



Belmar: The Boys are Back in Town

Marc Edward DiPaolo (August 09, 2008)



Welcome to Belmar, NJ. Site of one of the worst, and most transformative, weekends of my life.

Part 1 of a 3-part adventure. Rated NC-17 for language, sexuality, and adult themes.

Friday, 3:30 p.m.

I'm driving Griffin out to Belmar, New Jersey, in a Ford Taurus I borrowed from my father. We're coming from Staten Island, and have just driven past Schulmeister, a town with a name that amused us both. I am a reporter at this point in my life. Griffin is a tennis instructor. It is the late 1990s. We are in our early 20s.



Me: So, what's Belmar like?

Griffin: Beach town. Great beach, great water, lotsa bars. In the summertime it's like spring break, only for college graduates.

Me: I never did the whole spring break thing. I went to Italy instead. So I'm glad to get a taste of that scene now.

Griffin: I wish I'd went to Italy instead of spring break in frickin' Cancun. That was a waste.

Me: Why's that?

Griffin: You know how they say it's not possible to not get laid while on spring break in Cancun? It's possible. I didn't get laid.

Me: Is it not possible to not get laid in Belmar, NJ?

Griffin: My track record is a lot better in Belmar. I almost got a hat trick last weekend. Two chicks Friday night, and I almost nabbed a third on Saturday. I was soooo close.

Me: I'm just going for the beach. I love swimming.

Griffin: Don't worry, man. We'll get you laid. It's happening.

Me: I dunno.

Griffin: You're money. You're so money, you don't even know it.

Me: Okay, Trent.

Friday, 7:57 p.m.

A dark, semi-crowded bar in Belmar.

Me: I don't see anybody anywhere. No Kyle, no Hank, no Smiley, no David, no Boris, no Chewbacca. Nobody. They all said they'd be here.

Griffin: Maybe they're late.

Me: Are they still at the house you guys rented? Maybe you can call them.

Griffin: No phone hooked up to that house.

Me: Do they have cell phones?

Griffin: Smiley does.

Me: Call him.

Griffin: I don't have his number.

Me: So what do we do? Kill time till they get here?

Friday, 8:01 p.m.

Me and Griffin co-perform "Runaround Sue" on karaoke.



Friday, 8:07 p.m.

Me and Griffin lead the entire bar in song, singing “Sweet Caroline” by the jukebox. No karaoke machine or lyrics needed.

Friday, 8:30 p.m.

Griffin makes a pass at a woman who, coincidentally, happens to be the bar owner’s wife. We are tossed onto the street by bouncers.

Friday, 10:30 p.m.

At bar number two, I am separated from Griffin in an enormous crowd of drunken, six-foot-tall guys, who are all gathered in front of a bar tv watching some sort of game in which a “hero” player has to get a “ball” into a particular place in order to “score” a point for his “team.” Hero player does, indeed, score. The drunken men cheer. I am punched in the face for not cheering. I do not find Griffin again for the rest of the evening. I have no idea where the shore house is.

Friday, 11:00 p.m.

Scene: A quiet place named Pat's Tavern. I’m sitting at the bar, two seats down from a young British woman who is dressed like a flapper, and is wearing sunglasses indoors at night.

Me: Can I buy you a drink?

Sophie: (shrugs)

Me: What would you like?

Sophie: Gin and tonic.

The bartender overhears the order and looks at me for confirmation. I nod and he whips up the drink.

Me: What part of England are you from?

Sophie: Newcastle.

Me: Newcastle? So, when you go back home, you don’t have to bring coals with you.

Sophie: (lowers sunglasses) What are you talking about?

Me: It’s a famous expression.

Sophie: What’s a famous expression?

Me: If you do something unnecessary, it’s “like bringing coals to Newcastle.” Like, bringing your own beer to a bar is like bringing coals to Newcastle, or bringing sand to a beach.

Sophie: I don’t understand.

Me: Newcastle is a coal town, so nobody brings coal there, because it makes its own coal.

Sophie: I’ve lived in Newcastle my whole life and never heard that expression.

