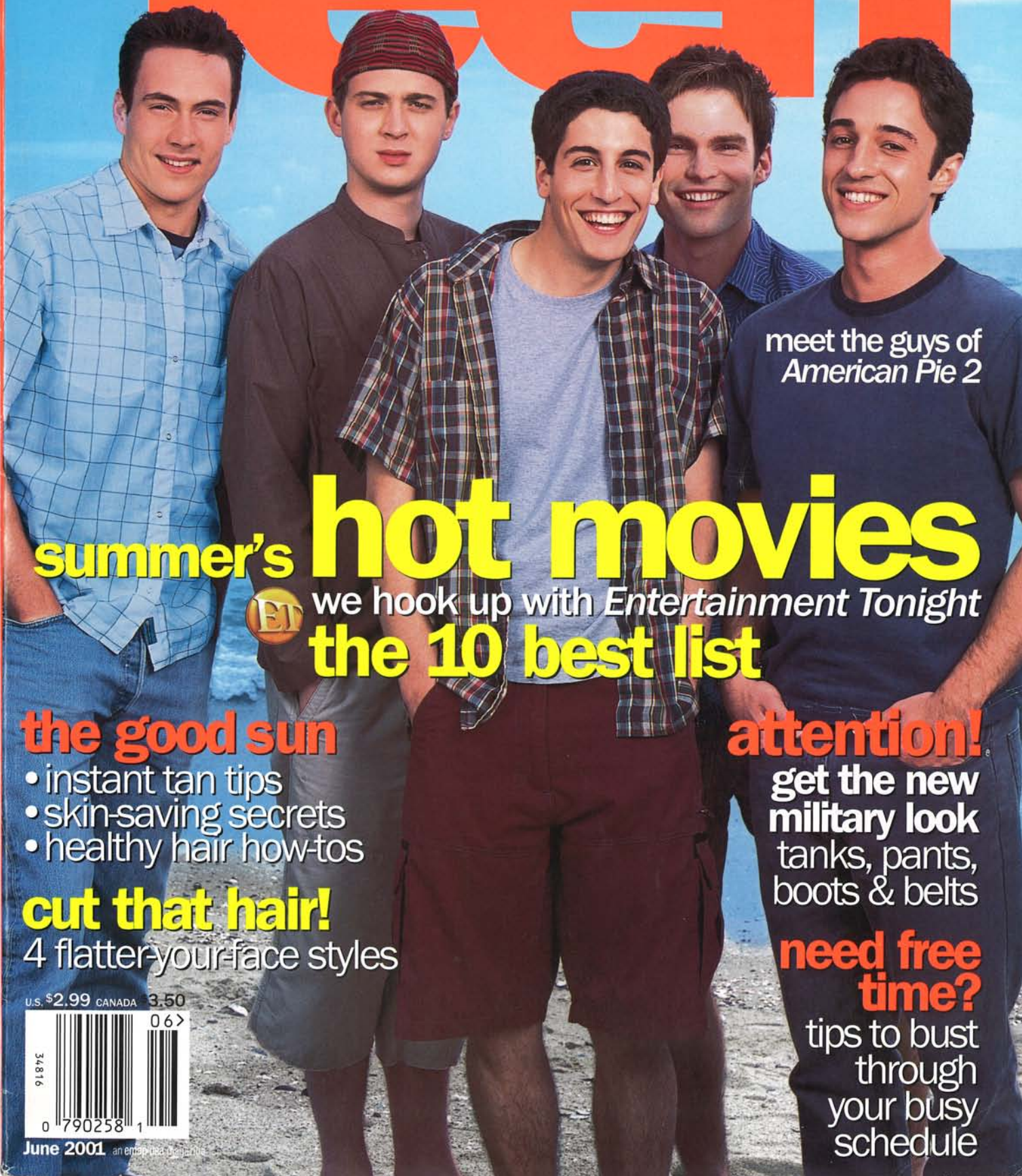


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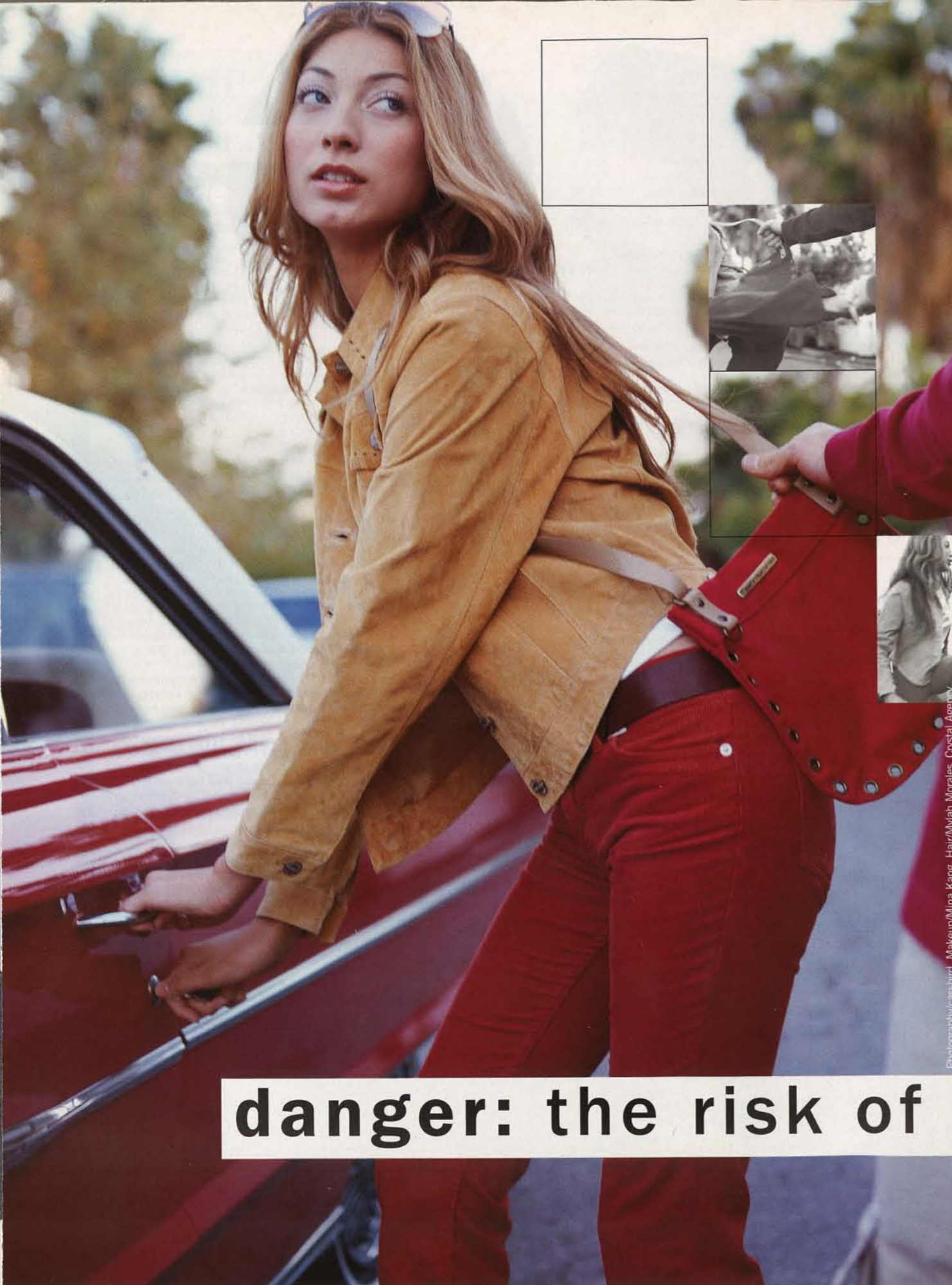
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June 2001 an emagazine



THINK YOU'RE SAFE? REVERSE THAT: DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'RE IN DANGER? IF YOU'RE FEMALE AND UNDER 18, YOU'RE MORE AT RISK TO BE THE VICTIM OF A VIOLENT CRIME THAN ANYONE ELSE IN AMERICA. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO STAY SAFE, AND IF NEED BE, PROTECT YOURSELF.

