

## Jumped

I was walking home from a party, by myself, at 3 am. I lived on a street that was next to a really rough neighborhood. I had NO city street smarts and shouldn't have been walking that late, by myself, in that area of Boston. Plus, being slightly buzzed from the party I was a sitting duck.

I had \$400 cash on me in my back pocket because I was going to buy a quarter-pound of pot, but the deal had fallen through so I had a nice little wad of cash on me. So there I am, walking alone on a dark street next to a bad neighborhood all buzzed with a pile of cash on me. Gee, I wonder what might happen next...

Out of nowhere, three black guys jumped out from behind a parked car and whipped out a knife. I could see it glistening from the street light directly above us.

The first guy, who was the leader and in front of the other two guys lagging, said, "I'm going to kill you," and without hesitation, I gave him the finger, said "Fuck you!" and turned and ran as fast as I could.

Unfortunately for me, it was winter and the sidewalks were all slippery with black ice and I was wearing Dockside boat shoes, which are probably the worst shoes in the world to run in. I'm sure my worthy adversaries had the latest in basketball shoes or some kind of running shoes because (let's just be honest) street thugs may not be the brightest kids on the block but they're at least smart enough to wear good sneakers, just in case they need to chase someone or run from the cops.

So, one second I'm walking home from a party, whistling a happy little tune and minding my own business, and out of nowhere three street thugs with knives jump out from another dimension, threaten me and start chasing me.

I instantly change my course of action. I'm running and slipping and trying to get away as fast as I can and it won't be long before they're all caught up and can stab me in the back while I'm running.

I think to myself, do I really want to have on my gravestone, "Cliff got stabbed in the back while running away?"

No, I'd rather have it say, "Cliff got stabbed in the chest REPEATEDLY and BRUTALLY by a GANG OF THUGS while fighting to the death with every ounce of his strength until he bled to death on the street."

It never once occurs to me to just stop running, hold up my hands and say, "Okay guys, here, take my \$400." I'm running to avoid having my money stolen. I'm running because it's the first thing that entered my mind when they pulled out their weapons and threatened my life. You could call it a classic case of fight-or-flight response, an innate, survival mechanism implanted in my reptilian brain from millions of years of evolution that figured the odds would be better if I just got the hell out of there really fast and asked questions later.

After about eight more very long seconds of running and thinking, I stop. I'm done running. I turn, crouch down real low and scream a death cry at the top of my vocally trained lungs.

"MOTHERFUCKERS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

I can hear my voice echoing off the buildings. It's the loudest, scariest and meanest sound I've ever made in my 20 years of life on planet Earth. It's the kind of death cry early man might have made while being chased by saber-toothed tigers or a gang of cavemen with rocks.

Most people have never experienced this kind of situation. They may have read about it, or watched it on TV or at the movies. Not me. I lived it. I was prepared to fight to the death by

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ripping their throats out with my teeth and clawing their eyeballs out of their face with my fingers. I was ready to fight back like a wild man out of control, if that's what it would take to save myself because my life is definitely more valuable than all three of those scum bags combined.

I would've taken one of them and put their face on the curb, opened his mouth and jumped on the back of his head, breaking all his teeth and his jaw and permanently fucking him up for life. I was determined to take a couple of them out with me if it was the last thing I'd ever do.

I wasn't afraid to die anymore. They knew it and I knew it, and they knew I knew it. I'd be damned if my gravestone would read, "Cliff was a coward." Not me. I may be a lot of things, but I ain't no coward.

I was all crouched down real low so whoever got to me first was going to have me spring up at them with all the force coming from my legs and I was going to go straight for their throats with my teeth and fingernails and try to kill the closest one as fast and efficiently as possible and worry about the other two later. I heard somewhere that if you're outnumbered the best thing to do is to attack the meanest one as hard as you can and take them out as quickly as possible — something about group dynamics and the rest of the gang either respecting you or fearing you. I'll bet that while these guys were chasing me, they were doing some thinking, too, like, "Shit, usually people just get all scared and give us their wallet right away without any trouble." Or, "Man, this guy looked like he was gay or something and an easy target, but now he's all freaked out and pumped up and he's acting all crazy and he wants to fight us all to the death; what a drag."