(A pause follows.)



Me: So, what do you think of that Tony Blair? Looks like he's made some progress bringing peace to Northern Ireland.

Sophie: Tony Blair's a fucking asshole. Thatcher II if you ask me.

Me: Ah.

(A very long pause follows.)

Me: I actually like to watch a lot of British tv. Grew up with it.

Sophie: You're not one of those Americans who spent years watching Fawlty Towers, Black Adder, Doctor Who, and Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes on PBS, are you?

Me: Yes, I am.

Sophie: Fuck off and die.

Me: Okay, then. (I rise from my stool.)

Bartender: Who's paying for this gin and tonic?

Me: Mrs. Parker over here. She's decided she wants nothing from me, so she gets to pay for her own drink.

Sophie: Ponce.

Saturday, 10 a.m.

The beach. Everyone on the beach is handsome or gorgeous, except for the guy with the glasses named Marc. He's had a good swim in the ocean, despite the baby jellyfish he found himself surrounded by, and now he's relaxing on towels beside Kyle, David, and Smiley.

Me: I'm not attractive enough to be on this beach.

Kyle: They're not attractive. They're all Guidos and Guidettes.

Me: The men all look like Ben Affleck, and the women all look like they stepped out of a music video, or a beer advertisement.

Kyle: Ignore them or go swimming.

David: Wanna sunbathe to some beach music?

Kyle: Sure.

David pops in a Beastie Boys cassette and blasts it.

Me: (laughing) Are you kidding me, David?

David: What?

Me: You call that relaxing beach music?

David: What?

Me: (to Kyle) Seriously, if they let loose killer robots on this beach programmed to exterminate all the ugly people, they'd laser beam me to death, glance over everyone else on the beach, spare their



lives, and leave.

Smiley: We're still getting you laid this weekend.

Me: I don't like that I've become your civics project or science experiment or something.

Smiley: Here's the deal. Chicks our age don't dig you. No getting around it. But there are a lot of housewives who go out with their friends for one beer in Belmar. I've seen them. They don't mean for anything to happen. Then, before they know it, they're blowing a recent college grad in their family SUV. And that recent college grad can be you.

Me: I'm not messing around with any women who aren't single.

Smiley: What, you have something against adultery? I'd fuck more married women if I didn't have a rule against sex with the over 25. You've gotta try it, or you'll never get laid. Adultery is your only hope. Older women love you. I've seen it.

Me: Would you shut up?

Smiley: Listen, here. Winston Churchill. Cheated on his wife all the time. One of the greatest men of the century. Adolph Hitler. Never cheated on his wife.

Smiley spread out his hands and waited me to draw my own conclusions.

Me: Are you saying that if I try to be a good person, and not commit adultery, I'll become a mass murderer like Hitler, and my only hope of being a good person is seducing a married woman in her SUV this weekend at Belmar. Otherwise, I'll wind up perpetrating a Holocaust for the 21st century?

Smiley: That's it. That's what I'm saying, exactly.

Me: Who writes your dialogue? Satan?

Kyle: Smiley's wrong. Churchill was an asshole. Ask any Irishman. Or Indian. So you're off the hook. The tautology doesn't work.

Me: Was that a tautology? I don't remember what a tautology is. And, by the way, Smiley, what's wrong with women over 25?

Smiley: You can't do anything with them. I like high school and college girls. They're young enough that you can train them, like dogs. Women over 25 are too smart, and you can't do anything with them.

Me: Man, you make me sick, you know that?

Smiley: What?

Me: Jesus fuckin' Christ, man.

Smiley: Younger women are hot, too. Admit it. If they're old enough to bleed, they're old enough to breed.

Me: Man. Fuckin' unbelievable, man.

Smiley: If they're old enough to pee, they're old enough to me.

Me: Be quiet already.

Smiley: Women's asses get bigger as they get older, too. You see that chick over there with a little bit of junk in her trunk? It's a little bit of junk now, but that ass is only gonna get bigger. Young



women are the bomb. They have the best asses ever, man. So tight, you can bounce quarters off their asses, man.

