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During my first week in Florence I tried to take a quick trip to the pharmacy to pick up some shaving cream. Because I have no sense of direction I managed to walk myself in circles for at least twenty minutes. While trying to get back on track, I stopped a pair of old Italian women for help. Talking over each other, they each gave me detailed instructions on how to get there. Having not understood a single word they said I trotted off in the direction they pointed me in. After a few minutes I decided to head back because getting lost over shaving cream didn't seem worth it. Moments into my return trip I ran into the same women from before. Correctly recognizing that I'm too stupid to follow simple instructions, one of the 70-year-old women grabbed me by the hand and dragged me to the pharmacy. My Italian being what it was I didn't know how to thank her or get her name or ask what was going on.

While being dragged down the street by an elderly stranger I couldn't have imagined that in two month's time I would put away my fear of getting lost on Piazza Donatello. Instead I would find myself walking down a busy highway in Catania, Sicily alone with nothing but a bag of fruit, a bottle of water, and no idea where I was.

It was my first day in Sicily and I was on my way to a beach that a couple locals had told me of earlier. Twenty minutes into my journey there was still no beach in sight, just a shipping yard. I walked into a rundown gas station and tried to ask the guy working there if those boats were all along the waterfront. Instead it came out "do cars of the sea live on the beach?" He had no idea what I was talking about, so I pressed on. A half hour into my adventure I turned off of the main road and spotted a giant sign that read "Moon Beach". I made my way through the open gate and quickly walked past the people at the front desk should they try to charge me admission. There was no sand or water, only large trucks. As I turned the corner I saw two fully grown buffalo in what could be described as a pig pen. They could have stepped out if they so chose to. Thankfully it was too hot out to expel that kind of energy. Instead they just stood and ate hay. I couldn't believe my eyes. I wanted to pet them, but was afraid they'd bite me. Instead I fed them straw. As I looked around I noticed an ostrich, a herd of camel, and a single hippopotamus; all of which were fully grown and contained within those pathetic fences. As I walked towards the hippo, the male camel dismounted from his female friend and lumbered right over to me. He and I were face to face as I tried to maneuver through the narrow walkway. I still remember the spot of white fur on his nose and the way one of us would move back whenever the other one tried to investigate the creature standing before him. Thankfully the hippo wasn't as interested in me. Instead he seemed depressed. He just stood towards the tail end of the 18 wheeler that delivered him there. I briefly entertained the thought of feeding the hippo my fruit, and then of taking him to the beach with me. Before I could act on my poor judgment an employee, curious of what I was doing there, approached me. After telling him I was looking for the beach he pointed me in the direction I had been walking in for the past half hour and informed me that Moon Beach would be a circus for the next few weeks. The posters that came to coat the island for the remainder of my stay informed me of the less friendly animals I could have stumbled upon during my visit. I managed to escape without being eaten by a tiger in the petting zoo setting.

After this program is over and we all return home to our families many of my friends will be able to show off the Italian they've learned. While they gloat regarding their linguistic skills, I take solace in the fact that should I ever cross paths with such beasts again The Camel Whisperer will know exactly what to do.