BY LAURA GILBERT

There's good news and bad news about going out on the street. The good news is that violent crime is down—way down. In 1999, the Bureau of Justice reported the lowest level ever of violent crime. The bad news? If you're a teen, those numbers don't apply to you. People between the ages of 12 and 24 were victims of violent crime more than any other age group. And young women are particularly vulnerable. Girls 16 to 19 were raped or sexually assaulted at 35 times the rate of older women, and twice as likely to be robbed than people 25 to 35. It may sound like a lot of numbers, but the basics are this: As a teen girl, you're seriously at risk.

Why are teenage girls targets for crime? "Criminals are bullies and cowards," says Patrick Malone, a security consultant who's trained military forces and police. "They pick people who they think will be intimidated. A criminal wants to do his crime, not get caught, and not get a lot of hassle." Girls look smaller and younger—and that makes you an easy target for the violent situations you're most likely to encounter: sexual assault or rape, physical battery and robbery.

Is this scary? Absolutely. Should you lock yourself in your room and bar the windows? Absolutely not. There are concrete ways to seriously reduce your chances of being attacked, and methods of responding if you do get into a bad situation. Keep reading for tips that will help you make a split-second decision if you get into trouble. This advice may seem simple, but it can help you escape—and possibly save your life.

Whether you're taking a walk or taking the elevator, these easy habits take no extra time and can keep you safe. Read, remember and pass them on.

Be Alert! No matter where you are, pay attention. Walk with confidence. Keep your head up, slightly wing your arms and stand up straight, even if you're totally lost. If you *look like you know what's up*, you're less likely to be victimized.

Have a Cell Phone. Even if it's just a cheapie that can only dial out in emergencies, *program your phone* so you can hit one button to get the cops while you're being chased or if you get stranded (in your car, after a game, wherever).

Trust Your Gut. *Avoid streets and spaces that "seem" unsafe.* If something tells you that a person or place is dangerous, it probably is. No matter how silly you feel walking a block out of your way for no "real" reason, it's still better than feeling scared or finding yourself in a bad situation that you could have avoided.

When Walking on a Street: If you see another person on the street, *look them in the eye.* Seeing a potential attacker means you've already taken away his ability to sneak up on you. Also, *walk close to the curb* to avoid people who may be against a building. If there aren't many people out, keep at least an arm's length away from anyone who passes you. *Lose the Walkman.* Earphones allow you to zone out, which puts you in danger, and you won't be able to hear people coming behind you. *Walk facing traffic.* No one can drive up from behind and pull you into their car.

When in an Elevator: *Always stand near the front* of the elevator so you can get off quickly if someone who feels dangerous gets on. Don't get on an elevator if you don't like the looks of someone who's in it. And don't worry about hurting that person's feelings—if someone invites you into the lift, that doesn't make him "safe." *Always take the elevator over the stairs.* Stairwells are more likely to be people-free and therefore dangerous.

When Getting Into Your Car: Before you get into your car, *peek in the backseat* and in the foot area of the passenger side where predators can hide. When you get in, *lock the doors first*, then start the car. Don't stop to fix your hair or change your C D, which can give someone who's watching a chance to get in and get you. This really does happen, and it's 100 percent preventable. If you notice someone is sitting in the passenger seat of a car next to yours, or there's a van next to your driver's door, get into your car on the passenger side and scoot over. This way, the person in the car next to you can't reach over and grab you. It may sound weird, but why chance it?

danger: the risk of being a teenage girl



SMART MOVES FOR VIOLENT SITUATIONS

Is someone shady up in your face? These are the moves you need to get away—fast.

When you're attacked, there's no time to think about what's happening. "Women always want to be nice—forget it," says Howard Mallen, cofounder of the Krav Maga self-defense training center in Los Angeles. "If you're going to fight, you have to do it until you can get away." Fighting back takes real aggression and real knowledge. "It can be hard to muster up the courage to attack someone back," says Mallen. "I tell women to imagine that someone was doing to their mother, sister or friend what's being done to them. That puts it in perspective, and girls have no trouble lashing out."

