

# FACING VIOLENCE



## Preparing for the Unexpected

- Ethically
- Emotionally
- Physically
- *Without Going to Prison*

**Rory Miller**

*Author of Meditations on Violence*

Foreword by Barry Eisler

# Survival favors the prepared mind. —Robert Crowley

“For those of us who think we know it all... this book is a game changer.”

—Al Dacascos, martial artist

“Brutal honesty... from one who has seen it... first-hand.”

—Alain Burrese, J.D., former U.S. Army, author

“This book is about reality. Above all, it’s useful.”

—Barry Eisler, from his foreword

“When you are done, read it again!”

—Lieutenant Jon Lupo, New York State Police

“A must-read for all who teach others to deal with violence.”

—Officer Kasey Keckeisen, training coordinator, Ramsey County SWAT

“Strips us of dangerous illusions we have about violence.”

—Dr. Kevin Keough, clinical and police psychologist

“Not interested in ending up dead, crippled, or visiting the prison showers? Read this book.”

—Marc ‘Animal’ McYoung, author

“A gift for the careless adventurer or the lost navigator; a safe way out.”

—Roy Bedard, Tallahassee Police Department

“These pages can save your life.”

—Steve Perry, *New York Times* bestselling co-author of Tom Clancy’s *Net Force* series

“Know about how violent confrontations actually occur, and what to do about it.”

—Toby Cowern, former Royal Marine, military security/counter-terrorism specialist

“If your training doesn’t encompass all seven of Miller’s principles, it is dangerously incomplete.”

—Lawrence A. Kane, author

This book stands alone as an introduction to the context of self-defense. There are seven elements that must be addressed to bring self-defense training to something approaching ‘complete.’ Training that dismisses any of these areas leaves you vulnerable:

**Legal and ethical implications.** To learn self-defense, you must learn force law. The consequence is prison. Side by side with the legal rules, everyone must explore his or her own ethical limitations. Most people don’t really know where this ethical line lies within them.

**Violence dynamics.** Self-defense must teach how attacks happen. You must be able to recognize an attack before it happens and know what kind you are facing.

**Avoidance.** You need to learn and practice not-fighting. Learning includes escape and evasion, verbal de-escalation, and also pure not-be-there avoidance.

**Counter-ambush.** If you didn’t see the precursors or couldn’t successfully avoid the encounter, you will need a handful of actions, trained to reflex level, to deal with a sudden violent attack.

**Breaking the freeze.** Freezing is almost universal in a sudden attack. You must learn to recognize a freeze and break out of one.

**The fight itself.** Most martial arts and self-defense instructors concentrate their time on the fight. It just needs to be in line with how violence really happens in the world.

**The aftermath.** There are potential legal, psychological, and medical effects of engaging in violence no matter how justified. Advanced preparation is critical.



**Rory Miller** has been studying martial arts since 1981. He’s a bestselling writer and a veteran corrections officer. He’s taught and designed courses on Use of Force Policy and Decision Making; Police Defensive Tactics; Confrontational Simulations; and as a sergeant, he led and trained his former agency’s Corrections Tactical Team. In 2008 and 2009, he taught methods to operate a secure prison for the Iraqi Corrections Systems, Iraq. Rory Miller resides near Portland, Oregon.

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(. . . and without going to prison.)

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# FOREWORD

There are a lot of books out there on deadly martial arts techniques and killer secrets of the ninja and the ancient principles of various lost fighting arts (I should know—I own most of them). But there aren't nearly enough books on the reality of violence: the precursors, the aftermath, and everything that happens in between. *Facing Violence* is about the reality.

I've been playing around with martial arts since I was a teenager: wrestling in high school, a black belt in judo from the Kodokan, a smattering of karate, boxing, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. And I had some excellent training when I was with the CIA, too. All these systems turned out to be useful—sometimes extremely useful—when it came to the main event. But none of them prepared me for the often ambiguous lead-in to violence (like woofing), or the disorienting affects of adrenaline (like auditory exclusion and tunnel vision), or the shakes and legal complications that come after. Some of these I learned the hard way; others I feel lucky to have learned from reality-based writers like Alain Burrese, Lawrence Kane, Marc MacYoung, Peyton Quinn, and others—and now, from Rory Miller.

