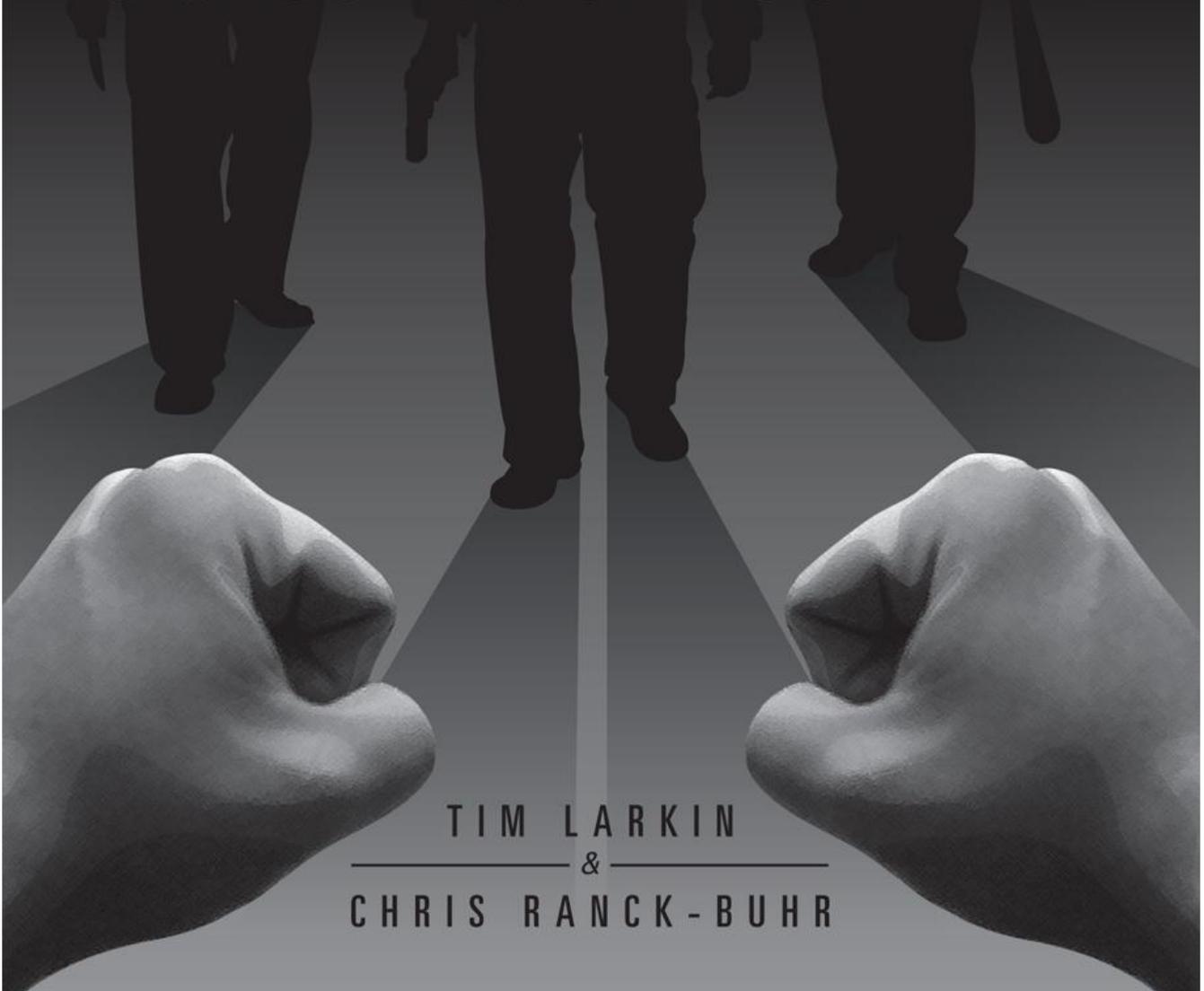


HOW TO

SURVIVE

THE MOST CRITICAL
5 SECONDS OF YOUR LIFE



TIM LARKIN
&
CHRIS RANCK-BUHR

Candid comments from readers of this new book

“Compulsory reading for every adult male on this planet. It is the most eye opening book I have ever read on the subject of self preservation. It’s so simple and clear you are left with no illusions about real violence and what is required to survive.”

Lawrence Jooste, Gauteng, South Africa

“It was really a game changer for me. There have been several times in my life when I felt I truly became enlightened about something and it forever changed my outlook – this book is one of them. I trained in college for Tae Kwon Do and became very effective at hitting targets. Now, I realize how naïve my self confidence has been. I’ve been lucky! I started your book late the night I received it and could barely put it down to go to sleep.”

Ed Hopwood, Warren NJ

“Well-written and compelling, this book will quickly strip away your ingrained, false perceptions about hand-to-hand combat and give you confidence that, with an understanding of what is really needed for victory, you could actually defend yourself against any attacker, regardless of differentials in size, aggressiveness, or skill level.”

Scott Nelson, Houston, TX

“Never before have I come across a book that addresses the use of violence in the open and honest manner this book does. As a former soldier, we were taught the simple fact that when fighting for your life, it’s you or your opponent – anything goes. The authors of this book address this basic idea but delve much deeper into the difference between anti-social and asocial violence, and why “anything goes” may sometimes be necessary. They make it abundantly clear that although violence is very rarely the solution to a confrontation, when it is, it is the only solution. This is not a book about techniques; it’s a book about mindset – the mindset about when and why the tool of violence should be utilized to end a confrontation. It is this mindset that may very well save your life if ever faced with a truly violent encounter.”

Tim Baguley, Las Vegas, NV

“I couldn’t put it down. Read it in one sitting. It’s a brilliant study on the use of violence as a tool and its use in social, asocial, & antisocial settings. If you’re considering the purchase of any self defense tool or training I highly recommend you read this book before doing so. You won’t hear this caliber of truth ANYWHERE else.”

K. T. Martin, Sacramento, CA

“It was the best book I have ever read on Self Protection. It gives a 360 degree understanding of the subject. I possessed the physical side and understanding but I could never fully understand the mental part. Once I finished your book I realized I could get the job done if need be... without hesitation. The way you communicate so clearly on the subject, I can see you have survived violent encounters. A lot of people who teach Self Protection never have -- its just theory.”

Shane Parisi, Mountain View, CA

Foreword

“The art of war is simple enough. Find out where the enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike him as hard as you can and as often as you can, and keep moving on.”

— General U.S. Grant

- There are many different reasons you might start reading this book; but the only reason to finish it is if you want to protect yourself and your family from violence. I want to make sure that if you’re ever in a violent situation, you walk away with your life.
- But to do that, you need to know something about the principles of what you’re doing. It’s educating yourself about the facts of violence. Without it, you’re doing what everyone else is doing— just learning techniques for specific situations. And by the time you finish this book, you’ll understand why that’s a recipe for disaster.
- Combat sports can teach you effective tactics for fighting, and they’re great for getting into shape. Unfortunately, however, if “sport fighting” is your thing, this book will not say a thing to you.

I'm talking about real violence, the kind we all want to avoid. I'm talking about learning to effectively deal with real life-or-death threats. And that's completely different from combat sport fighting.

- This book addresses the place where social communication ends and real violence begins—places where you have no control over your opponent. In other words, this book addresses those situations we all try to pretend don't exist.
- It doesn't make you a coward to acknowledge that you have no idea what to do in a life-or-death violent situation. In fact, it means that you have the courage to accept that there are people out there who will act in unpredictable and irrational ways to get what they want—a fact many people blithely ignore.
- Asia Tours... Tim conducted seminars. Hotels were barricaded, cars searched for bombs. Guests searched at hotels. His message was welcomed, "violence is the only way to combat violence". Why? Because the people living in these cities live every day with the threat of violence entering their lives in a real and dramatic fashion. These are clients who take a plan for asocial violence seriously.
- There are two types of people who won't find much to help them in this book: those who think violence is never justifiable, and those who think violence is the answer to everything. I don't recommend it as a solution to any but the most desperate of conflicts. In other words, violence is what you use when every other choice has been taken from you.
- Can you act in a violent situations that requires you 'kill or be killed'.

- “Do I really know how to use the tool of violence?” You simply can’t wait to ask it until asocial violence is imminent. By then the stakes are far too high.
- There’s nothing artistic about violence; it’s an instinctive survival tool, like swimming. Once you’ve learned the basics, you’re set for life. You don’t walk around every day wondering what you’d do if you fell into a swimming pool: “Let’s see, first I’d tread water, then I’d follow that up with a couple of neat butterfly strokes...” You just know that if you fall in, you’ll swim to the edge and get out of the water.
- **Serious violent conflict rarely lasts more than five seconds. It doesn’t take much to put even the biggest man down**, and five seconds is more than enough time to cause serious injury.
- So why is violence so important to survival? Because violence works on everyone. Superior physical ability, knowledge, experience, and iron will are all trumped by the thumb in the eye. There is nothing anyone can do to make themselves immune to the laws of the physical universe.
- Surviving a vicious, unprovoked encounter is not Enough even if you fought back and were critically injured! What was lacking in the training: mind-set and will.
- A lot of people will lecture you on mind-set and come up with numerous drills to ‘instill the will to kill.’ But neither mind-set nor will is what lacked in any of the survivors’ training. The problem, then, isn’t with the survivors: it’s with their training.

