

**DANGEROUS  
INSTINCTS**

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## Introduction

**N**ot long after I retired from the FBI, I hired Paul, a carpenter, to replace the drywall in my bathroom. He'd originally been referred to me by a close friend, someone who'd known him for some time.

Paul was decorated with tattoos from head to foot, and he wore his hair in a ponytail. I knew that there were plenty of people—perhaps you are one of them—who would think that Paul looked scary.

My friend had also told me that Paul had been a member of a gang many years before. This piece of information concerned me, so I asked Paul about it.

He did not attempt to hide his past. He talked about it openly. “I threw down the colors,” he said, implying that he no longer lived that lifestyle.

After talking for a while, I could tell, based on how he'd answered my questions and the referral from my friend, that Paul was a conscientious, hard worker. He was a true craftsman. I could tell from his behavior that he was really a gentle soul. I didn't want to exclude him just because of something he might have been involved in twenty years ago. I based my decision to hire him on the behavior and the personality of the man he is today. I gave him the benefit of the doubt. I hired him to replace the drywall in my bathroom.

When he showed up for work, however, Paul brought along his cousin

Jack. The friend who'd recommended Paul had not mentioned a cousin. Paul had not told me about his cousin. I had not interviewed Jack before, and I had no references for him. I knew absolutely nothing about him.

Normally I did not allow people into my house before asking them a few questions. It comes with the job.

I'd spent more than fourteen years with the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU). The BAU—the focus of the hit television crime drama *Criminal Minds*—consults with law enforcement all over the world to help it understand and solve some of the most violent and complex crimes ever committed.

I'd interviewed some of the world's most prolific serial killers. I'd walked through their lairs. I'd seen what they'd done to their victims. I'd glimpsed the worst examples of man's inhumanity to man.

I've seen what can happen when someone lets the wrong person through her front door.

Should I break this safety rule just this once and allow this other person into my home?

Paul introduced us. We talked briefly. Jack seemed likable, polite, and certainly nonthreatening.

I knew that Paul wanted to mentor someone in the business. I knew he wanted to pass on his master craftsman's skills. We'd talked about this before, and I'd thought it was a nice thing for Paul to want to do.

And since Jack was his cousin, I assumed Paul knew Jack well—well enough to know whether it was a good idea to bring him into the home of an FBI agent. I let them in. Paul supervised Jack the entire time. Neither one gave me any cause for concern. They replaced my drywall, and then they left.

I could see that Paul took great care with his work. He did a quality job. As a result, I hired Paul several times after that. Sometimes Jack came with him. Sometimes he didn't.

I later heard that Jack had been arrested for attempting to hire a contract killer to murder his girlfriend. Then I heard that he'd tried to take out contracts on additional people from his jail cell.

And I'd opened my door and allowed him into my home, even though I had not checked him out, because my gut instinct had told me that he was safe.

## Danger Is Not Instinctual

Of all people, I know not to trust gut feelings. Based on what I saw and experienced on the job as an FBI behavioral analyst, I know that you can't decide whether a person or a situation is dangerous based only on whether you feel fearful.

In my work as an FBI agent and an FBI profiler for many years, I've interviewed countless victims who told me that they "never saw it coming." Their feelings did not alert them that danger was in their midst. The instincts and intuition they thought they could trust had let them down and caused them, at times, to willingly walk into harm's way. Over and over again, I saw people unwittingly bring the same sorts of issues and problems into their lives. They:

- didn't know how to get people to open up, do what they wanted, or provide the information they sought
- did not seem to have the ability to recognize the risks they were about to walk into
- consistently made poor decisions that resulted in years of regret
- were not able to recognize individuals who posed a real threat to them or their family

*Dangerous Instincts* teaches you how to go beyond the gut feelings that get so many people into trouble. In this book you'll find a simple analytical process that will help you to more accurately detect danger, deceit, evasiveness, and more. You'll learn about dangerous behavior, risky situations, high-risk decision making, interpersonal communication, and even psychopaths—individuals without consciences who are stunningly callous and lacking in empathy for others. This book shows you how to peel back human behavior in an illustrative way so you can use that information to make better decisions, size up people more accurately, assess potentially threatening situations, minimize threats in your everyday life, and conduct better "interviews" with people in everyday life situations—both at work and at home.

## Do You Go with Your Gut?

We tend to trust our bodily sensations: hair pricking on the backs of our necks, shivers down our spines, racing heartbeats, and sinking gut feelings. We've been taught to read such sensations as signs of trouble and their absence as signs of safety. Yet over and over again, I've seen gut feelings lead people to ignore very rational signs that all is *not* okay and to instead open the door to danger.

It's these gut sensations that cause smart people to do seemingly unwise things, to engage in risky behaviors that earn them the kind of fame no one wants. They become the victims of identity theft, phishing schemes, bad investments, and physical harm. They suffer needless regret and heartache.

Their false security about their ability to judge someone's personality and intentions causes them to trust the very people they should not—con men, pedophiles, serial rapists, murderers, stalkers, spouse abusers, and psychopaths.

Indeed it was very likely just these sorts of “dangerous instincts” that caused investors to trust Bernie Madoff with their money. It's tempting to think that you would not have been tricked by Madoff—that something in your gut would have alerted you that he was up to no good. But are you sure about that? Madoff swindled many highly educated, powerful people over a period of ten to twenty years. Did all of those people ignore their gut instincts when they agreed to those investments? Did they sense fear, trickery, suspicion, and uncertainty, and then push them aside?

Their behavior would suggest otherwise. They followed through with investing their money with him. These investors were not naive. They were not of low intelligence. They were not lacking in common sense.

Investors trusted Madoff precisely because he knew how to manipulate their gut feelings. He disarmed them with his charm. He impressed them with his career accomplishments. He lulled them with glowing recommendations from other investors who were also unknowingly being conned. He was incredibly successful, wealthy, and respected. He had

been in business for years. He knew people in high places, and he himself was at the top.

Madoff knew how to make investors feel good about him and about his scheme. He created a sanctuary of false safety. People trusted him. They liked him.

As a result, they gave him their money.

We all like to think of ourselves as smarter and less naive than the typical crime victim. We like to think that we somehow possess instincts that would alert us when a dangerous person is in our midst.

I've found, however, that few if any of us have instincts that are so accurate and perceptive that we should ever rely on them when making important decisions, especially when those decisions involve our safety or the safety of our families, workplaces, or finances.

In reality, our instincts lead us to read people incorrectly. They cause us to overlook or ignore the dangerousness of some people and situations. They cause us to make poor and, at times, unwise and unsafe decisions about whom to trust to:

- manage our money
- watch our children
- clean or repair our homes
- lock up our businesses at night
- work at our companies
- friend us on Facebook
- share our information on Twitter
- help us pass the time as we sit in an airport or wait for a train
- give us or our children a ride
- date and marry

## **Do You Really Know Your Neighbors?**

Frequently when I lecture, someone will raise a hand and claim to be a phenomenally good judge of personality and to have flawless instincts.

Perhaps you feel the same way.



That's why I want you to think about these questions:

1. How do you know that others around you are not dangerous? For instance, how do you decide who to rent a room to, whether it's okay to allow your child to sleep over at a neighbor's house, or whether to give your neighbor the key to yours?
2. How safe is it to allow your child to drive with another teen or parents from the neighborhood?
3. How do you know that your next-door neighbor isn't a dangerous psychopath, a sex offender, or an arsonist?
4. Based on your gut feelings, which of those three types of criminals (arsonist, psychopath, or sex offender) do you think would be worse to have living next door?

If you are like most people, then you probably don't put much thought into whether it's safe for your child to sleep at a neighbor's home or whether it's safe to invite those neighbors to your home for dinner. That's because your instincts tell you that your neighbor is trustworthy, and your instincts tell you this because your neighbor does normal things that other normal, well-adjusted people do. For instance, he's probably married and has kids. He might walk his dog each morning or grow vegetables in a backyard garden. Maybe he dresses up in a suit, gets in a car, and goes to work every day. He probably looks normal, too, and so do his house and yard. The grass is well groomed. The shutters are freshly painted. There's a basketball hoop over the garage door.

He's friendly and polite. He waves when he sees you. He asks you about your day and about your kids. He tells you about his. He makes eye contact. He shakes your hand. He smiles. He's even done generous favors for you, like shovel your sidewalks and driveway when you've been out of town.

All of those seemingly normal characteristics are precisely why park ranger David Parker Ray easily blended into his Elephant Butte Lake neighborhood in New Mexico. His neighbors described him as a "regular guy." None had any idea that he was a sexual sadist who was using a small

trailer in his backyard as a torture chamber. It was there that he repeatedly shocked, beat, and terrorized an unknown number of women over a period of many years.

His neighbors thought he was a normal guy and, after I interviewed David Parker Ray, I could understand why. He took my hand and cupped it in both of his. He said, “How are you? It’s nice to meet you.” He politely answered my questions. He cracked jokes. He was charming and gracious. He seemed as if he was a sixty-year-old man who respected and admired women. I had to continually tell myself, “Don’t forget what you know, Mary Ellen. You just came from that toy box.” (The “toy box” was David’s term for the room where he stored his whips, chains, pulleys, straps, clamps, blades, saws, sex toys, and other devices that he used to torture women. It’s where he kept women for hours and days as he tortured them, became sexually aroused, and recorded all his deviant sexual behavior so he could watch it and enjoy it later on.)

I knew what David had done and I knew what David was—a criminal sexual sadist. He was sexually aroused by the victim’s response to his infliction of physical and emotional pain. He had kidnapped his victims, drugged them, and kept them in his home and in the toy box for his sexual pleasure.

“It might not seem as if this man is capable of doing that,” I reminded myself. “But you know that a victim was found running out of his home, naked, wearing only a chain around her neck and telling police she had been physically tortured, repeatedly, by Ray and a female friend for several days following his kidnapping her.”

Indeed, outside his toy box David Parker Ray did not seem anything other than perfectly normal. Inside it, he was anything but.

Our upbringings and our media consumption have trained us to believe numerous myths that cause us to overlook the David Parker Rays in our midst. One of these myths is that of the straggly haired stranger. This is the guy who roams the world, committing heinous crimes, never gets caught, and just keeps on getting away with his horrible behavior. The myth of the straggly haired stranger is one of several I will explore in this book—myths that cause many of us to let our guard down at precisely the wrong moment and to keep it up when we otherwise don’t have to.

For instance, you'll learn the following:

- That our instincts often lead us to trust people based on superficial details—details that generally have little to do with true normalcy. In fact, dangerous people can be masters at appearing normal. They dress nicely and keep their houses presentable. They usually don't look out of place. They don't seem threatening, and our underlying belief is that if we are nice to them they will be nice to us.
- We generally distrust people based on superficial details too. This is why we often assume that straggly haired strangers—especially the ones who are socially inept, off-putting, and shifty eyed—pose the greatest threat to us. In reality, some of the most dangerous of people fit right in. They can be outgoing, charming, and exceptionally good at making eye contact and putting us at ease.

In reality, you can't tell whether one of your neighbors is a sex offender, psychopath, or arsonist just by giving him or her the once-over. You also can't tell—based on the type of car he or she owns—if your neighbor is a responsible driver who does not text while behind the wheel or has serious anger-management issues that result in frequent road rage. Knowing that your neighbor is married or has children tells you, for instance, nothing about the massive gun collection in his home, one he keeps loaded and ready to be used at a moment's notice. You don't know if those guns are stored where curious children can access them, or if he uses them to threaten his family when he has had too much to drink after a bad day at the office.

I'm guessing that there's a lot you don't know about your neighbors, but by the end of this book you'll realize what you don't know, why those details are important, and how to fill in those blanks.

As for what's worse, a sex offender, an arsonist, or a psychopath—it depends. A psychopath might be a violent serial killer. That's scary. I wouldn't want someone like that living next door to me! Yet not all psychopaths are violent. In fact, most are not. A sex offender could be a serial rapist or someone with fantasies about abducting and holding adolescent children. For instance, it could be someone like John Es-

posito, the man who abducted ten-year-old Katie Beers—a child he knew because he was friendly with her family—and for sixteen days confined her in a two-by-three-foot bunker he'd built in his suburban home. Or the sex offender might be someone who was convicted of statutory rape because he'd had sex with a consenting sixteen-year-old when he was eighteen. There's a big difference between those two extremes. The arsonist could be someone like John Leonard Orr, a fire captain and one of the most highly regarded arson investigators in California, who was convicted of setting deadly fires in crowded, public places. Or it could be someone who played with matches when he was twelve, accidentally burned down a family shed, and ended up being labeled an arsonist even though he never set another fire.

“Psychopath,” “arsonist,” and “sex offender” are all labels. To truly understand whether someone is dangerous, you must look behind the label and study that person's behavior. This book will show you how.

## What Profilers Know

I am always asked, “What does a profiler do? How do you analyze behavior? What do you look for?”

TV programs like *Criminal Minds* and *CSI*, along with hundreds of Hollywood movies and books, attempt to capture the essence of the profiler's “process,” but they get it wrong a lot of the time. Profiling is not magic. Profilers do not walk into a room, glance at the suit someone is wearing, and proclaim, “You're the killer. I can tell by your body language and that one book on your bookshelf.”

No, we're not psychic or mind readers and we don't rely on crystal balls. Instead we are observers of behavior. We take into account what we observe at a crime scene and also consider the behaviors that are absent from a crime scene. We add that to other pertinent information, like forensics (blood-spatter patterns, ballistics, and wound pathology), autopsy reports, investigative reports, and more. We use that information to develop a “criminal investigative analysis” (a profile), investigative and interview strategies, and strategies for the prosecution during court procedures.

For years, as an FBI profiler, I studied human behavior—the behavior of the offender, the behavior of the victim, and the behavior of other people who surrounded both.

It wasn't until after I'd retired that I realized what I'd learned as a profiler could be very useful to others. That is what this book is about. It captures the process of an FBI profiler and applies that process to everyday life. It teaches you how to read behavior so you can assess the dangerousness of situations; make the kinds of decisions that, though all of us make them regularly, have a far-reaching impact on our lives; and effectively communicate with people, especially when strong interviewing skills are essential.

You will probably never find yourself in a position where you have to track down a dangerous criminal. It is not likely you will ever interview a serial killer, a kidnapper, a bank robber, a politician who has taken thousands in bribes, or the victim of a violent crime.

You will, however, be able to learn from a profiler's expertise and apply that expertise to your life. For instance, some of the communication skills I successfully relied on in hundreds of interviews with dangerous criminals can make a big difference in the success of your interpersonal communication with the people around you—family, friends, colleagues, and even strangers.

Normally information about how to stay safe focuses on what to do if you are, for example, tossed into the trunk of a car or abducted at knife- or gunpoint—both of which are incredibly rare situations that the vast majority of people will never find themselves in. Here you will learn how to make the kinds of serious and stressful decisions that confront all of us, all the time. Decisions like the following:

- whether to hand your car keys over to your teen or allow him or her to catch a ride from a friend
- how to respond when a coworker spreads lies about you and tries to malign you at work or on the Internet
- who to hire to manage your finances, fix your computer, babysit your child, or clean your home
- whether it's a good idea to place a personal ad online, what it

should say, and how you will screen the people who respond to it

- what to do when a friend or family member asks to move in with you
- how to handle a bullying incident at your child's school
- how to respond when your college-age daughter accidentally lets it slip that her boyfriend might have anger-management issues

Think about the important decisions you make. Can you trust your housekeeper with a key to your home? Is it safe to let your child's coach give him a ride home from practice? Should you make this financial investment with someone recommended to you? Is it okay to bring the guy you are dating home with you for the night? Should you give your Social Security number and other sensitive information to this financial adviser? Should you confront that neighbor about a problem you are having with him?

Such decisions and how you handle them can pose serious, long-term ramifications. They can result in lost sleep and worry. And in some cases the wrong decision, the wrong actions, or the wrong communication style can put you in a situation where the consequences are stunning and might even result in death or dire legal, financial, or career problems.

Wouldn't you like to know that you are making the best and safest decision in such cases? Wouldn't you want to know how to see signs of danger and do something about it? Wouldn't you like to be able to spot problem behavior before it's too late to respond?

*Dangerous Instincts* will help you to do all of that and more.

## The Secret of SMART Decision Making

While at the FBI, I used a logical, step-by-step process to make important decisions. I used it when deciding how to interview suspects, when doing threat and dangerousness assessments of individuals, and when creating investigative and interview strategies that would lead to the iden-

tification of a suspect or cause one to open up and talk about his crimes. This process, however, works for *all* important decisions and can be used by any person. You don't need a background in psychology or criminology to use it.

This book will teach you this process. I call it SMART, an acronym that stands for “sound method of assessing and recognizing trouble.” You'll learn more about it in chapter 2. For now, know that this process will show you how to assess other people for signs of potentially dangerous behavioral characteristics. You'll find out how to get people to open up and give you the information you seek—even people like stonewalling spouses, cagey job applicants, and threatening neighbors. You'll even find out how to tell if someone is lying or being evasive—and what to do about it.

*Dangerous Instincts* will help you minimize your decision-making risk and be safer overall. You will feel more confident and self-assured that you have weighed all your options, done a thorough risk assessment, and made the smartest decision possible.

**DANGEROUS  
INSTINCTS**





## Chapter 1

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# Test Your Instincts

**W**ould you date a rapist? Would you get into a drunk driver's car? Would you ask a thief to invest your money? Would you allow your child to sleep over at a pedophile's house? Would you let a serial killer into your home? Would you ignore behavior that warns that someone will likely shoot up a school, college classroom, or a workplace?

Most people answer all of those questions with a loud and confident "No!" I'm guessing you would as well. Like most people, you might assume that you would sense if someone were about to con or hurt you. Perhaps you think that you would get an "all is not right" sensation in your gut, heart, or somewhere else.

Unless you are highly unusual, however, you probably wouldn't sense such danger at all. If more people could sense deceit or danger, a lot fewer people would become victims of violent crime, identity theft, pyramid schemes, and investment fraud.

When I talk with people about the unfortunate events that have taken place over their lives, I hear expressions like "It just came out of nowhere," "I never saw that one coming," and "I can't believe something like this could have happened to me."

Such expressions are telling. They mean that these folks were not forewarned by any gut feelings at all. They did not sense fear. They did

not sense deceit. They did not have a premonition of something bad about to happen.

Their instincts and intuition let them down. Have yours let you down too? Later in this book, we'll walk through some of the decisions you've made in the past, and we'll analyze them to see what type of an assessment process you used, how well it's working for you, and whether it can be improved upon.

For now, let's have a little fun. Consider the scenarios in the following pages. Think carefully about what you would do in each. How would you assess the situation? What information would you factor into your decision? What information would you deem not important? Then consult the answer that follows each question to find out just how dangerous your instincts really are.

## The Test

**1. Jane is widowed and in her early fifties. It's been a few years since her spouse passed away and now she is ready to meet someone. Her friends, however, do not know any bachelors her age, and she's been unable to meet any at church or through her various hobbies. Her friends have been telling her to try online dating. She's resisted for a long time, assuming that she would only meet undesirable men that way. She's also been a little embarrassed to think she might have to resort to this in order to meet a man. And she's wondered if there's something wrong with her that she can't meet someone the old-fashioned way. Maybe she's too old, not attractive anymore, or too set in her ways?**

**Having exhausted her other options, Jane decides to give online dating a try. She joins an online dating site and reads a bunch of ads on it. Most of the descriptions seem like outright lies or just pathetic. She is about ready to give up hope when she comes across this ad placed by Kevin, a fifty-eight-year-old man:**

*I am looking for that special someone who will love and care for me and always be there for me as I will be there for her. I'm not into play-*

*ing games. I'm financially independent and recently retired from running my own company for many years. I've traveled the world. I am physically fit and good-looking. I'm ready to settle down with the perfect soul mate. I will treat you with respect, kindness, caring, understanding, trust, honesty, compassion, love, and joy.*

**What, if anything, can Jane tell from this ad that will help her to determine whether to get in touch with Kevin? What types of questions might she ask him to determine whether he's someone she would like to date? And what should she tell him about herself?**

Should Jane hop on this one quick before someone else snatches up this great catch of a guy? I'm not so sure about that. Before I get into why I think Jane should be wary of this gentleman, let's take a closer look at the potential pros and cons of this decision. On the positive side, Kevin might be the perfect catch, someone who will serve as a wonderful companion for Jane. But I'm a retired FBI profiler who chased bad guys for most of my career, so of course one of the first thoughts that pops into my head is that Kevin could also be a serial killer, rapist, or con man. Con artists have been known to comb dating sites in search of victims. For instance, William Michael Barber (also known as the Don Juan of Con) allegedly lured several of his victims via Internet dating sites. He married them, cleaned out their bank accounts, and then fled.

Romance fraud is one of the top five ruses used by Internet scam artists. In such "sweetheart scams" the con artist usually claims to live in another country. He might tell you that he is blown away by your photo and feels a strong bond and can't wait to meet you in person. Alas, he doesn't have enough money for airfare. Will you send him money for a ticket?

Can you see where this is headed?

But even if Kevin isn't a murderer or a con man, he might have a drinking problem, mental-health issues, or serious anger-management problems. Jane would not want to take on those kinds of problems. He might be someone who gets involved in one dead-end relationship after another. He may have stalked or harassed other women who broke up with him. If he's *not* the perfect catch, it's a waste of Jane's time and might

prevent her from finding the right man. More important, dating him could lead to emotional pain and suffering, financial loss, or even physical harm.

Because of all of this, Jane will want to be very careful. If she misreads him and fails to spot danger signs ahead of time, the potential risk to her is quite high. Now let's take a closer look at what Kevin wrote in his ad:

- *I am looking for that special someone who will love and care for me and always be there for me as I will be there for her.* This is what he's looking for. He wants a woman who will always be there for him. So far, so good, although the word "always" should give Jane pause. This could be a sign that Kevin might see the world in black-and-white terms—a world of absolutes—which could suggest a certain amount of rigidity. He writes that he wants someone who would love and care for him. That's asking for a lot. In return, he "will be there for her." That sounds a little inequitable—as if he's not offering as much as he's asking for. He could be using linguistic flattery to lure a woman into having contact with him. His words could be more seductive than truthful.

- *I'm not into playing games.* Whenever someone offers unsolicited information about what they are *not*, it stands out as a red flag. When I see the phrase "I'm not into playing games," I wonder if someone has accused him of playing games in the past. Otherwise, why bring it up?

It's similar to someone saying, "I don't want to hurt your feelings but . . ." In other words, they don't want to hurt my feelings but are going to go ahead and do it anyway. These kinds of phrases are indicators of deception. They don't necessarily guarantee that someone is trying to deceive you, but they are indicators that they might be. Such phrases should make you pause so you can consider the other person's true motives.

- *I'm financially independent and recently retired from running my own company for many years.* He's implying that he is financially stable. This might be a good thing for Jane.

- *I've traveled the world.* He's worldly. This is possibly another plus in Kevin's favor.

- *I am physically fit and good-looking.* Although this might sound like a plus, I would counsel Jane to think about the kind of person who would boast about being good-looking. Whether he's easy on the eyes or not, most nonnarcissistic people do not describe themselves as "good-looking." Does Jane want to date someone who is self-absorbed? More important, does she want to date someone who might be dangerous? Psychopaths tend to be narcissistic and grandiose—they are precisely the type of people who would brag about owning their own companies, of being good-looking, and of traveling the world.