If you're in search of a treatise on technique, this probably isn't your book. If you want to study an ancient Asian fighting art, you'll probably want to look elsewhere. But if you want to protect yourself from violence by understanding it better—recognizing causes and signs, knowing how to de-escalate, having a plan for what to do if de-escalation fails, being prepared for the legal and other consequences that can come after—then *Facing Violence* is the book for you. It's smart, it's thoughtful, and it's even funny and philosophical. Above all, it's useful. And a damn good bargain, too, considering what Rory paid in acquiring the experience to write it.

Barry Eisler  
Author of the bestselling *John Rain* book series



# INTRODUCTION

While teaching a Kurdish lieutenant in Iraq close-combat handgun skills, he suddenly threw up his hands and said something. He sounded angry. I turned to my translator and raised an eyebrow.

My translator reported, “He said, ‘I am so angry. Everything they taught us was wrong.’”

It wasn’t true. He had been well trained on an American model—the same skills that a rookie officer in the states would have coming out of the academy. The skills weren’t wrong, but they were incomplete.

Learning to shoot safely is not the same as learning to shoot quickly. Target acquisition on clear firing lanes in good lighting standing upright in a stable stance is very different from target acquisition when holding your head up for a second could mean you eat a bullet. The Lieutenant needed all of the basic skills he had learned. He was just now ready to step out of kindergarten and learn how those skills applied in the world.

Most self-defense training, and especially martial arts adapted for self-defense, suffers from the same problem. Most of what is taught is not *wrong*, but it is incomplete.

There are seven elements that must be addressed to bring self-defense training to something approaching complete. Any training that dismisses any of these areas leaves the student vulnerable:

- Legal and ethical implications. These are different but related factors. A student learning self-defense *must* learn force law. Otherwise it is possible to *train to go to prison*. A self-defense response where you wind up behind bars for years is not a very good win. Side by side with the legal rules, every student must explore his or her own ethical limitations. Some people simply cannot bring themselves to kill, maim or blind. A few cannot hurt another human being. Most do not really know where this

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ethical line is within themselves. Part of an instructor's duty will be to find that line and either train with respect to it or help the student grow past it.

- Violence dynamics. Self-defense must teach how attacks happen. Knife defense is worthless unless it centers on how knives are actually used by predators. Students must be able to recognize an attack before it happens and know what kind they are facing. The attitudes and words that might defuse a Monkey Dance will encourage a predator assault and vice versa.
- Avoidance. Students need to learn and practice *not* fighting: Escape and Evasion, verbal de-escalation and also, pure not-be-there avoidance.
- Counter-ambush. If the student doesn't see the precursors or can't successfully avoid the encounter, he or she will need a handful of actions trained to reflex level for the sudden violent attack.
- Breaking the freeze. Freezing is almost universal in a sudden attack. Students must learn to recognize a freeze and break out of one.
- The fight itself. Most martial arts and self-defense instructors concentrate their time right here. What is taught just needs to be in line with how violence happens in the world.
- The aftermath. There are potential legal, psychological, and medical effects of engaging in violence no matter how justified. Advanced preparation is critical.

What follows is an introduction to each of these seven areas. Considering thousands of volumes have been written on fighting and each of the other six subjects is at least as complicated—more than an introduction of each of these seven areas won't fit in a single book. However, scratching the surface will show you the uniquely interwoven nature of each aspect and may urge you toward better preparation should your next fight have no rules.

# CHAPTER 1: LEGAL AND ETHICAL

*The ambulance didn't even leave as a code three. The man was obviously dying and there was nothing they could do. For about forty-five minutes, the time it took for the team to assemble, gear up, and make a plan, the man had been driving his own head into a concrete wall.*

*We used a Taser to immobilize him long enough to handcuff him. We knew that either the Taser had saved him or we had been too late to save him. We rushed him to the ambulance waiting outside the perimeter. His eyes were being pushed down by the swelling in his brain. His hands and feet were turning inward and pointing down.*

*While we waited at the hospital, we knew that the very intervention that gave him a shot at living could end in a wrongful death lawsuit against us. Another "Taser-induced killing" despite the trauma the man had done to himself, despite the fact that only the Taser allowed us to get close to him without inflicting more trauma. This was shaping up to be something for the media and the courts, a circus of blame. There is always the fear that facts and innocence sell fewer newspapers than inflammatory headlines.*

*We had already contacted the detectives to initiate a homicide investigation. Lucky for all of us—the guy lived.*

Long before you ever get involved in a self-defense situation, you have to lay a background. You need to know what your own ethical beliefs about violence entail and you need to understand the laws on using force.