- Making the Critical Choices: Do you want to just survive a violent encounter, or do you want to win? Because in the moment when someone comes at you, you won't have time to consider mind-set, will, or any of the other things self-defense instructors commonly go on about. You'll only have time to act.

The Most Common Mistakes People Make When Picking a Self-Defense System

- 1. Picking a system that takes years to be usable.***
- 2. Picking a system that requires constant practice.***
- 3. Picking a system based on 'cool' techniques.***
- 4. Picking a system based on competition.***
- 5. Picking a system that doesn't take into account all body types.***
- 6. Picking a system based on a hit movie.***
- 7. Picking a system that only works when everyone agrees to play by certain rules.***
- 8. Picking a system that doesn't look like the violence you see on the news.***
- 9. Picking a system that doesn't account for multiple attackers.***
- 10. Picking a system that doesn't account for common, modern weaponry (knives, sticks, guns).***

Inside the Criminal Mind

- The predators in our society look at life a little ... differently. The main characteristic of a sociopath? A complete lack of awareness about morality and social behavior. That means that a criminal not only won't abide by rules of fair play, there's a good chance he won't even give them a passing thought. He has one thing in mind, and the ends justify the means—even if the “ends” are nothing more than the ten bucks in your wallet or soothing his savage pride.
- Until you can approach violence the same way, he will always have an edge. You do understand about morality and fair play. But in the moment your life is in danger, you have to shut that awareness off and go after him—any way possible.

Isn't It Dangerous to Put This Information Out There?

- One of the most common objections I hear from people is, “What if criminals get a hold of this information? Well, this would be an excellent objection except for one thing: They already know how to use violence to get what they want!
- Predators have INTENT. If you have years of ‘training’ and no intent, you lose every time.
- The key here is that the criminal is not operating from the same set of social beliefs you are. You are a well-adjusted, socialized person. Deep down, you believe that there's a way to resolve your problems without anyone getting hurt. A criminal doesn't.

Why are the Thugs Still Winning?

- The reason thugs are still using violence, and still winning, certainly isn't that they're smarter. The reason muggers win is that they have power. They understand how to use violence in order to cause the effect they want to achieve.
- Am I advocating that same approach? No. Learning how to use violence doesn't turn you into a criminal; it changes the balance of power. When you are proficient in the use of this simple system, instead of a threat from a violent stranger causing you to suffer pain, loss or even death, you will be able to cause serious injury to the man, resulting in his complete incapacitation.

Antisocial vs. Asocial Violence

- If you listen to people recount their experiences with violence, you'll quickly find that they fall into two distinct groups: those who have survived a true life-or-death confrontation and those who participated in violence as a kind of sport or game.
- **Antisocial Violence:** The violence that comes from social posturing is avoidable; it is often loud, dramatic, and instantly recognizable. You get to see it coming. And that means you can dodge it if you choose to and is also eminently survivable.
- **Asocial Violence** cannot be handled with social tools and is far less survivable. Negotiating with a serial killer is like arguing with a bullet: if it's coming your way, words are not going to deflect it. If someone has decided to stab you to death, capitulation only makes their work easier.

- How do you know whether you're dealing with antisocial or asocial violence? One involves posturing and ego, the other is all about survival.
- Antisocial Violence is avoidable, survivable and can be solved using social skills
- Asocial Violence: Lethal, unaffected by social skills and requires decisive action.

When To Engage

- Some people think just because I train the use of violence as the ultimate survival tool that it means I advocate responding to any situation with violence. Nothing could be further from the truth.
- Violence isn't always the answer, but when it is the answer, it's the only answer.
- Why? Because I teach how to do one thing and one thing only: how to completely shut off another human being. It's what I mean when I say "using violence as a survival tool." It's a limited tool, for sure, but one that's necessary (and priceless) if your life is on the line.
- When To Act... It's the last resort, when communication isn't an option and it's injure or be injured. Violence is what you use the moment you feel threatened.
- The Reality of Violence... That's what makes it so important to know when to use your training—that's why you should only use it as an absolute last resort. You aren't trying to disable your opponent. You're using violence as a tool to cause injury.

To survive a violent situation, you need to go against the rules.

- Believe it or not, most of the 31 Ultimate Fighting Championship Fouls are excellent guides as to what you should do in a violent situation.

Of the 31 fouls, these are the ones that stand out as a blueprint for what to do in violent conflict:

1. Eye gouging of any kind - Hair pulling - Groin attacks of any kind - Putting a finger into any orifice or into any cut or laceration on an opponent - Small joint manipulation, i.e. breaking fingers - Striking to the spine or the back of the head, This is going straight for the central nervous system - Striking downward using the point of the - Clawing, pinching or twisting the flesh - Grabbing the clavicle - Kicking the head of a grounded opponent - Kneeing the head of a grounded opponent....

All The Reasons Why You Can't

- No sane person wants to be involved in violence. The fact that you don't go looking for it is a testament to your civility, sociability, and sanity. Everybody's willing to cop to this.
- But there's something more than basic humanity underlying your aversion to violence. civility and fear. All of those excuses come down to the same thing: you are afraid of violence.
- You come up with all the reasons you can't engage in violence, but what they really are is a smokescreen designed to protect your ego from becoming aware that you're scared.

- Physical Excuses: I Don't Have Enough Training, I'm Not Coordinated! I'm Physically Not Able!
- Mental Excuses: I'm Not Cut Out For It! I Could Never Do That To Someone! Fear and Courage.
- The criminal sociopath knows only one thing about violence—that the person doing it wins. And even that statement is too wordy. When asked to articulate what works in violence they'll tend to speak to injuries—you know, things like “What works? Knee ‘em in the groin/stab ‘em in the neck/shoot ‘em in the head.”
- TFT is not the next step in the evolution of modern martial arts; it's a return to the root of the whole matter. ‘Back to basics,’ I'm not trying to teach you anything new. In fact, I'm trying to work all of those newfangled (if you can count something society came up with a couple thousand years ago as “new”) rules and ideas out of your head and get you back to what your basic instincts already know: the primary, raw rush of violence in its coldest, most brutal form.

Martial Arts: An Empty Bottle of Violence With a Child-Proof Cap

- Long ago, Asian societies used martial arts to train warriors. The warrior elite vanished and the martial arts began to open to anyone who displayed an interest. As the schools got further and further from that original purpose—training for war—the teaching was more and more diluted with philosophy and religion.
- Martial arts staked a claim to the foggy gray expanse of the antisocial realm—how to behave when dealing with social belligerents. Or, more plainly, how to be the best damn bar-fighter to ever sit a stool.

- For the most part, it works. Martial arts has taken ownership of the antisocial realm. And if the situation truly is antisocial in nature, blocking, punches, kicks, joint locking, etc., work well. But when we move from antisocial behavior to asocial behavior ... well, that's where martial arts start to lose their grip.

How Much Philosophy In A Bullet?

- People like to get philosophical about hand-to-hand combat. Dueling, martial arts, swordplay—all traditions deeply woven with aphorisms, exhortations, rules and other philosophical constructs. Why, then, does no one wax poetic for handguns?
- Because there's no philosophy in a bullet. There's only shooting people dead. Romance doesn't stick to stone-cold physics.
- Guns don't need philosophy because shooting someone to death is violence. Why, then, do people cling to it when seeking the same result by other means? Do you really need philosophy to break someone's leg and stomp on their throat?
- The answer is no, you don't. You don't need it in the moment of violence, you don't need it to train for violence, and, in fact, it can retard your ability to learn and execute violence. The answer to the question, "How much philosophy in a bullet?" is *none*. And that's an incredibly important distinction when you start thinking about real-life violence.
- Philosophy does not exist in the moment of violence. No more than it exists in bullets. Philosophy is for getting a handle on what your skill-set means to you: when and how to use it. But the skill-set is still the skill-set. Like a gun, how you think about it doesn't

change the reality of it. The only thing we can show you how to do is hurt people.

