

Panic and Peace

Sometimes, in a moment of panic, things happen that we can't explain. At least not in a rational or logical way.

I sat quietly in a car dealership this morning, waiting while my father's car was being worked on. I was prepared and brought a book a friend had lent me. It's called *The Third Man Factor* (Penguin 2009), and is an account of how people at the edge of death, often experience something other-worldly that helps them survive.

Four pages in and my mind wandered back to last week.

Back to the cycling trip I did with a girlfriend, on the country roads where she just moved. We're both avid cyclists, and were looking forward to a four hour ride through the windy, hilly back roads.

I remember the winds being particularly strong. I remember enjoying the peace and quiet of the country roads as nary a vehicle passed us. We rode two abreast and talked non-stop, filling each other in on our lives.

Just as we were thinking of turning around and heading back, my girlfriend shrieked and pointed to the farm fields to my right. Two large dogs, a rottweiler and a husky/sheppard cross, were coming at us in full attack mode. We had no time to turn around or even think. They were so close that all we could do was race.

I have outrun many dogs while cycling. Usually it's just a chase and the dogs don't actually mean any harm. But this time was different. With hackles raised, snarling teeth snapping and saliva spraying, it was obvious these were guard dogs whose sole purpose in life was to kill anything that threatened the livestock on their farm. That day, we threatened the livestock, or so they must have thought.

Riding uphill and into the wind, my girlfriend and I pushed through the gears trying to pick up speed and stay ahead of the killer dogs. I was leading and as such they settled their chase on my girlfriend, fiercely growling, snapping and biting at her legs. They were tenacious in their chase, smelling the fear of the hunted and victory of a kill. The act of pedaling with a fast rotation was the only thing that stopped their teeth from sinking into her flesh and bone.

Try as she might to get ahead of them, she couldn't. I yelled at her in the strongest, most authoritative voice I could muster, 'RIDE! RIDE! HARDER! HARDER!' I wanted her to focus on pushing forward and not on the dogs grabbing at her legs.

All of a sudden, out of the blue, a car appeared. From nowhere. It managed to get between my girlfriend and the dogs, giving her space to ride. Once she was free and the dogs slowed to a walk, the car came up beside me. I made a quick glance back to both rider and dogs to ensure the chase was off, and gave the car occupants a thumbs up.

And then it was gone. The car that miraculously appeared, to save my girlfriend and I from what we could only assume would have been a deadly encounter, vanished before our eyes.

It's an odd feeling, knowing that something other-worldly occurred. Although it's easy for me to recount because I was there, I saw it, and I lived it, it's much harder for those listening to the story to actually believe.

It reminded me of another terrifying incident that happened the previous summer. Although this story is told in great detail in *Death...and the Lessons I Learned*, I will highlight the important parts.

I had jumped into a lake for a cool refreshing dip after dinner. The sun was still shining brightly, the air warm, and the cool waters of the lake seemed to be calling my name. I had intended on it being a short swim.

A sweet, loving, labrador retriever dog jumped in to swim with me. I was completely comfortable with her joining me. Then she came too close and would not follow my commands to back away. She misread my intentions and thought I wanted to wrestle.

Within seconds I was held under water by her weight. I could not get out from under her, surface and catch my breath. Fear took over and panic set in almost immediately.

It's true what they say about a near death experience. About seeing the tunnel of 'light', and watching your life pass before your eyes. It is peaceful. Comforting even. There was not a single moment as I floated in what I call 'the in between space', where I did not realize I was dying or dead. Even with that, it was rather nice.

Then, just as the car appeared from nowhere for my girlfriend, in the water that day a voice called out to me. It was male. Loud. And serious. It simply said 'YOU HAVE THIRTY SECONDS', and I knew in that precise moment that some higher power was directing me to survive.

I yelled once for help. The next thing I remembered was being dragged to the water's edge, coughing up whatever had lodged in my lungs.

This is the lesson for today.

It doesn't matter that we understand what it was that came to me while drowning, or to my girlfriend with the dog attack. It only matters that in times of need there is something grander and more powerful than us that can guide us, save us and move us forward.

It doesn't matter whether you call it God, a guardian angel, the spirit of a deceased loved one, your own Higher Self, or a Third Man in. It doesn't even matter if you believe or don't believe. What matters is that we are not alone in this journey of life. That during times of great need or times of simple bliss, there is something watching over us, directing the traffic on our road of life in whatever way is necessary for our soul to learn our lessons and reach our destiny.

After the dog attack my girlfriend and I managed to finish our ride and log the four hours we had intended on. With the wind at our back the entire way home, we burned off the

surge of adrenalin, laughed a lot about the craziness of it all, and gave thanks that something intervened.

It was an hour drive home from her place later that night and I enjoyed the solitude where I could reflect on the day's adventure, the miraculous appearance of a car in precisely the right time, and the lessons I learned from it all.

It is amazing this journey we are on.

Enjoy,
Louise

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