Or, maybe they weren't thinking anything, like a school of sharks on autopilot, just cruising the black waters at night. Who knows what the hell they were thinking? In that moment, I couldn't have given a rat's ass what was on their minds.

After I screamed "Motherfuckers!" I couldn't believe what happened next. They just froze. It was as if they hit an invisible force field surrounding my body. Maybe their reptilian brain recognized that death cry as a very serious sound that's only made by people who are ready to die. It's a sound that very few people have lived to tell about, because they're usually killed.

In that moment, time had frozen solid. They couldn't move, I couldn't move; I had run and turned to fight to the death. Let's just say for theatrical purposes, it was a tense moment. I don't really know what happened next because I was in an altered state of consciousness, but I could have sworn I heard someone from behind me yell something. Then, for no good reason, they just turned and ran away. I couldn't believe it. I looked around and there wasn't anyone anywhere. There wasn't anyone behind me or up in a building somewhere. I was all alone, under a street lamp, in the middle of the cold, wintry night. I wasn't dead, or even wounded. What the hell had just happened? Why did they just give up like that and run away? Someone up there must really like me.

I jumped out into the middle of the street, where I could see more clearly my surroundings, in case anyone else was hiding behind a car again. There was nothing. No nothin' no place. They had totally disappeared. It was as if they jumped out from another dimension and then jumped back through a wormhole back to their world. Not a trace of them could be found. I scanned my surroundings and saw some lights coming from a Store 24 down the street a little ways. I was all pumped up beyond belief and ran down the street towards the lights into the all-night convenience store. I told the guy at the counter that I had just been jumped by three black guys with knives and got away. He didn't say anything or care; probably had been there for years and seen it all.

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I don't remember what happened after that. I guess I just called a taxi and went home. But I've thought about what must have happened and how I was able to get out of that situation. It could have been a few different things. It could have been the fact that I gave their leader the finger first, said "Fuck You!" and ran right off the bat and that might have thrown them off a little and rattled their little pea brains some. They might've figured I was just too much trouble and not a quick and easy target. They probably were just looking for some quick cash and too lazy to have to actually fight for it.

Or maybe other people that they had mugged had given up so easily that they were spoiled and used to people just OFFERING them their wallets and watches. Not me, man. The first thing I did was give them the finger. Everyone knows what that means; it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that one out. I wasn't just going to offer them whatever they wanted just because they pulled a knife on me. I may have been from a small town with no street smarts hardly at all, but something inside of me knew what to do and I didn't need an Ivy League education to know how to handle this situation.

Or, maybe what happened was that after I screamed at them and then turned to fight they might have realized that I was 6'4", and not such an easy target. Or maybe they thought that I was on some sort of freaked-out drugs like crystal meth or crack and that they didn't want to deal with a crazy white boy.

Or possibly it was my Native American belief that we all walk with animal totems, sort of like animal spirits and that when we are dealt with a life-and-death situation, an actual, for real life-and-death situation, they come out and protect us. Maybe those three motherfuckers saw a real tiger or black bear or bison or wooly mammoth spirit energy field standing side by side with me. I bet that's what probably happened.

Or, maybe some guy down the street or up in a building really did hear me scream and had yelled something back and they just figured the jig was up, that there element of surprise was over and that they better split.

But, my guess is that they just knew that it was going to be a big crazy fight and they were going to get seriously injured and that I was crazy and bigger than they thought and just too much trouble. I guess mugger's work on the art of surprise and this situation had turned on THEM. They must have figured that they should retreat and could find a much easier and simpler target.

I'll never know for sure what really saved me on that fateful night or why it happened to me. I just know that I have faced a life and death situation that most people will never experience. Even if I could've turned back time and avoided this scenario or erased it from ever happening, I wouldn't have. This experience unlocked in me an ancient survival mechanism that is still alive and well. I have been tested, as if I've been in some kind of initiation rights with a secret group of elite warriors and ancient wise men of days gone by.

I will spend the rest of my life unafraid to die, and know, to my innermost self, that I am protected by invisible forces that have proven to me that I'm on this planet for a reason and that I have purpose.