- Sane, well-socialized people see violence as insane. When we hear about violence, we're usually talking about terrorists, criminals, sociopaths—in other words, horrible events perpetrated by horrible, mentally unstable people. By saying you are willing to use violence as a survival tool you are also saying (in the layperson's mind) that you are a card-carrying member of one of the groups above.
- For a sane, well-socialized person who happens to be trained in the use of violence as a survival tool, you are no more likely to use it inappropriately, in monstrous fashion, than you were before you were trained. In fact, you're probably less likely to seek out 'opportunities' to use it now that you know, without ambiguity, what's at stake.
- People who really understand violence, rather than just viewing it from the fringes, know that it's no more or less a tool than the hammer. Violence isn't right or wrong—where and how you choose to use it is.
- The simple fact is that there is no reason to it. You're not injuring someone because of any extraneous reason—you're injuring them to shut them off. If you're in there to 'fight for your life' and he's just in it to kill you, you're probably going to get killed. The person with the clearest, cleanest and smallest achievable goal will tend to prevail. This is what I mean when I say 'intent,' which is another way of expressing monomaniacal focus. The focusing of your entire will and effort onto one small thing at a time—destroying a single square inch of him.

- This one small thing is so monumentally important I worked it into the title of what we do—Target-Focus Training
- Beating a man to death with a tire iron probably isn't allowed in self-defense, but—funny how the universe works—it may be just the thing that has to happen in order for you to survive. And that's where the term breaks down. We can't call violence self-defense because when most people hear that term they assume you've been attacked before you did any violence of your own—and then that violence is designed not to injure, but to temporarily incapacitate your attacker long enough for you to get away. That's great, isn't it? Except what happens if there are two attackers, or three, or nine, and your attempt at incapacitation goes wrong?
- When given the choice between self-defense and survival, let's all pick survival, shall we?
- Violence starts where choice ends.
- For social and antisocial interactions, this means you get to choose whether or not to be involved, and how deep your involvement will go. On the asocial side, you won't have that choice.
- Make the choice you can live with.
- Be man enough to be called a coward. I've walked away from situations where I was legally and morally in the right and no one present would have objected if I'd laid the jerk out. I did this gladly because I was handed the luxury of choice
- Social standing is a manufactured illusion; losing it is nothing compared to the loss of an eye, or freedom, or your life. If your

friends are truly your friends they will remain so; everyone else can go hang.

- Asocial means you have no choice; or rather, the choice is something decidedly unchoosy like 'kill or be killed.' Because it's hallmarked by a lack of communication, asocial comes on without warning, without preamble, like lightning out of a clear blue sky.
- The mechanics of the asocial, violent, interaction can be summed up in a single word: injury. Injury removes choice from the equation. He has no say in whether or not his eye comes out of his skull or if his throat crushes. He has no say in how his body will move next. The physical laws of the universe, and how well you've employed them, are the only arbiters here. If you did it right, everything breaks.

PART TWO:

THE PRINCIPLES OF VIOLENCE

Chapter One

Fight or Flight

“No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.” —Edmund Burke

People often ask me about the “fight-or-flight” response when it comes to responding to a violent, imminent threat of physical attack. When I tell them that there are actually four responses to this type of threat I usually get a confused looked.

As a lifelong student of violence I constantly research sources from the academic and literary world that deal with this very controversial subject. Some of my research has led me to see fight-or-flight as a fallacy. Fight-or-flight is a viable response, but only when the threat occurs between two different species. If you are walking through the woods and a Kodiak bear starts to rush you, you would quickly either fight if you had a weapon or run (flight) if you did not. Yes, you can use the other two responses but for the most part the meeting of two different species results in fight-or-flight.

So what are the other two responses? What sets a violent human-to-human encounter apart from a violent interspecies encounter?

The Four Horsemen of Response

When two members of the same species meet with one side posing an imminent threat, the other can respond as follows:

- 1. Fight - The challenge is assessed and the target decides to fight back.***

- 2. Flight - The challenge is assessed and the target decides to evade the threat, or run.**
- 3. Posture - The challenge is assessed and the target decides to feign or posture aggressively with the ultimate goal being to avoid having to fight or flee.**
- 4. Capitulate - The challenge is assessed and the target decides to freeze, lie down, and hope that by submitting s/he will appease the aggressor.**

Most are familiar with the first two options, but let's explore the latter two. How many times have you seen a person issue a threat and move towards someone aggressively, only for the person to respond by yelling back and striking an aggressive, threatening stance? This is very common in social violent situations where there is much posturing for dominance. Often the real objective is to get one side to back down, with verbal threats and aggressive postures used to convey dominance. That is a classic example of the Posture Response.

This is a dangerous gambit for both participants because it delays the fight option and often wastes valuable opportunities to end the situation with the Fight Response. The next response to explore is the all too common Capitulate Response. This is where an aggressive threat is met with complete and immediate submission to the threatening party. This response is very dangerous when used to avoid getting harmed because it literally puts you at the mercy of an aggressor. You rely on their moral code to respect your capitulation and have that be a sufficient way to satiate their desire to aggressively dominate you. Very risky.

However, when used properly the Capitulate Response can be an extremely effective manner to get your aggressor into a vulnerable

position to execute the Fight Response. Basically, you're getting the aggressor to expose vulnerable areas of his body to attack by your feigned capitulation.

Why is this important? There are three reasons. First of all, understanding how to use capitulation as a fighting tactic can be extremely useful. But more importantly, you can't enter a violent situation expecting your fear to drive you away. Moreover, it's essential that you not rely on "fight or flight" as an excuse to avoid learning what you need to know in order to defend yourself. Fear is a powerful human emotion, but with practice it won't control you. That's what will really matter in a violent situation.

Acting in the Face of Fear

For too long fallacies have held sway while common criminals exploit fear and ignorance; the simple facts that govern the effective use of violence as a survival tool are well known to them, and denied to the law-abiding, successfully socialized citizen. Know, then, these simple facts and let your power increase:

1. You can take decisive action in the face of fear.

- The first reaction in any violent situation is that most primal emotion of fear. When a man steps out of the shadows holding a knife, or an intruder pulls open the curtain in your shower, your adrenaline immediately starts pumping and your heart beats faster. These are natural reactions, which cannot be avoided—nor should they be. This is the fight-or-flight survival instinct that allows you to focus completely on destroying your enemy or to get the hell out of there.

- Many people fear that they will be overwhelmed by fight-or-flight and behave irrationally or ‘freeze up’ and be incapable of acting.
- When you know how to ‘swim in the pool of violence,’ however, your reaction will be slightly different. You will still experience the biological fact of fear, but that will be tempered with the knowledge of what to do next. Instead of being shocked and frightened into submission, believing you have no choice but to submit, you’ll do what you’ve trained to do. If that training was to wait and see, or to get ready, you may have already lost. If, however, that training is for violence—for causing injury—then that’s what you’ll do.

2. Violence is available to everyone.

- You are a predator born, with stereovision for hunting prey and teeth for ripping and tearing flesh. You are a member of the only species that makes an art of war. The average human body is an awesome engine of destruction, driven by the most dangerous thing in the known universe: a human brain. You are a survival engine, the descendant of winners; your ancestors didn’t get you here by laying down and giving up. They made the losers do that. Violence is your birthright.

3. The one doing the violence tends to prevail.

- Violence is one person injuring another person. This is the definition of the effective use of violence. While all violent acts have injury in common, they also share another trait: at the end, the person walking away is typically the one who did it.

4. The one getting the violence done to them tends to get injured.

SURVIVING THE MOST CRITICAL 5 SECOND OF YOUR LIFE
MORE INFORMATION

- Defense wounds are found on corpses. 'Nuff said.

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Chapter Two

Violence is About Injury

“It is by no means self-evident that human beings are most real when most violently excited; violent physical passions do not in themselves differentiate men from each other, but rather tend to reduce them to the same state.” —Thomas Elliot

All acts of violence come down to the same thing: injury. By now, you should be ready for that message. Until you accept this basic fact, you’ll never be able to defend yourself effectively.

In violent conflict, always assume that your life is on the line. While you can predict how he will react physically to being struck, how he reacts psychologically will vary from individual to individual. Some people may panic and run; others may choose to kill you for daring to defy them. This means you have to be merciless, vicious and methodical. You’re going to kick him when he’s down. You’re going to break his arm, then use it to throw him. And no matter what, you’re not going to stop until you’re done.

After you land your first blow, assume that he is prepared to go all the way. You might be wrong, but it’s better to assume the other man is in it to kill you than to assume he’s not and leave your family to mourn your mistake.

This may make violence seem kind of useless in your everyday life. If you’re living right, it is. Violence is a very narrow tool; it’s only good for one thing, and that’s shutting off a human being. It’s not really good for anything else. If you’re going to pull it out and use it, then employ it to full effect. ‘Going easy’ on someone who wants to

murder you or otherwise screwing around in violent conflict can get you killed.

Every technique and every target must be exploited, even those you might normally regard as 'out of bounds.' If, for example, you consider eye gouging to be beyond the pale and your only target is his eye, your hesitation could cost you your life. (Employing violence to it's fullest has an added benefit. Remember that people flock to a social fight and flee from actual violence. When you get in and break him with brutal efficiency, stomping him when he's down and whatnot, anyone not involved, like innocent bystanders, will take off running. Anyone you need to pay attention to will make themselves known by closing distance and coming after you. Put one man down and you'll find out who his accomplices are.)