To defend and save yourself, you don't need Buffy-like moves to be butt-kickin'. Here are some basic moves from Howard Mallen that you can put into play, no matter what your size or training.

In His Eyes

If you're in some guy's grip, your first move is to attack whatever vulnerable spot you can. If your hands are free, poke at the guy's eyes. Use a jabbing motion and try to use your thumbs—that's your strongest finger. Then, get outta there.

Power of the Pinky

If you're being held, he's probably too strong for you to pry off a whole hand. Instead, try putting all your might into peeling back his pinky finger. Pull it back as hard as you can (think of snapping a pencil), try to break the sucker, and you'll get more results.

Go for the Groin

It's an obvious spot—a guy's groin is very sensitive. If you're a leg's-length away from the creep, lift your knee, flex your toe and extend the top of your foot (where you tie your shoes) straight up between his legs. The key here is to do it again and again, as hard as you can. Do whatever it takes as long as it takes to get yourself out of danger. Don't stop, and don't give up.

Stomp His Plans

Whether he's behind you, next to you or just too darn close, a stomp on the top of his foot (where his shoelaces are), can be extremely painful. No matter how big he is, there are tons of little bones in there. Your goal: Put as much

of your strength behind the smallest point possible, and drive it into that spot. That means lifting your knee, flexing your foot and then stomping on his foot as hard as you can. Again, repeat this move over and over. Imagine that you're trying to nail all the way through his foot.

Bite Out of Crime

If he's got your limbs held tight, you've still got a dangerous, sharp weapon—a lot of them, actually, your teeth. Bite his flesh wherever you can reach, as hard as you can, and don't let go. If you take off someone's finger or tongue (sounds impossible, but women have stopped rapes this way), you might be disgusted, but you probably won't be messed with further.

Hit Hard

Learning how to throw a good punch is hard. Learning to hit someone is not. To make a fist, close your fingers and curl your thumb over the fingers, not at the side of your fingers. The part you want to hit with is the part of your palm that touches the table when you're holding a cup. Use your entire arm like it's a hammer, with that area being the head of the hammer. Make contact on the most vulnerable areas you can hit: his face, neck and groin.



STRAIGHT ANSWERS TO SCARY QUESTIONS

How do I know who's dangerous?

You don't, but the most common ploys that attackers use to get close to you are asking directions or asking for the time. *Never stop.* Girls typically don't want to be rude, but it's better to be blunt than a victim. Just keep walking and say "I don't know." Secondly, some lethal criminals pretend to be injured or in need of help (like a broken-down car) in order to get close to you. If you want to be a Good Samaritan, find a big guy and ask him to help you care for the person in need, instead of getting close yourself.

Should I get some mace?

Forget it. Even if mace or pepper spray is legal in your state, you'd have to have it out, unlocked, know how to use it and keep the guy far enough away that you wouldn't wind up gassing yourself or having him take it from you. You're better off using whatever weapons you can find in your environment, whether it's a stick in the street, a rock you hold while making a fist or even something like a fork.

Should I yell for help?

If you think people can hear you, do it. Some people advise yelling, "Fire!" instead of "Help!" because people will want to check out a fire, but they're scared to get involved in danger. If you do decide to attack someone back, yell every dirty, nasty, angry word you can think of. Why? If anyone does hear, they'll be interested and check it out. It will help fuel the aggression and confidence you need to do something so dangerous. It will surprise your attacker for sure, and it will keep you breathing in and out, which means you'll tire out less quickly than if you hold your breath while you're in danger.

What if I get chased?

Try to get an object between the two of you, ideally a parked car or a huge table. You can play ring-around-the-rosie forever with this jerk if you need to, and it's much better than being in his grip. Throw things at his face, like keys, water, whatever you've got. It'll distract him and make him blink.

What if he's got a weapon?

Most likely he's just trying to scare you, but a guy with a weapon is more likely to want your stuff than your body. Best to throw whatever you can down and then run. Even sharpshooters don't hit moving targets, and this coward will probably prefer to find another victim than deal with committing a bigger crime. Run in zig-zags and make sure you're running somewhere safer—not further into a deserted area.