Your ethical beliefs limit your behavior. Most people accept that killing is wrong, but understand that some other things are worse. When presented with something worse, like dying, killing seems less wrong. This line is blurry and different for each person. If you do not

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know where your line is, not just for killing but also for all the levels of force, you will freeze.

When someone is trying to kill you, you won't have time to work out your issues.

Laws set the standard for behavior and you will be held to it. You must know how the law limits what you can and cannot do—and then you must adapt your training to work within those limits.

Most martial artists train in systems that predate effective legal systems. Things that would have been acceptable in the Japan of the 1850s or during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, Manchuria, or the Philippines will get you arrested and imprisoned today.

You need to know this stuff in advance so that you can be prepared.

### **1.1: legal (criminal)**

Force law varies by state and sometimes, especially as it applies to weapons, by city. The principles are pretty universal but you need to personally read the statutes of your state. If you are a self-defense instructor, you need not only read them; but also to understand them, print them out, and have copies available to your students. Do a web search for your state and statutes or “revised statutes” and then search the statutes for “self-defense” and “force” and “justification.” Printed copies of the criminal code and statutes for your state will also be available from your state government. **READ THEM YOURSELF!** If your on-line search through the statutes for self defense law comes up empty, it is possible that the state has not codified the law. Try a global search for “your state” + “self defense” + “jury instructions.”

#### **1.1.1: affirmative defense**

The first thing you must understand is that in court self-defense is an *affirmative defense*. This has two huge implications. The first is that you are acknowledging the basic facts of what you did—if you hit someone with a brick and caused severe injury you are acknowledging that what you did falls under the definition of assault with a dangerous weapon and/or aggravated assault. Serious felonies. If your affirmative defense of self-defense does not work, you have effectively

## CHAPTER 2: VIOLENCE DYNAMICS

*Bill and I were talking to the warden in an Iraqi prison, drinking chai. A gun fired. Other than ours and the warden's bodyguards, there shouldn't have been loaded weapons in that section of the building. I put down my tea, stood and drew my sidearm. I started clearing the building. Slow is smooth, smooth is fast.*

*Button hooking each door, scanning the room, "Clear!" Bill was right behind me. Everything seemed slow, but no one else had begun to react yet. I realized that nothing was happening. Hordes of well-armed militia were not pouring into the corridor. There was no second shot.*

*Animals are social creatures. Even as they broke out of the freeze one-by-one, they weren't running away from the shot. Neither were they gathering around to watch. The behavior of the others told me long before I got to the end of the corridor that it was neither an assault, a gunfight, nor even a suicide. I knew it was an accidental discharge before I turned into the last room.*

*I cleared the weapon, comforted the poor guy in a language I barely understood and left it for the warden to handle. Then I went back to finish my tea.*

Understanding violence can be extremely complex. As a subject, violence could be said to extend from toddlers wrestling to boxing to rape to nuclear war. Self-defense, however, fits in a narrower range and this chapter will study the dynamics of the violence where self-defense is appropriate—criminal violence.

Generally, violence can be broken down into two very broad categories: social and asocial.

Social violence is what, in the natural world, would be the types of violence common within a single species. This intra-species violence

does not follow the dynamic or use the same tactics as violence against other species. The dominance game of snakes wrestling or bears pushing and mouthing is not the same as the way the same species hunt prey.

Social violence includes ritualized jockeying for territory or status. It also includes acts to prove or increase group solidarity (a powerful side-effect of hunting as a team) and violence to enforce the rules and mores of the group.

Asocial violence does not target the victim as a person, but as a resource. Asocial violence is the domain of the predator and the humanity of his victim does not enter into the equation.

What follows are descriptions. How to deal with these dynamics is the subject of Chapter Three.

## **2.1: social violence**

Social violence can roughly be delineated as the Monkey Dance (MD), the Group Monkey Dance (GMD), the Educational Beat-Down (EBD) and the Status-Seeking Show (SSS).

### **2.1.1: the monkey dance**

Most, if not all animals have a ritualized combat between males of the same species to safely establish dominance. Snakes coil around each other and wrestle. It can look like mating to the uninitiated. Deer and elk lock antlers and push and fence. Rams slam their horns, reinforced with massive blocks of bone, into each other. Humans fist-fight or wrestle.

In all cases, it is a ritual with specific steps, genetically designed NOT to be life-threatening.