The Injury Manifesto

There is a single key feature that is present in every successful use of violence: injury. It defines the act and brands the participants, the vanquished more so than the victor. Owning injury, the arbiter of success in violence, gives you a distinct advantage over those whose understanding is dim and instinctual. Know, then, these simple facts and let your power increase.

Violence Begins and Ends with Injury

Violence is purely about injury. Injury is the only thing that means anything in violence. It's the goal and end-result. It defines the violent act and finishes it. Violence literally starts and ends with injury.

Effective violence is hallmarked by serial injury: injuring him, taking advantage of that injury to do it again, and again to put him

down, with ever-increasing severity (stomping on a man who's down is easy for you and devastating for him).

Injury Changes Everything in Your Favor

In violent conflict, injury is the portal through which you pass into the rest of your life. As things go bad—he pulls the gun—your options narrow to a single question: 'action or passivity?' In a way, you are at the end of your life: if he shoots you dead, it's over. The thumb in the eye, however, is the key turning in the lock on the rest of your days. Injury gives you options; a universe of choices spreads before you. Injury is opportunity.

Injury is Objective

Disinterested third parties can all agree that an injury has occurred. A broken leg is obvious from across the street.

Injury Decrements Body Function

It will alter the normal functioning of his body in a negative way. A broken leg just plain doesn't work.

Injury is Permanent

That is, it's permanent across the course of the encounter. It will require medical attention in order to heal. A broken leg does not get better on its own. He can't 'walk it off.'

Injury is Physics and Physiology Meeting Badly

Excessive force plus vulnerable anatomical target equals injury. There is nothing in this equation about pain or the psychological

state of the recipient. Neither of these matters. Different people have different pain thresholds; for some, a torn fingernail drops them into dramatic paroxysms of agony, for others a torn off limb goes unnoticed. But note that in the case of the missing limb, that person may be functioning just fine psychologically, but they're not going to be grabbing and picking anything up anytime soon.

Injury is Independent of Technique

All we need is force and a target. You could trip and fall, all by yourself, and get an injury. Note the conspicuous lack of a hopped-up emotional state, a technique, or even another person. This fact is why technique without injury is a parlor trick, and injury, regardless of how it occurred (with technique or without, 'accidentally,' etc.) will always be more effective.

The most artless injury will always be superior to the fanciest technique. Rock to the head, anyone?

All Injuries are Equal

This is another way of saying all targets are equal. The best target? The one you just wrecked. All injuries are equal when you know what to do next—how to take advantage of the fact you injured him.

Injured People Move in Predictable Ways

The body responds to injury through the somatic reflex arc (spinal reflexes). These are pre-programmed, specific movements, triggered by a large stimulus (like ruptured testicles). The threshold switch that decides whether or not to reflex is in the spinal cord, not the brain. There is no conscious choice involved. Just physics and

physiology. These reflexes are injury-specific, meaning that a boot to the groin elicits the same basic response in all humans.

This means you can predict how he'll move when you injure him—and be there to take full advantage of it.

Injured People are Helpless

For the short moment of time they are in the throes of their spinal reflex, they cannot stop you from injuring them again. And again. And again...

Injury Begets Injury

An adjunct to the helplessness above, is beating an injured man is easy work. It's also shorthand for 'a broken knee can cause head trauma.'

Injury Trumps Speed, Strength and Resolve

Is he stronger than you? Not with a crushed throat he isn't. Is he faster than you? Not with a broken knee. Is he far more dangerous than you, with scads of training, experience, a gun, and an indomitable iron will? Funny how a broken neck takes all the scary out of him.

Violence Begins and Ends with Injury

Anything you do in a violent situation that does not cause an injury is worthless to you. Every time you touch him, you need to break something inside him. Every time you touch him, you need to make a part of him cease normal function. Injure him, drop him, and

keep on injuring him until he's nonfunctional. You're not done until you're sure he's done.

The answer to every question in violent conflict is: injury, now.

What is Injury Really?

It's the only thing that means anything in violence, or at least that's what we're always saying. But what is injury after all? And is there a simpler way to think of it, relate to it and thereby better relate it to others? We'll start with the dictionary definition of the word—The Shorter OED, 5th Ed. says:

'Hurt or loss caused to or sustained by a person or thing; harm, detriment; damage, esp. to the body; an instance of this.'

This is a good start, but it's not quite as serious and stunning as I would like. While 'harm, detriment, damage' are all good synonyms for what we're up to, it's still a little bit vague on the overall effect we're gunning for. There are plenty of people out there, for example, who believe that they can sustain 'damage' and keep going. And, of course, they're right. We all can. But no one—NO ONE—can sustain injury the way we mean it and keep going. Period. So even the dictionary leaves something to be desired, a 'tightening up' of ambiguities.

These ambiguities flourish and grow into their own chaos-gardens in the minds of the average person. I dare say no two people's definition of 'injury' is going to be exactly the same. For some it is tearing a fingernail or stubbing a toe; others won't declare it until blood is spilled. The difference between the definitions of a lucky person unused to pain and a trauma surgeon is going to be vast. It's a lot like saying the word 'dog' out loud to a roomful of

people: everyone will see a dog in their mind's eye, but I dare say no two will be alike.

And still, for me, even with torn skin and spilled blood, we are not at a workable definition.

The TFT 'textbook' definition reads thusly:

'The disruption of human tissue in a specific anatomical feature such that normal function is obviously impaired (and can only be regained through medical intervention), eliciting an involuntary spinal reflex reaction.'

This is great for two reasons: it reinforces the universality of violence (as this effect can be achieved with any judicious application of kinetic energy, from fist to stick to bullet) as well as being specific enough to rule out hangnails and messy, but ultimately ineffective, minor lacerations.

The only problem is that for all its precise 'lawyer-ese' it's quite a mouth—and mind—ful. It's not easy to remember, it doesn't roll of the tongue, and you're just plain not going to win over any converts with it. It's thorough but clunky. By seeking to be clear it loses its clarity and becomes next to worthless to you. Anything that gets in the way of your understanding needs to be retooled—like carving steps into an insurmountable cliff face.

This gets us to my current favorite way to think of injury:

Break things inside of people so they don't work anymore.

This is the way the sociopath approaches the problem, the way the Saturday night slugger thinks when he wades in to deliver a beat-down. It is the simplest way to think of injury. It paints a picture that's easy to parse; even the ambiguities work in your favor. Does

'they' refer to the people or the things inside them? Hey, either one or both: I'm good with all of it.

This is a definition of injury you can take as your personal violence mission statement. It's all you want to do; it's the only measuring stick that divides success from failure. Easy to think, easy to say, easy to do.

Chapter Three

Why You Must Learn to Kill

“It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees!”
—Emiliano Zapata

If you were uncomfortable with the last chapter, you’re not going to like this one very much. It contains some things that are hard to take but have to be said. I won’t sugarcoat it: you must go into every violent situation with the intent to cause serious injury and, if necessary, death. The time has come to point out a harsh truth: the biggest fear most people have is realizing they actually can be every bit as brutal—and effective—as the most heinous thug walking the street.

The obvious difference between a slap-fight and a murder is one of intent. You have to have that intent. You have to go in willing to injure and even kill the person who’s trying to kill you. But unless you have scary psychic powers or you really can throw daggers with your eyes, intent, in and of itself, is not what’s going to get the job done. So what is intent really doing? What lies between intent and injury?

Body weight in motion

When one has intent, he applies himself totally to causing injury. A total dedication of will tends to manifest itself as a total dedication of body mass. There is no hesitation, no getting ready, no waiting to see what will happen next. There is only rapid, brutal motion. The knife punched through ribs, again and again.

But I Don’t Want to Become the Bad Guy!

When confronted with the realities of violence, sane, well-socialized people recoil. Violence is the void oblivion in which nothing

save injury exists; it is a hellish monospace where things like communication, love, and caring are not just absent, they never were.

It is a space defined by the absence of all we hold dear.

It is Nietzsche's Abyss.

It is natural, and indeed 'good' in a social sense, for the mind to recoil from such a thing. But then a secondary reaction occurs; the mind recoils and then seeks, desperately, to fill in the gap between itself and that awful space. To build a wall of easy ideas in order to maintain a sanity-safe distance. You can hit a guy in the head with a rock, or you can do a back flip and then hit him in the head with a rock. Either way, he gets a head trauma. Remember, Occam's Razor says: "Forget fancy—the tire-iron to the head trumps all."

This Guy's a Killer

During my time in Las Vegas, I met a number of Mixed Martial Arts competitors from various "No-Holds-Barred" events like the UFC and Pride. For the most part, these fighters were amazing physical specimens and tremendous competitors. Their skills in the arena were impressive and fun to watch. And surprisingly, the fighters I met were all very good-natured guys.