Me: Younger women also don't know how to spell.

Kyle: You're right, Marc. I've seen Smiley's girlfriend, and I don't think she knows how to spell.

David: How about a girl who knows how to read? You like those, Marc?

Me: Love 'em. You see one?

David: Eleven o'clock.

A woman in a large "Annie Hall" hat and sun dress was resting on a lawn chair, seemingly out of place amongst the rest of the beach's sunbathers, volleyball players, and six-pack ab displayers.

Me: I can talk to her about her book. That's a great ice-breaker. I've heard of every famous book there is, and I've read a lot of them. This is perfect!

David: Go talk to her, then!

Me: You don't have to prompt me. I'm going.

I jumped to my feet and walked over to her.

Saturday, 2 p.m.

The shore house.

A little hovel equipped with bunk beds, an electric fan, and a tv, on which is played, in an endless cycle, a tape of old "Saturday Night Live" episodes, "South Park," and the films "Swingers" and "Dazed and Confused." When the tv isn't on, a small CD player plays the Red Hot Chili Pepper's latest album, Californication, on permanent repeat.

I'm with David and Smiley watching Saturday Night Live. Kyle has also disappeared now, so he and Griffin are both mysteriously absent from the scene.

Me: I never even heard of that book. You've both heard of it?

David: It's a classic of the counterculture movement.

Me: Oh, that explains it. My parent's tried to shield me from all things 60s when I grew up. I think they let me hear Sgt. Pepper by accident. Some kind of oversight...

Smiley: So you froze when you never heard of the book?

Me: That was my big lead in. My ice-breaker. But I couldn't bring myself to say, The Electric Cool-Aid Acid Test, huh? I've never heard of it. Is it any good? I would've felt like a total tool.

David: She might have liked you taking an interest.

Me: She might have thought I was ignorant for not knowing what it is.

Smiley: (waving dismissively) It would have never worked out anyway. That chick is waaaaay too cool for you. Waaaaay too hip.

Me: How do you know?



David: He's got a point. Your favorite book is The Screwtape Letters. Those books don't go together, man. A person who loves The Screwtape Letters isn't getting any play from someone who likes The Electric Cool-Aid Acid Test.

Me: Are you saying I can't date a hippie?

David: That's what I'm saying.

Me: I like hippies. I have no attachment to nukes or Vietnam or Nixon. They had a point. The hippies had a point. Even if Johnson and Carter sucked, the hippies had a point.

David: Well, hippies don't like you.

Me: Why not?

Smiley: Because you're a Roman Catholic Republican who has never smoked a joint. You watch Doctor Who religiously, your favorite band is Roxette, and your idea of hard partying is having one White Russian and then switching to lemonade. That's why hippies don't like you.

Me: But they're having all the fun I'm not having. I'm as enchanted by that notion as I'm jealous and repelled.

Smiley: Well, they're not jealous of you and your White Russian, I'm telling you that.

David: They are repelled, though.

Me: Where the fuck is Griffin, anyway? I've been asking you every half hour since you guys found me walking the streets of Belmar last night, and none of you will tell me.

Smiley: Kyle went to get him about ten minutes ago. They'll be back soon.

Me: Went to get him from where?

Smiley: Griffin made us all promise not to tell you where he was.

(On television, Alec Baldwin asks Kim Basinger, once and for all, how her name is pronounced, Bass-injur or Bay-singer. They are doing the opening monologue for SNL.)

Me: Oh, come on, where are they?

Smiley: (looks at watch) I better get showered so we have time to barbeque before Happy Hour.

Me: (innocently) When's Happy Hour?

Smiley: (face reddening) DID YOU GO TO COLLEGE? DID YOU?

Me: WHERE'S GRIFFIN?!?!?!?

Smiley: PRISON!!!!!!!!

(silence rose to fill the room)

Me: What?

(Want to know what happened to Griffin? Read the next post, entitled "Smiley's Revenge." Coming sooner than you think...)



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