This human dominance game, the Monkey Dance, follows specific steps. (See Fig. 2-001.) You have all seen it:



Fig. 2-001: The Basic Monkey Dance

- 1) A hard, aggressive stare
- 2) A verbal challenge, e.g., “What you lookin’ at?”
- 3) An approach, often with the signs of increased adrenaline: gross motor activity of arm swinging or chest bobbing, a change in color, usually with the skin flushing.
- 4) As the two square-off, there may be more verbal exchanges and then one will make contact. It will usually be a two-handed push on the chest or an index finger to the chest. If it is an index finger to the nose (remember face contact, above) it will go immediately to step #5. If there is no face contact, this step can be repeated many times until one of the dancers throws . . .
- 5) A big, looping over-hand punch.

This description is simplified and shows only one side. It must be emphasized that there have been thousands of generations conditioned to play this game in this way. It is easy to get sucked in and a very difficult thing to walk away. Backing down from a Monkey Dance, unless you take or are given a face-saving out, is extremely difficult and embarrassing, especially for young men.

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A full MD will look more like this:

- 1) A hard, aggressive stare. The recipient will either look away or meet the stare. If he looks away, dominance is established and the instigator will move on. If the recipient:
  - 1a) meets the stare or
  - 1b) tries to be dismissive (like saying to friends, “I think that guy has the ‘hots’ for me”), either of which will likely cause the situation to escalate.
  - 1c) It is possible, however, that the aggressor here is looking for or willing to settle for a Status-Seeking Show (SSS) in which case looking away, being submissive, may mark you as a good target. Also, any submissive body language increases your likelihood of being targeted by a predator.
- 2) If the stare is met and held, it will escalate to a verbal challenge, e.g., “What you lookin’ at?” Again, if the recipient at this point looks away and pretends to be very interested in something else, dominance is established and the aggressor will likely move on. The recipient, especially if girls are watching, will have an incredible urge to respond in kind. It is, in fact, fear of being humiliated by not responding that is driving the dynamic. The MD is not a game you play. It is genetically programmed and unless you possess wisdom and exert will, the game plays *you*.
  - 2a) In order to defuse, the looking away must be submissive. It must be humble. If the recipient looks away but starts snickering with friends or making low-voiced comments, the verbal challenge is repeated and escalated, “Hey! Asshole! I’m talking to you!”
  - 2b) If the recipient is not feeling submissive and is not mature enough to avoid the MD, he answers the verbal response. “Who’s asking?”
- 3) An approach, often marked by adrenalin-linked signs: gross motor activity of arm swinging or chest bobbing; a change in color, usually with the skin flushing.
  - 3a) At this point, other monkeys get involved. Friends of both sides try to intervene, get between the two and prevent any further escalation. This is one of the best ways to have a face-

## CHAPTER 3: AVOIDANCE

*Rusafa Prison in Baghdad. Obviously, since I was here voluntarily, I'd failed to take my own advice on avoidance. Nothing immediately going wrong . . . how dangerous my immediate future would be, and how successful the mission would be could be affected by anything I did or said in the first minutes, hours or days.*

*So I asked questions like an inquisitive, well-behaved child:*

*“Why do men wear silver rings but women wear gold?”*

*“Why do some of the old men have dark circles on their foreheads?”*

*“Do you have pets at home?”*

*“What stories did you listen to as a child?”*

*“Teach me the numbers.”*

*I found out very quickly that asking to be taught (out of curiosity, not out of a desire to control) is always received as profoundly respectful.*

You have to understand violence dynamics before learning how to avoid violent situations. The things that might discourage a predator might trigger a Monkey Dance—you need to correctly read the situation you are in. You need to be able to recognize when you have crossed a border and are in a place with different rules in order to avoid the Educational Beat Down. You need to be able to distinguish between a Resource Predator and a Process Predator before you decide whether to give up what the predator wants.

There are three general strategies for not being assaulted: absence; escape and evasion (E&E); and de-escalation. If you are not in the place where the bad thing happens, you don't even get your feelings hurt. Absence is the most efficient survival strategy.

If you find yourself on dangerous ground, get the hell out. Escape and evasion is the first choice when you couldn't be absent. E&E

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requires no contact with the threat, and thus, there is no chance of messing things up.

De-escalation is the last chance to avoid damage for both parties. There isn't always opportunity for it and it doesn't always work.