- *I'm ready to settle down with the perfect soul mate.* This line initially might make Kevin seem like a man who is ready to commit. I, however, would counsel Jane to take a closer look at the word "perfect." No woman is perfect. Is he searching for something that is not real? Will he hold Jane up to standards that she can't possibly meet? It's likely, especially when you add the word "perfect" to the word "always" from a few sentences before.

Now let's consider the term "soul mate." A friend of mine often says, "Soul mates are like unicorns. Neither one exists." I subscribe to that notion. If Kevin is looking for a unicorn, he's setting himself—and Jane—up for disappointment. Jane is only human after all.

He also might be using this phrase and others because he wants to impress women and persuade them to lower their guard. If this man is a psychopath, then he will say anything about himself—true or not—if he thinks it will help him achieve his goal. He will have read that women want a "soul mate," so he will use that term as a lure. It may have helped him to lure women in the past.

- *I will treat you with respect, kindness, caring, understanding, trust, honesty, compassion, love, and joy.* This line certainly makes Kevin sound like a great guy. After all, who wouldn't want to be treated this way? That's precisely why I would counsel Jane to be

wary. There are too many positive nouns in this sentence. It's over the top. It's a little too good to be true.

Let's assume for a moment that I'm overanalyzing the ad and that this Kevin is a good guy who just wants to meet a good woman. Maybe, for argument's sake, Kevin asked his granddaughter for help with the ad, and that's why it has so many flowery and over-the-top descriptions.

Even if that's the case, Jane has no way of knowing, from the ad alone, what Kevin is really like. If I were Jane's life coach, I would recommend that she e-mail Kevin a number of open-ended questions that will help her to learn more about him and determine what kind of person he is:

- How do you feel about online dating and the type of people you meet?
- What are your biggest concerns about meeting someone online?
- What do you think are the risks?
- When you've had good dating experiences, how did those experiences go?
- When you've had bad dating experiences, what made those experiences bad?

In his answers, she will want to look for verification that what he said in the ad is true. Here are a few things she could look for and what they mean:

- *He blames all his past failed relationships on the women involved.* He might not be as understanding as he claims to be.

- *He writes numerous "I" and "me" statements.* He could be too self-absorbed for Jane's tastes.

- *He evades her questions.* Rather than directly answering, he says, "Let me get back to you on that" or "I don't know about that but . . ." Or he might pretend he never got the question at all, or he

might change the topic. Any of this might mean that there's something he'd rather Jane didn't know.

- *He responds defensively.* He asks, "Why would you ask me something like that?" This, too, could mean that the question has hit a nerve and that he's got something to hide.

- *He continually talks about how great he is.* He might be trying to overcompensate for something Jane might perceive as a negative. He also might be incredibly arrogant and self-centered.

- *He is fearless and disregards any risks.* He might be the type of person who would not be able to understand the feelings of others. If he is a thrill seeker who does not think through his decisions, he might be too willing to take risks involving Jane, her life, her money, her investments, and her feelings, and that could create serious problems for her.

You'll learn more about how to interview people and interpret the answers they provide in chapter 8.

**2. Dr. James works in human resources at a major university and will be part of a team interviewing potential candidates for an associate professor position in the English department. He is concerned about the incidents of school and campus shootings, as well as other incidents of workplace violence, throughout the country. What information do you think will be important for Dr. James when he and his team interview an applicant to ensure that the person does not one day threaten violence or act out violently at the university?**

Did this question stump you? It stumps most people. And it does because most people assume either that people who are likely to become violent in the workplace have a certain look about them—they are easy to spot—or that it's impossible to spot someone who is likely to become violent until the day that person acts out. They assume that violent people



snap, and there's no predicting who will snap and who won't until the day it happens.

Neither of these assumptions is true. People who commit workplace violence don't dress a certain way, have a specific hairstyle, or share any other visual characteristic. They are not necessarily all loners with poor social skills who live alone in a disheveled home with a cat. (This stereotype gives a bad name to those of us who live alone, own a cat, and are very happy and a risk to no one!)

A good interviewer, however, can spot someone who is likely to commit workplace violence.

For example, people who are predisposed to workplace violence are likely to have anger issues, a preoccupation with violence, and are "injustice collectors" (more on injustice collectors on page 186). That means they are easily offended, and they do not forgive or forget. They ruminate about real or imagined insults and blame others for their failures.<sup>1</sup> Of course, Dr. James can't ask, "Are you an injustice collector?" during an interview, but he can ask the following questions:

- How do you feel about the tenure process? What do you think the university administration should take into account when granting or not granting tenure?
- In the past, when management hasn't handled things to your liking, what have you done?
- What type of coworkers have you had problems with in the past and how have you resolved those problems?
- What type of feedback, both negative and positive have you received in your prior positions, and how did you address the negative feedback?

As he listens to a candidate answer these questions, Dr. James will be looking for information that the candidate might accidentally leak out. For instance, does the candidate blame others for conflicts and criticism or take ownership of his other mistakes? Someone who blames others might, at best, not be a joy to work with. At worst, he could be an injustice collector who harbors violent fantasies, resents others for their success,

broods about perceived mistreatment at work, and who one day decides to act out violently against his bosses and coworkers.

Dr. James will also want to listen for times when the candidate might have disagreed with a policy and then just ignored it and broke the rules. That could be a red flag. You'll learn more about how to screen people for threatening violent behavior later in this book.

**3. A new family has moved into Shannon's neighborhood. They have a son about her son's age, and the children have hit it off. Shannon briefly met the new family on the day they moved in. They seemed pleasant and normal enough. Their son, Kyle, wants her son, Max, to sleep over for the night. What types of things should Shannon make sure she knows before agreeing to allow her son to spend the night?**

In my experience, I saw more people willing to let their children go with others they don't know well than to lend their cars to a good friend. If you are a parent and you are being honest with yourself, then you can probably think of times when you've allowed your child to sleep over at another child's house without a second thought. You may have done it without even meeting the other child's parents.

Or if you did know the parents and you did ask some questions, chances are the questions centered on basic things like what time they put the kids to bed and whether dinner would be served.

You did so because your instincts told you that these neighbors were safe, and they probably caused you to think so for these reasons:

- You assume that dangerous people don't have spouses and children, and that they either live alone or live in someone else's neighborhood.
- You assume that no parent could ever hurt a child. You think all parents possess an instinctual empathy that causes them to want to protect any child.
- You assume that people who look normal *are* normal, and your neighbors all look normal.

- Your children attend the same school, and you assume the school would have spotted something and done something about it if there were a problem.

Yet all of these reasons are false, and you'll learn more about why later in this book. Even if Shannon's new neighbors are not pedophiles or murderers, there are still many questions that she has not yet considered:

- Are there loaded guns in the house and, if so, is it possible for the children to access them?
- Does this couple own porn or violent videos that Shannon doesn't want her son to see?
- Does either parent drink excessively or do drugs, including abusing over-the-counter drugs?
- Is either parent verbally or physically abusive?
- Do any members of the family have anger-management issues?
- Does anyone in the family engage in sexually inappropriate behavior?
- Are there animals in the house? If so, are they child-friendly?
- Are hazardous substances like cleaning fluids, pest-control chemicals, and flammables kept out of reach and safely stored?
- Is either parent careless about smoking, cooking, baking, or the proper use of space heaters and likely to accidentally start a fire?
- Do they lock their doors at night?
- Are there other children in the home? If so, what is their disposition? Are any of them likely to bully, abuse, or threaten Shannon's son?
- Who else comes into the home? Who else has access to the children?
- Does either parent have criminal records and for what? Do they associate with people who have criminal records and, if so, for what?

- Have these new neighbors had problems with families in neighborhoods where they've previously lived?

Are you thinking, "Who could ask such questions? My neighbors would think I'm a paranoid freak if I asked such things!" You have a point. These are not the kinds of questions that Shannon can ask in rapid fire while standing on her neighbor's front porch. They could be interpreted as offensive, and the neighbors might become defensive. If they had something to hide, they would make sure to hide it.

I would counsel Shannon to explain that this is not a good night for a sleepover. This is a stalling tactic, designed to provide Shannon with more time to gather important information. Shannon should definitely go online and check to see if these neighbors are registered sex offenders and whether there have been any police reports that mention their names. For instance, if they have a dangerous dog that has bitten someone, there will probably be a police report on the incident or their addresses might be listed on a dangerous-dog registry. Shannon will be able to find any of this publicly available information on the Internet. While she's at it, she might Google the names of all the family members, just to see what comes up. Is either parent writing a blog? If so, what is it about? Are they on Facebook, Myspace, or another social networking site? If so, what types of things do they post?

Do you think this is excessive? Consider that Phillip Garrido, the man accused of kidnapping and holding Jaycee Dugard for eighteen years, was a registered sex offender. His neighbors thought he was an okay guy. One of them spotted a young girl in Garrido's backyard soon after Dugard's disappearance, but he thought nothing of it. Had that neighbor checked up on Garrido and discovered that Garrido was a registered sex offender who was barred by law from spending time with children, he might have thought to call the police.

But let's say everything checks out: Shannon's neighbors are not registered sex offenders, they have a squeaky-clean police record, and a Google search reveals nothing out of the ordinary. Does the absence of information mean that problem behavior is absent? Not necessarily.

Next she might meet with her neighbors in different social settings.

She might visit them for a chat. While in their home, she might see objects that will allow her to ask important questions in a polite way. For instance, if she sees mounted deer heads, she could ask, “Do you hunt?” The answer to that question will allow her to politely ask other questions that help her to determine whether there are guns in the house and where and how they are stored.

She might also have the neighbors over for dinner, during which she can more easily ask many questions and listen carefully to the information they provide. She might, for instance, observe the mother and father. How do they interact? Does the father seem to control the mother and tell her what to do and say? Do they fight a little too openly, as if aggressive arguing is commonplace for them? Do they drink too much? Do they trash everyone they know? How do they treat their children? Are they domineering? Are they on top of things? Or do they ignore their kids?

Over time, as Shannon gets to know this family better, she’ll be able to make a better decision about whether it’s safe for her child to sleep in their home.

**4. A telephone repairman comes to your door. He’s dressed in a uniform. He shows you his identification and tells you he is working on lines that were damaged during a recent storm. He tells you his work will be limited to the outside, but he will need access to your phone line inside the house at some point. He is believable, seems trustworthy, his story makes sense, and he is polite and professional. How do you decide whether to let him in?**

Perhaps you’ve let such a person into your home before. Maybe it was someone who wanted to test your water. Maybe it was a salesperson who wanted to give you a free estimate for replacing your windows. Maybe it was a census worker. Whoever it was, you did a quick once-over and assumed that the person did not look dangerous. Anyway, he or she would not be there very long.

You were fortunate.

Several women in the Midwest who opened their doors to Anthony

Joe LaRette were not. He was dressed in a telephone repairman's uniform. Because of this, these women did not perceive him as a threat. They let him into their homes. Then he sexually assaulted and/or murdered them.

Dangerous people are quite adept at seeming harmless and at spinning lies that lead you to trust them. Based on what I've witnessed during my career with the FBI, I can tell you this with conviction: We can't tell if someone is dangerous just by giving them a quick look up and down. I'm trained to detect psychopathic traits in people. Even I wouldn't trust myself to be able to tell—just by looking at someone—if it was safe to let a stranger inside. Psychopathy, the most dangerous of personality disorders, cannot be assessed simply by looking at someone. Most of the time, neither can other types of dangerousness.

You might be thinking that people like Anthony Joe LaRette are rare. That's true. The likelihood of you opening your door to a serial killer is roughly one in 8.7 million. You are more likely to get struck by lightning.

