

## The Last Hoorah of Summer

The desert sun pours down on me almost as violently as the pulsing beat from the mountains of speakers that surround me. At this point, I think the only thing that keeps my upper body from spontaneously combusting are the three Big Gulp size Vodka and Red Bulls I have poured down my gullet and the number 8 sun block I apply every 10 seconds. In addition, I'm starting to become aware that the once clear water that I am standing waist deep in has been reduced to about a foot of visibility by beer, urine and undoubtedly things produced by the other thousand or so party animals that I just don't want to think about.

The fact that I notice the water at all in the presence of so many bikini clad twenty and early thirty something women should tip me off to the fact that I definitely need another drink. However, my dangerously low blood alcohol level and the murky liquid I'm standing in isn't really what's suddenly bothering me. I can hear a funny little voice in my head: "Too old! Yes too old to begin the training!" And I get the very unsettling feeling that I really don't fit in to this scene, and I want to. I'm sober enough to know its not REALLY Yoda's voice I'm hearing (so certain are you) but its the same voice I distinctly heard chiding me earlier for being unable to use The Force to cause bikini tops to fall off (Do or do not! There is no try).

I can think of a dozen reasons why this little torturer has followed me to the desert. Pick your favorite; Ill throw you a few:

- Recently failed marriage
- Impending 35<sup>th</sup> birthday
- A life time of battling my weight
- A life time of expecting more of myself than others
- Beating myself up constantly for my failures
- All of the above and then some.

Honestly it doesn't really matter at this point, I feel detached from the people and scene around me, but instead of an out of place participant I feel more like a detached viewer of some super high definition Discovery channel program. The program I'm watching must be called "The ritualistic mating habits of the human animal"; so Yoda and I sit back and enjoy the show.

We humans are funny creatures, we think we are so evolved and have divine destinies because we ended up with opposable thumbs and mathematics. Not so friends and neighbors, you add a little inhibition removal agent (a.k.a. booze and by a little I mean a lot) and we humans revert back to our primal selves pretty quick. Need proof that we evolved? Spend a semi-sober afternoon at the Hard Rock Hotel pool on a Sunday afternoon in late August and you'll start to wonder if Adam and Eve were just a couple amebas that God happened to nudge onto the Evolution Expressway. Sorry, I know I just pissed off every Christian friend I have, but I didn't come here to talk about God, I came to talk about sex (which often leads to invoking God's name, but I digress). Let me borrow a page out of the old Quentin Tarantino book of story telling and step back 24 hours.

It's a very hot Saturday morning in August during the last hoorah of the summer for four thirty something guys, 1 of their family members and 3 other friends. For most of us, we have known each other since at least the seventh grade with two new guys

to mix things up. After severe miscommunication and \$50 a head we end up at the Morea Beach Club, located what seems to be about a two mile walk from our room on the same hotel property. The first of a dozen or so buckets of beers arrive, as do the other patrons, and so begins another Las Vegas experience.

Of the eight of us; two are married, one lives with his ex-wife (guess who), one is engaged and the others are single. With the exception of one (guess again) the rest of the guys are in pretty good shape for late twenties to mid thirties (Good looking like Chewbacca, you are! Great, so I got that going for me...which is nice).

The Alpha Male of our little pack is undoubtedly Roach, and like a proper Alpha Male he draws the most attention by far from the opposite sex. However, also like an Alpha Male wolf he's also mated for life to his very lovely wife. I almost feel bad for these poor lusty females as I catch them eyeing him semi-discreetly from across the pool. There is simply NOTHING that any of them could do to shake this man's fidelity (Strong with the Force, he is). He is so dedicated to his wife and kids that he doesn't even notice these women staring at him. We'll tease him relentlessly about this later, but I, for one, deeply admire his conviction and dedication to his woman.

Our second married pack member is Troy, again a dedicated mated soul with two pups of his own. He's a faithful friend who will go out of his way to be considerate and put the need of others above his own. He's also well known for going a bit mad during the full moon and by "mad" and "full moon" I mean he goes all Jekyll and Hyde on your ass if he gets a high enough blood alcohol level. At which point you just stay out of the way and let him run through the forest howling.

I'm the Omega of this group; the sentinel like big brute who only appears older and bit less threatening due to the increasing gray and torn up missing patches in my fur. What I lack in viral attraction I make up for in approachability, obnoxious humor and personality. In the presence of the others I'm mostly invisible to females. This only encourages my sarcastic wit driven humor and antics, but even I'll admit that this occasionally leads to a bout of broody introspection and low growling. (I sense much beer in you).

Of the core, original pack, Chris rounds out the four of us. He is not exactly heralded as being the most considerate guy in the group, but we love the guy all the same. I've known many a women to find him quite attractive, kind of making him the Beta male among us. He's also the guy who will surprise you with moments of DEEP and MEANINGFUL interaction and honesty.

Rounding out the group on this trip are the latter four: Haz, a recently engaged and an easy going guy you can't help but like. Mike B. is Chris's cousin, but we don't hold it against him. Like Haz he's easy going and likeable. Brian is close friends with both Mike B. and Chris, and right out of the gates you can tell he probably doesn't have much trouble with the ladies. In addition you can't help but see why Chris and Mike made a friend in this guy; he's got charisma and honesty to him. Then last but not least you got Mike 2, a.k.a. High Speed. He's the playful young male of the pack who has got a bit of reckless puppy in him still. A likeable guy the ladies seem to like but constantly putting himself in train wreck after train wreck while we older dogs sit around shaking our heads and laughing.

Now that we got the Dramatis Persona out of the way, I bring you back to the Morea Beach Club. As the day progresses another pack arrives made up of what appears to be all married females. I notice their arrival mainly due to the fact that their group numbers close to a dozen. Like a good pack of human females they stay very close together for protection, some broadcasting the leave us alone vibe others fronting a bit too hard to hide their inappropriate desires ([too much, the lady doth protest...Great, Yoda does Hamlet](#)). Other males at the watering hole have also taken note of their arrival and they are nose open. I simply raise my ears and cock my head sideways as I notice this, the writer in me trying to discern each woman's story through their subtle actions and reactions.

Some of our boys are first to act ([while Roach goes about oblivious to all, sipping on his beer and talking with other members of our group](#)). Brian works his way to the edge of the female group and begins chatting up the one on the outer edge. Chris and Mike B take advantage of this and move in to join him, chatting up the next closest female. The longer this progresses and the more beer that is consumed I notice Brian's interest waning as I seem him purposefully sabotage his conversation with one woman and come back to chat with us. Chris however is a different story.

Chris and Carol's conversation is more intense, the flirting escalates and he slowly begins moving his new found interest away from her pack. Slowly he draws her further and further toward the other end of the pool. This tactic is genius, as it prevents her friends from suddenly injecting their own judgment into the situation, and it prevents any of us from accidentally ruining his chances to make this new found friend a more intimate companion. Somehow I manage to piece together that within the hour they will be leaving this pool together for a more private location ([thank you Captain obvious](#)).

With Chris and Carol out of sight my attention now falls on the fact that I could never pull something like that off, even if I wanted to. I start to get that "not so drunk feeling" of self consciousness at the thought. Oddly, its not like I haven't pulled my share of beautiful women in my time, this is just my inner demon messing with my head again. Sober, I'm the first one to tell you that the last thing I want right now is another relationship of any kind. However, with the anti-inhibition juice coursing through my veins, the animal in me wants to be viral and attractive. This downward, slippery slope is quickly distracted from as yet a new group of married thirty something's arrive.

I had seen the Alpha Female in this pack, Kim, the day before. She had come over chatting me up in the friendliest of ways. It only took her about two minutes to ask me about Roach, which only caught me off guard because of the wedding ring on her finger and copious amounts of beer in my stomach:

"Is your friend married?" she asked.