*It is better to avoid than to run, better to run than to de-escalate, better to de-escalate than to fight, better to fight than to die.*

Any option you take depends on your awareness, your ability to see confrontation coming. The earlier you see it, the more options you have. The more clearly you see it, the less likely you are to make a mistake.

In *Meditations on Violence* I wrote of five stages at which you can defend yourself from an assault. The first three of the stages mentioned—*blocking the motion*, *blocking the opportunity* and *blocking the intent* belong to the fight. *Altering the relationship* and *using terrain* are aspects of preventing the attack from happening in the first place. Altering the relationship is one tactic for de-escalation. E&E relies on a tactical understanding of terrain. Absence relies on a strategic understanding of terrain and crime dynamics.

### **3.1: absence**

Bad things happen in predictable places. If you avoid those places you can avoid a huge percentage of the violence that occurs in the world. What are those places?

Bars, parties, and other places where people get their minds altered. Drugs and alcohol change the way people think and act. They lower inhibition and they make people stupid. When some of your brain cells are pickled or fried, picking fights can seem like a good idea. You may forget that “no” is a complete sentence. And that's just alcohol.

Stimulants can make people forget that they are mortal and can't really fight the whole bar. I have seen Threats on stimulants screaming and pleading and demanding for someone to come close enough to kill, so that, “We can all die together!”

High-volume cash businesses like bars and drugs attract armed robberies. Wired people with weapons can always go bad. People

## CHAPTER 4: COUNTER-AMBUSH

*Talking to a friend in a public place, her eyes suddenly focused over my shoulder and went wide. I turned fast, elbow up, spinning and drop-stepping towards the Threat. Didn't feel the solid contact of a head, but felt an arm brush away and continued. The drop-step placed me behind the Threat and one hand came up to grab the face and control the spine, the other found a bendable wrist.*

*And I stopped. A friend playing a trick. Sigh.*

Avoidance and de-escalation have failed or you never had a chance to use them. You have been attacked. Something just broke over the back of your head or someone has grabbed your hair and yanked you towards a closet. What should you do?

Let's take it back one step. What should you already have done before you even realized the fight was on?

This section covers only about a quarter of a second of any fight, but it is a crucial damn quarter-second.

I'm less worried about the Monkey Dance in this section. If you couldn't get out of that it's on you. Additionally, the MD is not particularly dangerous unless you fall and hit your head. This is about surviving the first contact of an assault in such a way that you can recover.\*

### **4.1: foundation**

What you need must be fast, effective, uncomplicated, work on most things without modification, easy to train and you must be able

\* In case it is not clear, a fight is two people trying to hurt or physically dominate each other. An assault is a single person attempting to hurt or dominate a victim. If a victim of an assault can turn that into a fight it is a significantly improved situation.

## FACING VIOLENCE—PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

to follow it up. Sound simple? Then, after you've got it you must train it to reflex speed.

*Fast.* Ideally, the move would be so efficient that upon your first clue of an incoming attack you could launch and hit first. Because reaction is slower than action this is hard. Not impossible, just hard. At minimum, when trained to reflexive speed, this move should be fast enough that if you are hit you will hurt the Threat before his second attack lands.

*It must work.* That's almost too obvious to say, but I have seen many moves taught that are not workable in real life or under real attack conditions (e.g., catching knives in the air, somehow getting your elbow between a fist and your face faster than the fist can move or wrist locking a fast flurry of punches).

*Simple.* If the move is complex; it will be too slow to employ, too hard to train, too easy to over-refine to the point of uselessness. Simple works better in the slop of real combat than complex.

*Without modification.* The move should work on most common attacks. If you have to change the move to accommodate where or how the attacker stands or whether he attacks with a right or left hand or high or low, it requires a series of decisions that slow you down. Thinking is too slow in a fight. You need an initial move that works on (almost) everything.

*Easy to train.* You want to put a lot of repetitions into this to make it reflexive. You also want to be able to practice it at full power and speed safely.

*You must be able to follow it up.* This is a reminder for *me*. I have a few counter-assault moves that I love, but I am an infighter. If you are not an infighter and use my entries, you will get past the first quarter second with flying colors . . . and then have no idea what to do.

*Train to reflex speed.* If you have to think, the Threat's second strike or the third will land. Every strike that gets in, every stab, decreases your physical ability to do anything about the next. Time is damage. Damaged is defenseless.

## CHAPTER 5: THE FREEZE

*Ralph was a veteran fighter, both skillful and experienced. Also a pretty nice guy with good awareness and good verbal skills. As a sergeant he had excellent rapport with both inmates and other officers. He was just doing his job.*

*An inmate took his words, his expression, something as an insult. This was an inmate who had honed the blitz attack to a fine art. Ralph was hit three times before he was aware an assault was underway. Then his first instinct was to grab the Threat to try to slow down the situation and buy time to think.*

*It all ended well. There was a fair amount of blood, mostly from the Threat. Ralph's injuries were cosmetic. The other 56 or 57 inmates watching chose not to get involved. Minor injuries all around.*

*The sergeant was mentally torturing himself for a long time. Because he froze. It wasn't much of a freeze—three hits for an average blitz attack is less than half a second. He'd turn it over in his mind, wondering how he let his guard down and how the Threat had opportunity and why he didn't see or feel it happening in time to react.*

*This is the thing, the difference between a fight and an assault, the victim is behind the curve, trying to play catch up, trying to figure out what the situation is and how to respond while the Threat is already well into the steps of his plan. This is where you start in an assault: fifteen points behind, halfway into the fourth quarter, and you don't know if you're playing basketball or football and you aren't dressed for either game.*

*Because he's done this for decades, Ralph thought he should have done better. He's alive and mostly uninjured. The Threat was dragged away in cuffs. It honestly doesn't end much better than that. But that freeze, that half-second, didn't let him rest for a long time.*

*If you play with snakes long enough, you get bit. It's natural. But the human animal has to ask "why me, why that time, why, why, why?" A skilled officer will prevent 99% of what could happen, but when that 1% breaks through, he can feel like a rookie all over again.*

*Ralph did well. We all hate it, but freezing is normal and natural, and bad guys rely on it, they expect it to last for the entire assault. Anyone who thinks they can't be surprised or won't freeze for an instant when they are caught off-guard is wrong.*

Whether you did well in the counter-assault phase or not, the next thing you will do is freeze. If you are lucky or well-trained, the Operant Conditioning may have kicked-in and the Threat may be down, lying on the ground trying to figure out what just happened. If things *didn't* go so well, you may be the one lying on the ground as boots slam into your ribs, wondering what just happened and trying to remember what to do next and suddenly concerned with remembering your first girlfriend's eye color . . . *what a horrible thing to die forgetting*, your mind whispers.

I can almost guarantee that you will freeze. Whether it lasts a fraction of a second or for the short remainder of your time on earth will depend on a combination of your nature, your training, and your experience.

## 5.1: biological background

Behavioral biology lists three survival responses to sudden extreme stress, the "three Fs": Fight, Flight, and Freeze. Dave Grossman lists four: Fight, Flight, Posture, and Submit.\* All *five* of the listed responses, Fight, Flight, Freeze, Posture, and Submit are hard-wired reactions to an immediate, serious, living threat.\*\*

The hard-wired fight response is nothing like a Monkey Dance or sparring fight and nothing like the way a predator attacks. In this

\* Grossman, Dave.

\*\* The responses to major disasters are quite different, more limited and predictable. See *The Unthinkable* by Amanda Ripley.

## CHAPTER 6: THE FIGHT

*The Threat was walking out of the casino. He seemed to be complying. He didn't like it but he had been ordered to leave and he was leaving.*

*Suddenly he jumped in the air and spun, swinging a wild punch. I ducked and his fist sailed over my head to connect solidly with my partner's jaw. It made a meaty, slapping noise.*

*The Threat landed and for one second I had the perfect opening—his ribs were exposed, he was leaning slightly away with a roulette table on the other side to keep him from falling away—and I had a thunderous sidekick. The advantages were the problem. We were there to throw out this guy, not to smash his ribs against a table. I let the moment slip away.*

*When it was all over, after a wrestling match under the roulette table, I shakily pulled myself to my feet thinking, "Damn. That wasn't anything like sparring."*

You worked out your ethical and legal knowledge long ago. You understand criminals and recognize an ambush or a set-up. You couldn't avoid this one, couldn't defuse it. The strike came out of nowhere and you taste blood in your mouth. You might have counter-assaulted. You don't know. You don't remember. For a second you hesitated, not sure what to do, but you broke through that . . .

Once the freeze is broken, the fight is on.

Whatever you have trained in martial arts or defensive tactics now has a chance to work. You have to get here, however. Preferably in one piece.