What can I do about date rape?

Watch your drinks, alcoholic or not, and watch who makes them. Don't let your drink out of your sight, even if you have to take it with you to the bathroom and carry it around all night. Date-rape drugs are easy to slip into drinks, so keep an eye on your beverages.

Elbow Grease

Elbows are also good weapons. Make a fist and hold it up by your shoulder. See all those bony protrusions at the elbow? Those hurt when slammed repeatedly against a nose, a crotch, a neck, whatever. The secret? Keep your hand by your ear, and only move it straight up and down or straight horizontally (like a sprinkler).

Walk Backward

If you've stunned your attacker, don't turn your back on him—back away quickly to make sure he doesn't recover right away and grab you again. You can get away and be prepared for more fighting if he lunges at you.

You can find out more about Krav Maga training at KravMaga.com

ANATOMY OF A CRIME

If this story hasn't convinced you that crime can happen to anyone (even you), maybe these cold, hard numbers will.

When crimes happen:

- 54% of violent crime occurs during the day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.)
- 66% of rapes/sexual assaults occur at night (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.)

Victims of aggravated assault:

- 9 out of every 1,000 people in urban areas
- 7 out of every 1,000 in the suburbs
- 5 out of every 1,000 in rural areas

Note: Urban residents are robbed almost four times as often as rural residents.

Percentage of females who took self-protective measures during specific crimes:

- 78% rape/sexual assault
- 74% aggravated assault (assault with a weapon)
- 66% simple assault (assault without a weapon)
- 61% robbery

What these self-protective measures accomplished:

- 64% helped the situation
- 9% hurt the situation (more than 17% in rape/sexual assault cases)
- 7% helped and hurt the situation
- 11% neither

Percentage of violence against women committed by strangers:

Age of victim:	12-15	16-19
All violent crime:	27%	33%
Rape/sexual assault:	18%	28%
Robbery:	38%	44%

Where crimes happen:

- 18% on the street not near the home
- 18% at or in the home
- 14% on school property
- 7% at, in or near a friend or relative's home (the number of rapes and sexual assaults is highest here)

SURVIVOR STORIES

Crime can happen anywhere, anytime, to anybody. These girls know firsthand.

"When I was 16, I was in New York City on my band trip. We were walking through Central Park, but I got tired. I told them I'd catch up in a minute, and sat down on a bench. Suddenly, someone put his hand over my mouth and whispered close to my ear, 'Don't move.' I freaked out, and before I could even think, I turned around, hit him in his privates, and ran away." —Andrea, 17, VA

"I was at the mall with a friend when this guy started following us. He rubbed up against my friend, and I got this horrible sense of extreme danger. My friend and I walked all over the store, but he kept following us. Then, another of my friend's families walked in. I told them what was going on, and the mom gave us a ride home. I'm glad I'd learned to trust my instincts." —Karen, 14, OH

"I met this really great guy online. He told me he was 17, and we e-mailed each other for months. We decided to get together in person, and he told me to meet him at this local hangout that was outdoors. He showed up and grabbed me, covered my mouth and dragged me behind a building. There were people around, but they just thought we were making out. This guy was an adult, and he handcuffed me, raped me and left me there. I woke up in the emergency room." —Steffi, 17, MS

"My younger sister and I were walking home through a ravine path. I heard a glass break, and then felt a sharp pain in my foot. Someone was behind us, throwing things. We started running, and then I said loudly, 'Mom, Mom.' That scared him away." —Jenni, 15, CA

"This guy I was dating tried to force me to have sex. We were outside a movie theater, and no one was around. He pushed me to the ground and started pulling my pants down. He was almost a foot taller than me, so I knew I couldn't overpower him. I waited for him to undo his belt because I knew he'd only have one hand free. Then I brought my knee up to his groin. When he rolled off of me, I kicked him in the face. I ran into the theater and called the police. It was really awful, but it was worse because this was someone I thought I loved and could trust." —Leslie, 16, SC

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics