

Besieged by hounds

By Jeff Davidson

When I was 21 years old, I went backpacking in Europe for a period of 66 days during the summer. In Barcelona, I decided to sign up for an overnight cruise that would travel to one of the Balearic Islands: Majorca, Ibiza, or a third island, Minorca. There were only openings on a ship that would be traveling to the tiny island of Minorca. I figured what the heck! Majorca or Minorca: same thing! One is just the smaller version of the larger one.

That evening I boarded the ship carrying a backpack that I would later use for my pillow. I slept on the cabin deck that night, staring up at the stars and anticipating my early-morning arrival at the island destination.

As the sun rose that morning, I spotted some distant land just over the horizon. We slowly neared the island and I soon realized there were no standing structures on the island that reached over two stories.

When we pulled up to the dock, all I could see ahead of me was a simple footpath. A few moments later, I got off the ship and began my walk to the "center" of town. It was already late morning by the time I found an available pension room to rent.

Although this trip wasn't exactly my idea of a luxury vacation, I decided to make the best of it. So I picked up my towel, grabbed my bathing suit, and headed out the door ready for some kind of adventure. Once I got a hold of a map of the island, I decided that I was going to walk the entire perimeter.

As I walked along that lone, narrow footpath, I couldn't help but stare up at the sky.

It is so blue! I was equally enamored by the olive-colored trees surrounding me. The water was amazing; a deep, emerald green.

Without any drinking water, sunscreen or hat, it didn't take me long to feel the effects of the blistering heat. That feeling was short-lived, however, as I suddenly was confronted by a completely different sort of uneasiness.

Three of the wildest looking dogs I could have ever imagined came upon me: Mangy, drooling, growling and in a pre-pounce state, seemingly prepared to attack any unwanted visitor with the slightest provocation without the slightest warning.

The three dogs strategically aligned themselves in front of me. I noticed that with my addition to their semicircle, we formed the peace symbol. I felt



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no peace These dogs were going to use me for sport and move in for the kill.

As I looked around, hopelessly, for some type of retreat, or weapon, I quickly realized that none was available. So I grabbed the towel from the back of my neck and wrapped it up into a rattail, hoping that the dogs would think I now had some sort of a weapon. I was buying seconds, maybe.

I began to envision myself waking up mangled in some strange room with no antiseptics, no one to treat me. No way out. I was only 21, but I thought that maybe I was just going to die there.

As the seconds of my life ticked away and the dogs in their pre-pounce state edged ever forward, a man – dressed in a broad brimmed hat and a colorful shawl, just like you might imagine of a traditional Spaniard — suddenly appeared and came running down

the hill toward me. He waved a stick above his head and yelled out in Spanish. He approached one of the dogs from behind, grabbing it by its mangy neck and leading it off to the side of the road.

He then cleared away some leaves and revealed something I hadn't noticed until that moment. It was a pen, to which he opened the gate and directed the dog inside.

He then returned and did the same with the second dog, leaving only one standing in front of me. Maybe I'm going to get out of this alive!

After he secured the last of the three dogs inside the pen, I walked back up the hill, woozy beyond belief. By this point, I was fried to a crisp. In fact, I was so burned that I could not sit down. Finally, two days passed and the ship returned to the island to take us back to the mainland. As I boarded the ship, the physical discomfort began to dissipate.

As the years passed I began to reflect

on my experience and see parallels to the over-information era in which we all find ourselves. When it comes to information, we are constantly besieged by the hounds, our burn isn't subsiding, and our ship isn't coming back to save us. We are all confronted by the hounds of too much change, too much information and too much competing for our time and attention.

One of the most effective ways to alleviate the constant sense of time pressure is by "living in the moment." What does living in the moment mean? It means being aware of your power in the present. It is not a recipe for accomplishment. It is observing the finely woven canvas of your life while you are also living it. It is giving yourself permission to be who you are. It is resting when you are tired. It is not having to strive. It is allowing yourself breathing space.

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