It is more likely, however, that you might be facing someone who is casing your home (in order to burglarize it later) or who has intentions of scamming you.

I recommend that you consider the following before making a decision to open the door:

- Are you expecting someone?
- How easy would it be for the person on the other side of the door to overpower you and force his or her way in? (Note: It's a lot easier for someone to push his or her way in than most people think.)
- Are you alone? If you are not alone, would someone be able to get help or fend off a potential attacker? Is there someone home who is even more vulnerable than you are, making it even more important to not allow a stranger into your home?
- Can you verify the identity of the person on the other side of the door without making yourself vulnerable to an attack?

Can you see who it is through a window or peephole, or talk to the person through the door? Can you call the company to make sure the service person is there legitimately, on company business?

- Does he have anything on him or in his hands that could be used as a weapon against you?

You might say that these are all basic precautions, yet I see people ignore them every day. I have neighbors, for instance, who never lock their doors—day or night. And I know many parents who assume that their latchkey children know better than to open the door whenever someone knocks and no adults are home. I can't tell you how many grieving parents I have comforted who told me, "But she knows not to open the door. I told her never to open the door to a stranger." In my experience, children always open the door.

Later in this book, you'll create your own assessment process for detecting trouble at the front door. For now, however, if you are not expecting someone, you are vulnerable, and you cannot verify the identity of the person at the door, I would recommend not answering the door at all. Anyone with a legitimate reason to be there will leave a note or follow up with a phone call. Although this might seem rude, consider that your safety is more important than whether the company gets the job done that day.

**5. Larry is one of many professionals who commutes to work in the D.C. area, where drivers can only travel in the commuter lane—and avoid the worst of the rush-hour traffic—if they have a passenger in their car. For this reason, “slugging” has become a common practice. Sluggers gather at park and ride lots and catch rides with other commuters, usually people they've just met. Larry is such a slugger.**

Larry's wife doesn't like that he does this. She worries that it is dangerous and has warned him that he's eventually going to get into a serial killer's car. Larry has assured her that slugging is perfectly safe. No one has ever been murdered as a result of it.

**“Serial killers might prey on hitchhikers and prostitutes, but they don’t prey on commuters,” he tells her. “Anyway, I can fight off anyone. No one is going to overpower me.”**

**Today Larry has a choice between two drivers. One is a woman in a Mercedes. He peers in her window. He sees a child’s car seat in the back. The driver is alone. She’s dressed in a professional pants suit and seems friendly. It looks like she’s got the AC going, and it’s a hot day.**

**The other driver is a man in an old sedan that is missing its hubcaps. He’s dressed in jeans and a T-shirt. He has two other passengers. The windows are down. Larry can’t tell for sure, but he suspects that this car does not have AC.**

**Larry decides to go with the woman. He figures the ride will be a lot more pleasant, that few Mercedes-driving mothers are dangerous, and that he could overpower her if it became necessary.**

**What is wrong with Larry’s decision?**

Did you just do a set of mental calculations, trying to figure out which car would be safer for Larry? Maybe, like Larry, you thought the woman in the Mercedes was the best bet for the following reasons:

- She’s a woman and therefore less of a physical threat.
- She has kids (based on the car seat in the back).
- She’s in a luxury car.

Or maybe you thought the other car was a safer bet because the presence of other passengers would provide safety in numbers.

Both decisions, however, are flawed.

First let’s talk about the woman in the Mercedes. Beyond taking into account how it might perform in an accident, the type of car means very little in terms of personal safety. So does the presence of the child’s car seat.

The fact that she’s a woman could possibly make her slightly safer than the other driver, but not for the reasons that you or my hypothetical Larry probably think. If he thinks he can fight her off because he’s bigger



than she is, he's wrong. If she has a gun, his body size and physical strength will mean very little. She's safer than the other driver because women are three times less likely to die in car accidents than men are. According to the 2009 Traffic Safety Culture Index, men are also more likely to speed, run red lights, tailgate, and drive while fatigued.

But none of this means it's safe to get in her car. I'll elaborate on why in a couple of paragraphs.

First let's consider the other car. The problem with assuming safety in numbers is this: You don't know if the other passengers are innocent commuters like Larry or if they are accomplices planning to work with the driver in order to steal from or even murder Larry. Even if the driver is harmless, you don't know if all the passengers are, too, and vice versa.

But Larry's biggest lapse in judgment is this: He thinks he can look at a driver and tell if he or she is safe. He can't. Even I can't do that, and I'm trained to assess whether someone is a psychopath!

I'm guessing you might not believe me, so let me tell you a story. Colleen Stan also thought she could tell whether someone was dangerous. As she hitchhiked her way from Eugene, Oregon, to Westwood, California, she checked out each person who offered her a ride, trying to calculate the likelihood that the driver might be dangerous. She even passed up two rides because something seemed off about the drivers.

But when a Dodge Colt stopped and she saw a man, woman, and baby inside, she relaxed. They looked like a clean-cut, friendly family. She got in.

The driver was Cameron Hooker. He drove to a remote location, pulled out a knife, threatened to slash Colleen's throat, and then handcuffed, blindfolded, bound, and gagged her. He kept her as a sex slave for the next seven years—torturing her and keeping her locked in small box stored under his bed.

You just can't tell whether someone is dangerous by looking at them or at the type of car they drive or at what's in that car.

It would be exceedingly unlikely for Larry to step inside the car of a serial sexual sadist, but not for him to get in the car with someone who is a high-risk driver. You cannot look at someone and evaluate whether they are a skilled driver. You also cannot look at someone and tell whether they:

- text and drive or practice other dangerous or distracting driving behaviors
- have insurance that's up to date
- have drugs in the car that could get pinned on you if discovered by the police
- are operating a reliable vehicle, with airbags, seat belts and other safety features that are working properly
- have a neurological condition such as Alzheimer's disease that could impair their response time in breaking, swerving to avoid an accident, or taking other actions needed to drive a car safely
- drank alcohol or took drugs—legal or illegal—that morning
- have a bad driving record or prior incidents of aggressive driving or receiving multiple tickets or warnings
- own the car they are in

It doesn't matter how strong of a guy Larry is. If he steps into a car with a bad driver and that driver gets into a terrible accident, Larry is going to get hurt. These potential consequences of slugging won't make the front page of the newspaper, but they can have a serious and lasting negative impact on a person and their family's life.