At one event I was introduced by an MMA friend of mine to one of the top competitors, and this fighter asked, through his interpreter, if I was an MMA competitor.

Before I could answer, my friend (who had a couple of beers in him since he was not on this fight card) smiled and said, "Nah, Tim's a 'killer.' He likes to teach you how to stab people to death or beat their brains out with a tire iron. You'd like his course!"

(It's always great to have friends give this kind of PR "help").

Then the fighter asked if I taught how to “defend” against knives and guns. Again, my friend “answered” for me saying “Oh yeah, and more than one attacker, too. I mean, its prison riot training!”

(Again, very “helpful” stuff. By now, I’m sure the interpreter’s really wondering about me!)

Then the fighter told of his cousin being assaulted and stabbed by two men in his home country. He said he felt bad because he truly couldn’t give his cousin (who survived the attack) any tips on how to “fight” people with knives.

“Quite frankly, for all my skills in the ring, I doubt I could have done much better. I know how to kick someone’s ass on the mat but on the street, it’s so different.”

We exchanged info and he got the dates when I’d be training in Europe that year. Then he was off to prepare for his match (which he easily won that night, absolutely wrecking his opponent).

But his words got me thinking about the difference between a fighter and a “killer:”

- The fighter competes to better his opponent; the “killer” focuses solely on ending the other person.
- The fighter seeks to score points or force a submission; the “killer” seeks to shut down the other’s brain.
- The fighter is good at kicking someone’s ass; the “killer” knows how to irreparably injure vulnerable areas of the human body, permanently wrecking the functioning of that area.
- The fighter relies on superior strength, speed and skill; the “killer” gets his results using stealth and the action of violence.

- The fighter's skills work best in the controlled environment of the ring; the "killer" is effective anywhere violence is necessary.
- The fighter's skills deteriorate once his competitive years end; the "killer" retains his skills often for a lifetime.

I could go on, but you see the pattern.

Here's the point: you must always ask yourself, "How will I apply my martial arts or combat sport training?" 'Cause if it's in the random chaos found in the world of real violence then you hamstring yourself with rules and skills that work mainly for the young, fast, and strong.

And we're not even addressing whether the other guy plays by your rules (wanna guess how much time most murderers spend worrying about your competitive standards?).

That's why I challenge you to explore the world of the "killer" (even if you're pursuing a competitive MMA career). Despite your likely repulsion at the term, these skills are easily learned and can last your entire lifetime. But most important is the by-product of learning this—you get to live a far more relaxed and peaceful life.

Strange, I realize, but true.

Finally, understand the big difference between a "killer" and a murderer.

Face-to-face with the later, it's the skill set of the "killer" that not only prepares you to survive. It can actually give you the advantage.

Lethal Force

No cop wants to draw his gun, but if some psychopath comes running at him with a knife, you better believe he'll do it. When it's your life or his, you have to be ready to make a choice. Is your moral

stance against killing strong enough that you'll let some sociopathic murderer end your life for no reason? If the answer is no, you'd better be prepared to use lethal force when you have to.

You need the skills to kill, and if it's clear that it's life or death, then killing is in order. The severity of the situation can be surmised in many different ways (hostage situation in which other hostages are being killed right in front of you, modern airline hijack, firearms, and associated threats of imminent death, etc.), but ultimately it's going to come down to a personal call on your part. And your best guideline is to trust your gut.

If you don't think it's a particularly bad situation you're probably picking up unconscious cues from body language, facial expressions, etc., that are telling you he's not serious. If you feel serious apprehension in your gut—that queasy, 'oh my God' feeling—you're picking up those same unconscious cues but this time they're lethal. He means to kill you, and primitive parts of your brain are trying to let you know by making you feel sick.

For all of that, ultimately it's your call. We can't build every possible scenario you could ever be involved in, and we can't tell you how you should think and feel. It's all up to you; you have to live or die with your decision.

Once you do go in, go in full-bore, to tear his head off. How far you take it will depend on what you need to feel done, safe, and able to turn your back on him and walk away. Every use of violence must start with serious injury, and then proceed to rendering him nonfunctional.

This can mean one or more of three things:

- Incapacitation
- Unconsciousness

- Death

Incapacitation is everything from a single shot to the ribs that drops him and makes him go fetal and quit to a broken knee and two broken collar bones that make it impossible for him to get up. At what point you've reached incapacitation and can stop is your personal judgment call. Just make damn sure you feel comfortable turning your back on him.

Unconsciousness is just that: he's out cold and down for the count. It's obvious when you've achieved it. He'll be down, motionless, possibly with his jaw slack and eyes rolled back in his head. Once you've got this it's safe to say you're done.

Killing the man by stomping on his throat, breaking his neck, or stabbing him in the heart is reserved for the most extreme circumstances only. Situations where you realize or believe that you or others will be killed if you do not act. You need to think a great deal about how you feel about him and make your choices ahead of time: you don't want to get caught hesitating when what's required is decisive action.

Chapter Four

Overcoming the Stigma of Violence

*“Violence isn’t always evil. What’s evil is the infatuation with violence.”
—Jim Morrison*

Hopefully, by now you’ve come to realize that I don’t endorse using violence for the reasons a criminal sociopath would. I don’t think violence should ever be used to get what you want, and I think in all situations, it’s a last resort.

But when it becomes your only option, you have to be ready to act.

People are afraid of violence. They’re afraid of experiencing it, and they’re afraid of being the one to do it. If you go into a room full of people and start talking about gouging eyes, they’re going to freak out. We live in a society that’s safe on the surface, and no one wants to think about what lies underneath.

But something does lie underneath, and if you ever encounter it, there’s only one way to survive it. And in order to do that, you have to accept violence as a tool—not good or evil in and of itself, but a tool that can be used for good or evil depending on who gets a hold of it and how they’re swinging it.

Violence is a tool, and as such it takes on the moral color of the user—but only after the fact. Bludgeoning someone to death with a claw hammer can be murder in one instance and justified homicide in another—but in both cases someone bludgeoned someone else to death with a claw hammer. Knowing how doesn’t make you a bad person. Using that knowledge to bully and intimidate others is a far cry from using that knowledge to protect yourself and your family.

How Much is “Too Much?”

Most people are willing to accept that violence can come in handy. If you say to someone, “I know self-defense,” you’ll get a very different reaction than if you say to someone, “I know how to kill people.” But the first is an empty, generic term, and in a real life-or-death encounter with asocial violence, it’s not going to see you through.

Now, I’m not saying you should go around bragging about knowing how to kill people—that’s just stupid. But you should know how to do it, and you shouldn’t be ashamed of the fact.

Society would really rather that you meet force with like force; if he just wants to push, you’re allowed to push; if he just wants to slap and choke, you’re allowed to slap and choke ... and if he wants to kill you, you’re allowed to match him in kind. That’s great—as long as he doesn’t get the ‘kill’ idea before you do. Of course, if he just wants to slap and you break him, people will call that ‘excessive.’ I find it hilarious. It shows a basic misunderstanding of violence itself. There’s no such thing as ‘excessive force’ when it comes to hurting people—violence is the art excess.

There are lots of examples floating around of precision knockout blows—restrained force that results in a successful attack or defense. But in pretty much every such video circulating on the Internet, we see the results of a perfect storm: there was just enough penetration and rotation through a target to get the desired outcome. The conditions were sufficient to get an injury, but almost always hardly optimal. The perfect storm usually consists of luck-factors like the injured man moving into the strike (increasing penetration & body weight effects) and/or being caught off-guard and flat-footed.

But what about the times when he's moving away from the strike? Or 'rolls' with the punch? In that case sufficiency fails to result in an injury, and now you can see how this is sub-optimal. Sometimes you get a knockout and sometimes you don't. That's fine and dandy in the ring, but you can't bet your life on such things.

Your job is to figure out what is sufficient to cause the injury, and then optimize it to ensure that you get exactly that set of circumstances every single time.

Penetration and rotation through a target, anyone?

Maximizing penetration means that even if he's moving away or 'rolling' with it he's going to get overrun: you're going to get a good three feet of follow-through through the target—with your entire mass behind it.

Maximizing rotation is you taking full advantage of that three feet you bought yourself with the penetration: you will make the target bounce off of the tool, rather than the other way around.

So with so-called sufficient force, if we get lucky, we catch him with just the right amount of 'snap' at the end of that punch to give him a concussion: so out of ten wild swings we get the one that connects and gets the job done. Again, if we're lucky.

With optimal, we get the knockout (or whatever injury we're gunning for) every single time, and only luck (and unusual circumstance, like you screwing something up) is going to prevent it.

Look at it this way: blowing on some embers you made by rubbing two sticks together in a heap of dried pine needles is sufficient to start a fire, but, as anyone who's earned that merit badge can attest, 'sufficient' doesn't mean 'every time.' It can take all day.

We can optimize our situation by firing a flare gun into a ruptured gasoline tanker truck. Now that's gonna make a big BOOM every single time.

Overdoing it? Yes, and that's the point.

Injury in violence is, by definition, the result of excess. The body only breaks when it is subjected to forces that exceed the elasticity of human tissue.

And while there are those who will tell you that sufficient is 'just enough', that's only good in theory. While it could work every time, in practice it often doesn't. Optimal means it will work every time.

Sufficient hopes for a perfect storm. Optimal recreates that storm, every time, through excess, brutality, and methodical thoroughness.

Call it precision brutality, if you will.

Chapter Five

Violence as the Ultimate Survival Tool

*“One should always play fairly when one has the winning cards”
—Oscar Wilde*

The reason it’s so important to view violence as a tool for survival came to me during a conversation with a friend of mine named Chuck, a former NFL Defensive Lineman. Chuck had a reputation in college as a brawler and never missed an opportunity to use his fists to answer any disagreement.

Chuck has definitely mellowed over the years and is much easier to be around these days—but old habits die hard. The conversation drifted towards my training and he was giving me some feedback from a mutual friend who attended a TFT seminar.

Our friend Tony loved the training and, since he travels to some of the more dangerous parts of the world, has unfortunately had to use his training. The results were that he survived two unavoidable criminal attacks using principles and methods from the TFT Seminar.

Tony faced multiple attackers in one incident and a knife in the other. Chuck was impressed that Tony survived both incidents unscathed and then commented that the three attackers were all larger than Tony, as was the knife wielder, and that in a “fair fight” Tony would have lost.

He pointed out that if Tony hadn’t used all that “unfair stuff” he got from my seminar he never would have “won”. Chuck said he was glad that Tony knew TFT but that it really didn’t prove he could fight.

Chuck went on to say that if it were just a “thumping contest”—“Ya know, Tim, a real fight,” then the bigger, stronger guy would

always win. He was disturbed by the fact that Tony had to crush the throat of one of his attackers and actually kill the guy who tried to knife him. To Chuck, that proved it wasn't a "real fight." In addition, the fact Tony effectively used deception to disarm his attackers before he attacked really disturbed Chuck.

"That's not fighting, it's just..."

"Violence?" I suggested.

"Yeah, it proves nothing about how good a fighter you are," Chuck blurted out.

I know what Chuck was trying to say and it's sad when I see anyone like him that has never gone beyond using violence to dominate a social situation.

By choosing to use violence in a social situation, guys like Chuck always run the risk of bumping into someone who won't bother fighting a bigger, stronger guy.

They'll just use violence in the only way it should be used... as a survival tool.

A "Fair Fight" Isn't About Survival

Some of you might agree with Chuck. You might think that, although you understand the necessity for some people to understand TFT's methods, a real fight involves two people pitting their strength against each other. That's fine in terms of competition. Unfortunately, a criminal doesn't think that way. He has absolutely no desire to make sure the fight is "fair"—only to make sure he wins.

People often ask me for the best way to "protect" them in some imagined criminal assault. They want me to respond by giving some perfect technique that handles their particular imagined scenario.

They're often disappointed at first when I don't respond the way they want me to. They don't like to hear the truth—that violence is random and thinking only in terms of “techniques” to use against a random act is a good way to get yourself killed.

The problem with practically everyone's approach to dealing with violence is not that they're incapable of learning techniques. It's that they don't understand this way of responding to violence—real asocial, maim, cripple, or “kill you now” violence—is seriously flawed.

That's because when it comes to violence, we (meaning you and me, the productive, law-abiding members of society) live lives of assumed constraints.

We are taught early on by parents, teachers, and our legal system that if we want the benefits of living in a society like ours, then we need to constrain our violent impulses when things don't go our way.

And obviously, this is a very good thing. It's the reason you don't kill the obnoxious jerk that steals your parking place, you wait patiently for the light to turn green at an intersection, and you don't shoot the neighbor's Labrador for digging up your rose garden.

When it comes to the subject of violence, we are controlled by society much like circus elephants are controlled by their handlers. These trainers know the most reliable way to handle an elephant is to “condition” it when it is very young. They put a shackle on the baby elephant's leg with a short chain that is held in the ground by a very long spike. The baby elephant tugs at the chain attempting to break free.

After a short while the elephant breaks the skin around the shackled leg and gives up. But the pain of attempting to break free is never forgotten.

Later on, that same method is used to control the now full-grown elephant, even though the adult beast could pull the spike free with no more effort than you and I use to remove a thumbtack from a corkboard.

And the same approach is taken with all productive members of society regarding the tool of violence.

We are “shackled” at a very young age—first at home, later in our schools, and finally at our workplaces.

When faced with violence, most of us respond socially. We attempt to communicate with our attacker in hopes of avoiding the use of violence. We may threaten to use this tool but we really don’t want to since that shackle is still firmly attached.

The sad part of assumed constraints is that most martial arts, combat sports, and, yes, even most “reality fighting systems” teach you to respond—*while still shackled!*

It doesn’t work.

I learned long ago the first order of business is to teach my clients how easy it is to break those assumed constraints when the threat warrants such an approach.

Because the real threat to society is when we run up against some “rogue elephant” that has never been “shackled” and has no problem using violence to get what he wants. And imagine how easy it is to fight someone if they have their leg shackled.

Remember first and foremost—violence is rarely the answer to most situations, but when it is the answer, it’s the only answer.

Once you understood that you then must be able to rip off those assumed constraints and free yourself so you can utilize the tool of

violence when required. This is not the best way to survive an asocial, violent threat: **it is the only way.**

A Tool For Survival

In the end, you don't 'win' in violent conflict—you survive it. It's not competition; it's destruction. The survivor gets to walk away. The other guy doesn't. And far more often than not, the one who's walking away is the one who was doing the violence.

It's only going to work out in your favor if you get in there and injure him. You have to put him down and keep him there. You have to throw out the rules and combine instinct with intellect.

In these situations survival is the only thing that matters, and the best way to survive violence is to be the one doing the violence.

Knowing how to use violence as a survival tool—and being willing to do so—puts you on nice, flat terrain, even and equal with the worst of humanity. You can see the people who still have their heads in the sand and the predators who stalk among them taking advantage. Before you know how to grab the tool of violence in both fists and swing it hard and sure you are at a disadvantage. But learning how to use violence as a survival tool means that disadvantage is gone, and in its place is the stone-cold truth: you're responsible for you, all alone. Either you can rely on yourself or you can't; either you'll get the job done or you won't.

You have a choice: you can be afraid, or you can be resolved.

The Golden Rule Of Violence: Injure Him Now

The best way to survive violent conflict is to be the first one to cause an injury. When you destroy a target and make him react, you

will have the time and the opportunity to injure him again and again and again. You will be in control of the situation, and of the other man. Do unto others before they do unto you!

All of this flies in the face of a “fair fight.” But survival situations aren’t a fair fight. In a competitive fair fight, it’s all about skill and ability. A violent situation is about survival: injure the other guy as fast and hard as you can, in any way possible. It’s not something to be used lightly, but when it’s the only alternative, it will save your life.

You have to ditch the social constraints and shackles before you’re in the situation. It’s time to accept that, while these constraints are useful in 99% of everyday situations, you may one day find yourself facing a situation where they don’t apply. And in that situation, you have to be able to slip them off and unleash the killer within.

Chapter Six

Kill It Simple, Stupid

Violence is simple.

How simple is it? We can answer that with two more questions:

- 1. How can untrained people prevail?***
- 2. How is it that untrained people can prevail over trained people?***

Because for all their blissful naïveté the victorious untrained have a firm grip on the tool of violence. This fact stands because violence is much simpler than people would have you believe; it's much simpler than you want to believe.

The idea that violence is difficult and requires years of training—and that years of training will protect you from the untrained—are comfortable, comforting thoughts. They are society's buffer. Even if you yourself aren't one of the trained, it provides comfort to know that unless someone's had years of training, they aren't really going to be able to damage you. Sit back and relax. Doesn't that feel nice?

I read somewhere once that the little lies we tell ourselves on a daily basis, the small untruths that shape our subjective realities, are what keep us happy. That the people who see the world and themselves as it all 'really is' are the clinically depressed.

Accepting the simplicity of violence is an unpalatable dose of hard reality. To learn that you are never immune and that someone who is completely and conspicuously untrained can murder you is acutely unsettling. Even depressing.

If, that is, you're a blood-bucket-is-half-empty kind of person.

I like to look at it from the other side—the blood bucket is half full, and I’m going to use him to fill it the rest of the way up. If violence is so simple that even the untrained can use it and survive, then even a little bit of training is going to make you really, really good at it.

With a little bit of training you could know far more about wrecking people than a serial killer does. The only thing that could possibly hold you back is a lack of intent; what the serial killer lacks in technique he more than makes up for with a monomaniacal will to get the job done. But you already knew that.

Violence is much simpler, even, than I present it to be.

I spent a lot of time teasing out the common elements of violence and finding ways to communicate them to you. It comes across as a ton of material that people mistakenly believe they must master before they can be effective. Let’s be honest: I have a lot to say. This stuff is interesting to me, and if you’ve read this far, I’m guessing it’s interesting to you, too. I like to talk about it—to break down those social walls that pretend this stuff doesn’t exist. But for all that, we’re only ever really talking about the rock to the head ... and what is the rock to the head but a big hunk of kinetic energy driven through a vulnerable target?

Everything else is just detail work, an exploration of all possible combinations and configurations for using your body as a human tissue wrecking machine, with and without snap-on tools. Violence only seems complicated if you buy into the hype, if you think that because someone’s falling-down drunk, they can’t hurt you, if you think you need a black belt before you can seriously injure someone.

Let's look at it this way: close your eyes and think of the most stunning martial arts action movie sequence you've ever seen. Come on, I know you've seen them—they're everywhere, and they make violence as intricate and beautiful as some sort of dance. Now think about the end result of that complex series of leaps, jumps, throws, and movements. It was a guy down on the ground, dead or injured, right?

So in other words, that beautiful build-up is exactly that: a build-up. It has absolutely nothing to do with causing actual, physical injuries. It looks impressive. If you shout a lot, it sounds impressive. And if you're dealing with a normal person, it might be enough to scare them into backing down, hesitating, or making a bad mistake.

But we've all seen the flip side, too: the moment in an action movie where some guy comes up twisting, turning, hopping, flipping, and doing every martial arts move known to man ... until our hero punches him in the face, and down he goes. That's a slightly more realistic assessment of how violence works. When you focus your energy on techniques, execution, and style, that means you're not focusing on what violence is really about: hurting people.

Remember, in a life-or-death situation, technique won't save your life. Hops and yells, throws and flips, none of it matters. When the chips are down, every single movement should be directed at a single cause: injury.

So forget everything you think you know about how it should go down: violence is you injuring people. It's throwing yourself at him to break things inside of him. You are the bull in his anatomical china shop, the Enola Gay to his Hiroshima. It's you violating every tenet of polite society and destroying the only thing that any of us ever really own. And if that violates your personal philosophy, counters your techniques, or seems unsporting, then you haven't really listened to

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a word I've said. Because violence is never about competition. It's not about showing off or practicing your coolest moves. Save that stuff for the arena. When we start talking about life-or-death violence, your whole focus has to be on survival—and in this case, survival means causing more damage to him than he does to you.

It's simpler than you think because it has nothing to do with thinking. Violence is all in the doing.

Chapter Seven

Access the Meat

Choosing the Level of Interaction in Violent Conflict

One of the key features of the sociopath is that he sees everyone as essentially the same—a piece of meat to be butchered. Sociopaths look at everyone this way, regardless of personality, skill, or ability.

You have to keep in mind that sociopaths are not insane. Sometimes they claim to be in an effort to lower their sentence. But that's what's so chilling about many serial killers: they are completely sane people who made rational, calm, cold-blooded decisions to rape and murder and do whatever else they came up with. Ted Bundy, America's most notorious serial killer, once said: "I'm the most cold-blooded sonofabitch you'll ever meet. I just liked to kill; I wanted to kill." Does that sound like someone who didn't know what he was doing?

The other thing to remember is that sociopaths see violence as a useful tool. In a best case scenario, they aren't even thinking about your pain or humiliation; they're just using the violence the same way they'd use a pencil to write with. In a worst case scenario, they're actually getting a charge from your helplessness—enjoying the sense of power, superiority, and prowess. Pleading and talking won't have much effect on these people because they like what they do. Like Ted Bundy, they pride themselves on being cold-blooded sonofabitches. In an online dating profile, they'd list "murder" as a hobby.

And knowing that, you start to understand why they don't differentiate between victims. It never occurs to a sociopath that

he'll get caught, or that someone might be able to stop him. Sociopaths are more than twice as likely as any other criminal to be a repeat offender. They not only don't think they'll get caught, they like what they're doing too much to stop. Eventually, every human being looks the same to them: a piece of tender flesh to be brutalized as a means to an end.

A big strong guy with a black belt looks the same to them as a sleeping little girl. The sociopath understands that both their skulls open the same way, their eyes yield to equal pressure, and they both die when their throats are cut.

The sociopath disregards the things that set them apart; he will not interface with their personalities, or the big strong guy's black belt-level skill, or his massive muscles. He will only concentrate on the things that they are both susceptible to.

In order to use violence successfully, in order to have an equal chance of survival, so must you. Don't get caught in the sucker's game of interfacing at higher levels, of showing respect for the person, his skills or physical power. Go straight for the meat.

The Four Levels of Interaction

1. As a person—social

- This is trying to change behavior, mood, or motivation. It's where most people would like to keep the situation, and in our Happy Place, this is where everyone would want to be, able to talk a serial killer out of his crazy tree.

2. As a skill set—antisocial

- This is trying to outwrestle him, or out-technique him in a 90 mph chess game. This is a duel in which the most skilled practitioner

will typically win. It is ‘civilized violence’ and seen as ‘fighting fair.’ Some bar fights look like this, especially if they’re between drunken friends. School yard fights almost always involve antisocial interactions. So do combat sports: wrestling, boxing, martial arts. Someone might get hurt, but not badly. No one is really meaning to seriously hurt someone else. At worst, they might try to “teach him a lesson.” If someone in this type of interaction was seriously injured or died, the other parties would be horrified.

3. As an animal (via strength, speed, stamina)—antisocial

- This is pitting your strength against his, trying to outmaneuver or outlast him, going blow for blow. This typically looks pretty brutal and ugly. Two lions fighting for dominance of their pride might look like this. In all likelihood, no one’s going to die—at least, that’s not the idea—but this isn’t your typical schoolyard brawl. Kids would run for a teacher, not stand around watching. While an antisocial fight can be somewhat good-natured, an animalistic fight is serious. Both combatants are taking this seriously. They are out to prove who is the best specimen. This is seen as brutish, desperate and decidedly ‘uncivilized.’

4. As a piece of meat—asocial

- This is regarding him as a physical object beholden to the natural laws of the universe. Paying no heed to the person, the skill, or the ability. This is seen as almost universally ‘bad’—people who do this naturally are classified as ‘evil’ in a social setting. This is interfacing with him as a thing that can be broken down and rendered non-functional.

- It's interesting to note that these four levels correspond to different ranges and comfort zones:
- Interfacing with the person can be done from across the street, a distance from trouble where most people feel safe (they can always take off running if it gets out of hand).
- Interfacing with his skill-set is almost always done at a pace away, with the contestants circling to get a feel for the other guy's skill level, feinting and parrying and otherwise dancing around. It's all about giving yourself enough room to see what he's doing and try to counter it.
- Interfacing with his physical abilities is done skin-to-skin, but that's as deep as it goes.
- Interfacing with the frailties of the flesh is done beneath the skin—true injury is about disregarding the sanctity of the body and simply destroying it.

What-ifs, Buts and Maybes

As a trainer, I'm constantly interacting with people of various sizes, ages, genders, and skill-levels. What's interesting isn't so much the physical configuration of the person I'm training, but the things they ask me. The kinds of questions people ask during training can tell you a lot about where their head is at and at which level they're stuck on. Most people are used to the social sphere. They accept the antisocial sphere as sometimes necessary, and that's as far as they ever want it to go. Getting them to move beyond that to the asocial can be an incredible challenge. They come up with all sorts of questions to avoid confronting the truth. But the important thing to

note is that none of their worries have any impact on injury whatsoever.

The ‘Socialist’

The person who is uncomfortable with the whole idea of conflict will ask questions that dance around the issue from across the street, like, “How can I tell if he wants to hurt me?” and such. It’s obvious that they never want to engage in actual violence. Most people start out here. What they’re actually looking for is some kind of warning system that will tell them when they should get away. They’ve yet to realize that what they’re training for is the type of violence that can’t be avoided. If you have the option to run away, then take it. There’s no “how can I tell” involved. How can you tell if he wants to hurt you? You’ll know. Your instincts will tell you. And at the time, you won’t think about it because it won’t matter.

The Duelist

People trained in martial arts usually get hung-up on interfacing with his skill. They’ll ask the most what-ifs, like, “What if he throws a spinning back kick?” “What if he counters my joint lock?” and “What if he’s holding the knife like this?” They are also overly concerned with blocking—both in doing it and worrying about having it done to them. These are the tacticians. They want to lay out every scenario beforehand so that when it happens, they have a technique to address it. Trying to explain to them that they have to leave the technique behind is difficult because it’s been so carefully drilled into their heads. These people are also concerned with keeping things at the social level. They never want to move outside the world regulated by rules and fair conduct.