"Very." I replied, smiling.

"Is he corruptible?" She asked.

"He's 99.99999% incorruptible." I laughed, caught off guard by her candor.

"Why not just say he's 100% corruptible?" She said pretending to smack me upside my head.

"I didn't want to crush you like that," I say sipping my drink, playfully closing the trap on my sarcastic joke.

"You're so sweet." She zinged back in good nature.  
"Yeah, I get that a lot." I sigh.

After that she quickly abandoned her interest in Roach and moved her attention to our very drunken young male High Speed who struts his stuff with full male bravado. He of course, at some point, shots himself in the foot if foggy memory serves, chasing her away.

Needless to say, I was not surprised that she recognizes me in the crowded Morea Beach Club pool and waves to me. (Difficult to miss you are. Yeah you and me both). She begins chatting up some guy across the pool, and gets limited results. By that time High Speed (again hammered) finally notices her and moves in for a second try. I fell almost giddy at the prospect of seeing how this turns out: Round two. DING, DING! To my surprise, despite a lot of beer and a few faux pas he manages to secure mating rights and they too disappear from the pool area.

The rest of us continued our hanging out, drinking and enjoying each others stories until the sun started to slink down in the west. We head up to our rooms to shower, change and head out for a night on the town of yet more drinking, eating and talking. Our pack remains at 6 for most of Saturday night, dwindling down to Roach, and I at the very end. At about 2:30 am Roach discovers the text messages that he has been sending his wife all night have not gone through. He decides to try to save face by putting a call into his wife before we head to our den missing a good portion of his ass by the time our heads hit the pillows.

Sunday morning we pack up and head over to the Hard Rock Hotel for REHAB Sunday and thus how my drunken, introspective, Jedi-wanna-be ass ended up at the beginning of this tale. So here I sit, watching what surly was a modern day reenactment of some Ancient Roman debauchery and doubting my place in it, wanting to somehow belong more than I feel I do. I quickly spiral from there; questioning my place in the pack, questioning my potencies. The sinking feeling starts to really take hold and it is in that moment that Brian decides to attack.

In a playful attempt to submerge me in the water, the nimble SWAT trained Brian attempts to tackle me. I fling him off playfully like a doll, laughing and smiling, forgetting about my whiny inner voice. Brian circles again, trying again unsuccessfully and ending up at the bottom of the pool. My cockiness and bravado growing with his amazement, both of us laughing and smiling. Then there was a third attempt, this time with help from Roach and Mike B. My saving grace was preventing Roach from getting his arms around mine as I fling Mike B into the air right and then Brian to the left. We laughed even harder, strangers cheering me on, feeling like a victorious gladiator as Brian pats me on the back, laughing.

In that moment I was reminded you can't take life too serious. Were all just making our way through as best we can and you can't spend too much time worry about your place in it. Play to your strengths, work on your weaknesses and surround yourself with people who can accept you for both.

So here I stand talking with Roach and smiling, inner demon silenced, enjoying the slowly sinking sun and the last hoorah of summer. I am so in the moment I barely realized the submerged lurking figure as it grabs onto my ankles. In a last second realization only two words dejectedly leave my lips defeatedly: "Awww Shit."

Seconds later the rest of them are tackling me backward pinning me to the bottom of the pool. A smile crosses my face as hands reach down and help me up. Hollering and hooting in success along with rest of the crowd I join them, laughing even harder at their deviously successful fourth attempt.

These are my friends, and this is how we spent that last day of summer in 2006. Despite my private demons or maybe even because of them, we now share a moment in time that will live with all of us and in our future stories. As I sit in the isle seat of the Southwest 737 bound for Denver the following day, I hope these memories will serve to remind me to try to take life less seriously and participate more instead of sitting on the sidelines trying to understand it all. After all, when it comes right down to it, were only human.