This could be the longest chapter in the book. By rights, it could run to millions of pages just repeating what everyone else has ever written about fighting and self-defense. But this isn't a technique manual. It is a guidebook to something that is a very strange country for

most people. I am going to introduce you to how the rules change once you step through the looking glass.

There are four elements in every fight: you, the threat or threats, the environment, and luck. What you think you know about those four elements may be very different on the other side of the looking glass.

In this section we will cover some of the elements of using force in actual application that are obvious to insiders and may be new to you. Also, you will find some of the concepts presented in the section on Freezing reintroduced in the context of The Fight. It is unrealistic to discuss any fight scenario without discussing freezing.

### 6.1: you

You have certain expectations about who you are, how you think and what your body can do. If you have trained in martial arts, combat or self-defense, these expectations may run very deep. They have become part of your identity.

Unless you have experienced violence and chaos, these things that you believe are assumptions. They are not facts. Remember the section on Beliefs, Values, Morals, and Ethics? What is coming next might hit you at the belief level. If it does, you may feel it as a personal attack.

When I use “fight” in this section I specifically mean using force to escape from an assault. I do not mean any kind of mutual combat or Monkey Dance stuff. You are under assault. That means that you have been attacked without provoking it. That means that you could not avoid the assault, couldn’t run from the assault and couldn’t talk your way out of the assault. You are under assault, and the only option you have left is to fight your way out.

Feel free to draw distinctions between fighting and combat and assault survival, *if the distinctions help you clarify your ethics*. But do not get hung up on words. When someone is trying to take your life it isn’t about words.

## CHAPTER 7: AFTER

*Rubber bullets are supposed to hurt a lot and bounce off, not tear a hole the size of your thumb into human flesh.*

*The barricaded Threat who had made weapons and armor for himself looked up and said in a completely dead voice, “Well. Guess I’m gonna have to sue you now.”*

*As soon as the operation ended we could see the Captain pacing back and forth, talking on his cell phone. “This is the worst day of my life,” he said.*

*At the after-action debrief, we checked the munitions and the literature that came with the munitions just as we had done before the operation. It clearly stated the round was supposed to be safe at five feet and I had fired at more than fifteen. I double-checked the data on the company’s website where impact data was available at five feet. Within a week the website said that the round was not for use at close range.*

*No dreams at least. Occasionally a thought would drift out of nowhere, “Hey, I shot a guy.” But it didn’t feel like that, exactly . . . I’d undoubtedly blown a hole in a human being with a firearm . . . but it definitely wasn’t an officer-involved shooting.*

*Months after the incident everyone involved was cleared by Internal Affairs except for me. Actually, I was cleared. They just forgot to deliver the letter.*

*Friends drifted away temporarily. It seemed big and harsh at the time but they were just having trouble dealing with an intrusive reality. Training and minor operations could feel like a hobby, like playing a game. Hospitals and gunfire made it a little too real for a time . . .*

Win, lose, or draw, if you have to defend yourself and you don’t die, you will have to deal with what comes afterward. That can be a

lot or a little, depending on you and your preparation, the identity of the threat, the level of force that you used.

There are potential medical repercussions, legal consequences, psychological issues, and sometimes the possibility of retaliation.

Everything you have done in the previous six areas that we discussed will affect how you deal with the aftermath and what aftermath you will be dealing with.

If you decided that training scenarios with respect to the law would pollute your pure and ancient art, you might be looking at manslaughter charges and prison time.

If you never worked out your glitches and froze, you may wake up in the hospital unable to see or speak.

If you never put the time in to study how criminals use knives, you may be in dialysis twice a week until your name finds its way to the top of the kidney donor list.

If you said something stupid, process servers may show up to let you know that you are being sued in civil court for more money than you have ever seen.

### **7.1: medical**

Ideally, your self-defense will never get physical. Avoiding the situation and running or talking your way out – either of these is a higher order of strategy than winning a physical battle. If it goes physical, however, it will not end with all parties unscathed. Someone will be hurt. Maybe everyone. It might be bad.

How bad? You might be dead. Or dying alone in the rain. Or crippled. You might bleed-out slowly in great pain, looking at white chunks on the ground that your blurred vision can't quite resolve into your own teeth.

Too poetic, that last. It is dirty and hurts and you might not win. Even if you do win by some definition, you might die.

There is potential for immediate, medium, and long-term medical effects of violence.

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