The Animal

Untrained people who can come to terms with the idea of conflict usually end up fixated on physical attributes. For smaller, less athletic people it manifests as worry about how they'll fare against bigger, stronger, faster adversaries; big, strong folks have the opposite problem—they typically believe they cannot be defeated by 'lesser' beings. Both are equally problematic. Violence isn't about prowess. It's about injury. A five foot tall, 100 pound woman is just as capable of gouging your eyes out as a six foot tall, 250 pound man. Don't ever fall into the trap of thinking the stronger party prevails. Whoever gets it right, first, does.

Sociopaths & Butchers

Almost no one shows up comfortable with injury as a starting point. If someone came in excited about hurting people, I would be very worried.

Progress

Another interesting thing to note is that progressing through the levels is not linear. Socialists don't usually walk through the others to arrive at injury. They go one of two ways—either they dig in their heels and cram their heads into the sand and will never, ever cross the street, or they go straight from where they are to injury (though sometimes with a short stopover at the animal level).

Duelists are another thing entirely. It is often very difficult to wean them off of the idea that they need to respect and/or thwart his skill before they can be effective. If they do move on, it's usually with a long stopover at the animal level. His skill bothered them before; now they've transferred that worry to his physical abilities.

Those who have taken the long walk from skill to animal to injury are typically the most evangelical about the whole process. (As opposed to those who went straight from social to injury. They usually don't see the whole experience as that big a deal).

Animals are easier to nudge into interfacing directly with the meat of the matter. They're pretty close, conceptually, and they just need to be shown how to direct their efforts away from strong points and into the weak ones. (Instead of going strength-to-strength, go strength-to-eyeball).

If you're reading this I'm going to assume that you don't have a problem with violence in a general sense, that you're not hung up on the social aspects from across the street. So where are your hang ups? What are you stuck on? Are you worried about what he'll do if he's skilled? Or bigger-stronger-faster? Be honest with yourself. You're letting yourself down if you lie—you're not going to get any more effective that way.

If the idea of going after a trained Goliath makes you sweat (more than the usual, healthy amount, I mean) then you need to buckle down and study up on injury. Seek out photos of sports injuries (for broken joints and twisted, non-functioning limbs). Autopsy reports from non-firearm killings—especially where the victim was beaten to death—are illuminating. Troll the internet for videos of prison fights and violent muggings. Essentially, look for anything where the survivor is interacting with the other person as a piece of meat.

You'll be repulsed and comforted simultaneously.

Chapter Eight

The Hardest Lesson

I'll be honest with you, when the Virginia Tech shooting first happened, I really didn't want to write about it. Not the day it happened, and not the next. Never. I didn't want to write about it because nothing I could say would be novel, or surprising—if anything this incident was just everything we're always saying and doing anyway, knobbed up to 11 and turned on a mass of hapless innocents.

But mostly, I didn't want to write about it because I did not wish to inadvertently speak ill of the dead or laud a mass murderer.

What changed my mind? To a large degree it was the back channel chatter I got—phone calls, emails, PMs from pretty much everyone who knows what I do for a living. Everyone wanted my take on it. The straw that broke the camel's back was one in particular who pointed out what a difference it made, for them personally, when I spoke to the point on the 9/11 attacks the day after they occurred.

That, and the comments of an Israeli lawyer. But more on that in a moment.

I'm going to skip the obvious dissection for the reasons stated above, and instead focus on problems within American society itself that, in my opinion, make it possible for one man with a 9mm pistol to slaughter more than 30 people.

It comes down to two things that together make for a tragic oxymoron: we live in a society that is voyeuristically obsessed with violence, and yet we have very little real information on how to

function in violent conflict. To me, this is a lot like living on boats and aggressively plying the seas while not actually knowing how to swim.

On the one hand, our culture celebrates violence in video media, music, and indeed our literature. On the other we recoil from any attempt to confront the realities of violent conflict. I believe most people view portrayals of violence in media through an antisocial lens; when the 'hero' kills a 'bad guy' they are seeing the school yard fight we often talk about.

But the moment one attempts to realistically address violence, and train for it, we're suddenly madmen. You would not believe the amount of static I get for being honest, forthright, and attempting to educate people in this matter. Of course, this is a natural, sane, response; it would make perfect sense if we lived in a perfect world.

And therein lies the problem: if only madmen are allowed and/or expected to use violence, then only madmen will have access to the tool.

That brings me to the comment from the Israeli lawyer, made to a colleague of mine. He asked, "Why didn't they just rush the gunman?" He further commented that this was the 'tactic of record' in Israel.

Did they try that? I don't know. I fear that what allowed this murderer to work so efficiently was the same thing that allowed the 9/11 attacks to succeed: individual fear of a tool.

The mechanics for handling the situation are simple. The psychological element is not. In other words, the mechanics of knocking out or killing an armed person are very straightforward. Making yourself get up and get in there—overcoming the terror and chaos in your head—is not.

Knowing the mechanics of this sort of action, and training with them, helps the psychological side immensely. Knowing what to do is its own kind of confidence. Even something as simple as deciding, as a society, that we'll all rush and overwhelm a gunman—having that plan ahead of time—goes a long way toward mitigating individual, paralyzing fear.

Realizing you have no idea what to do can only fuel the terror and give the murderer the time and space he needs to work.

It's already been said, in many places, that a single student armed with a firearm could have made a difference. While they are right, let's tease out the 'why that works.'

Another student with a gun could have affected the outcome because he or she would have held, in their hand, the power to kill. So what's really being said here is that one student who had the power to kill could have made a difference. Whether that power comes from a device or from knowledge of how to do it with their bare hands is immaterial. In fact, any amount of real information as to what to do when suddenly dropped into this situation could have made a difference. But none of us really know anything about violence, in spite of our constant exposure to it. None of us are comfortable enough to know how to kill when the situation arises.

Instead, due to the way our society processes violence, there was only one person there who had access to the tool. If we don't change the way our society processes violence only one person is going to learn anything from all this—the next shooter.

Don't Flinch, Don't Look Away—Learn

You've heard me say that the one doing the violence prevails, and you've probably seen this adage in action (hopefully only on

video). You buy the logic of it, see the truth of it stitched across the entire swath of human history. But have you ever really thought about what that means for you?

In poker they say that if you sit down at the table and don't know who the sucker is, it's you. If you find yourself there, as the sucker, it's best to get out before the first card hits the table.

In violence, if you're not the most dangerous person in the room, you're a potential victim.

So really, the end-goal of all training, all time on the mats, every last millisecond, even reading this book is to become the most dangerous person in the room. Period.

Wherever you go, no matter who you're surrounded by, you need to be the most dangerous person there. The One person who, if you were to be caught on video doing violence, would stand out for directness, ferocity and brutality. The One obvious person in the frame who is in control, making everyone else want to get away from them—and breaking people at will. The One who would make even a casual observer blanch and crap their pants.

You want to be the center of the storm.

Right now you're all nodding in agreement. You got it, this is nothing new. That's you to a 'T.' It's where you live, it's how you roll, because you're dedicated to living an embarrassingly long life and dying in bed surrounded by your geriatric great-grandchildren with your third baboon heart beating in your chest.

Here comes the hard part, the hardest lesson, because violence has nothing to do with being dedicated to living—it has everything to do with being dedicated to hurting, crippling and killing people. With

being The One person there who wants to do those things more than anyone else in the room.

Who do we know of who pulled off this trick recently?

That's right—the Virginia Tech shooter.

His use of the tool of violence was stunning in its base utility—it was textbook. So much so it is now your required reading.

I already told you that I don't want to applaud this guy. I don't want you to think that I approve of what he did. Hell, I'd like to not lay it out like this at all, but then the question becomes 'when?' There will never be a good time, so like a nasty-tasting medicine we're just going to get it over with.

He was everything I laid out in the above paragraph, the one you were nodding enthusiastically to just a moment ago. Feels different now, doesn't it?

If you really got it, if you really understood what we're up to and up against here, it wouldn't feel different at all. You would nod, but not enthusiastically. You'd do it with a grim determination.

See, it's kind of cool to whisper to yourself, "I'm The One, the most dangerous person in the room." Kind of puffs you up, makes you feel like a 007 agent.

The reality of that statement ain't so nice—or socially acceptable. Because what you're really saying is "I'm like the Virginia Tech shooter."

The center of the storm, with unflinching intent, making everyone want to get away from you rather than go after you, delivering multiple injuries per person, dropping them and then making sure they don't get up.

If you had read the preceding paragraph before I mentioned Virginia Tech, you'd think it was pretty cool. You'd think, "That's me." But not now. Now you're wrestling with it. Sickened by the idea.

That's why it's the hardest lesson.

It's not only hard to learn—most people don't want to learn it.

If you're having trouble with it, then that's your biggest problem with training for violence—not how good or bad your technique is, or where exactly is the spleen target or not knowing enough joint breaks.

Because if you walk into the room and you don't know who the most dangerous person there is, it sure as hell isn't you.