Larry doesn't know any of these things about either driver. He never even thought of them. That means Larry doesn't have enough information to make a safe decision. More important, his ability to get those answers while standing in the middle of a park and ride lot are slim to none. Larry's wife is correct: Slugging could be dangerous. Eventually there is a good chance it will get him into trouble.

**6. Mary works in corporate security for a major bank. She is deciding what the bank should do about Caroline Miller, a twenty-one-year-old teller who has worked at the bank for one year. Caroline's supervisor and a consultant from human resources are worried that Caroline's twenty-four-year-old husband, Jim Miller, may attempt to come into the bank to threaten or hurt his wife.**

**In the past, Caroline has come to work with bruises and cuts,**

and she's explained them away by saying that she fell or was in a car accident. Now, however, Caroline has filed for divorce, and she has told the HR consultant that her husband is abusive.

According to Caroline, Jim has threatened to come to the bank and confront another employee, Peter Jones, because he thinks Caroline is having an affair with him. Since their separation, Jim and Caroline have been seen, by one of her coworkers, sitting in their car and arguing.

Within the last month, Caroline applied for a bank loan in order to purchase a new motorcycle. The loan was declined because of a poor credit rating.

When Caroline initially applied for her position with the bank, Jim also submitted an application for employment and was interviewed but not hired. His employment record was incomplete, and during the interview he admitted that he had a prior felony conviction for possession of drugs and illegal possession of a firearm. He explained that the conviction was a huge misunderstanding and that he was pursuing legal means to have his record "expunged." The woman who interviewed Jim for employment described him as being charming but egotistical. During the interview, the way Jim looked at her made her so uncomfortable that she had to look away. His eyes were like a snake's. It unnerved her.

About nine months ago, an unidentified man robbed the branch of the bank where Caroline works, pointing a gun at her and demanding all the money from her drawer. She complied. The same person is believed to be responsible for at least two other robberies at different banks in the area.

What do you think is going on here? What else does Mary need to know in order to make a decision about how to resolve the situation? Are these isolated events? Or do they all tie together?

I have used this scenario when I train corporate security and human resources personnel. It usually stumps most of the people in the room.

Some people might reason that Jim's charm, incomplete employment record, and attempt to explain away his criminal record as a "misunderstanding" are signs that he might be a psychopath.

I usually have a few people in the room who suspect that Jim might have been the person who robbed the bank.

Never, however, has anyone come up with the following questions for Mary to consider:

1. Is Caroline really a domestic abuse victim? Are the signs of domestic abuse a ruse to distract bank employees from something else?
2. If Jim robbed the bank, did Caroline hand over the money because she was scared or did she do it because she was complicit in his scheme?
3. What was really going on in the car when the coworker saw Jim and Caroline? Were they really fighting over the divorce? Was he making threats that she has not told the bank about? Is his violence escalating?
4. Will he come back to the bank and kill his wife and others because he is paranoid and jealous and suspects Caroline of having an affair?

We've been conditioned to sympathize with and trust people who appear like victims. For instance, a few years ago, when a woman accused three Duke University lacrosse players of rape, most people vehemently took the alleged victim's side. When I heard about the details of that case, however, I was pretty sure that the woman's story was fabricated. False allegations of rape are extremely rare, but this woman said and did several things that caused me to doubt her story.

When I mentioned this to some of my family or friends, they told me that I did not know what I was talking about. Some even became angry with me, saying things like "Who would ever lie about something like that?" The alleged victim's story, however, was eventually proven false, and the lacrosse players were vindicated.

Our natural inclination is to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. We forget, however, that other people do not necessarily wear the same types of shoes we do. They do not necessarily share our behavior, personality, and values. Just because you or I would never falsely accuse someone else

of a serious crime like rape doesn't mean that no one else would do such a thing. The same is true in this bank scenario. Looks can be deceiving, and things are not always what they appear to be. If Mary trusts her instinct to protect Caroline, without considering all the facts, she and others at the bank, including customers, might very well end up victims themselves.

**7. Graham writes a motivational blog that offers career and life tips. For several months, he's been getting a lot of mail from Lisa, who describes herself as "his biggest fan." This admirer e-mails Graham positive comments once every other week, like clockwork. Graham tries to interact with all his fans and to answer every single e-mail. That way they will continue to come back and tell others about his blog. For this reason, Graham has been responding to Lisa with a quick e-mail that says, "Thank you for reading!" or "Thanks for your kind words!"**

Over time Graham has learned that Lisa lives overseas and that she reads his blog because she is currently unemployed and searching for a new job.

Recently Graham posted a photo of himself. That day Lisa e-mailed the following:

*I am, of course, your biggest fan, but I would like to offer you a constructive critique. You need to wear your blue suit when you have your photo taken. It goes with your eyes. I suggest wearing it with your red tie, for contrast. You also should cut your hair shorter. This will make you look more self-confident and more polished, like the sexy man I know you to be.*

Graham doesn't know what to make of this. Initially he was annoyed, thinking, "How dare she tell me how to dress and cut my hair?" He doesn't respond right away, however, because he can't think of what to write.

A few days go by. Graham gets busy and forgets about the e-mail.

A week later he gets this e-mail from Lisa:

*Why didn't you respond to my e-mail? I need to hear from you. I'm not trying to harass you, but I just cannot believe you would be so insensitive and irresponsible as to not respond to your e-mails like this.*

**A few hours later, he gets yet another e-mail from Lisa. It says:**

*You apparently are not the person I thought you were. In fact, you seem to have some real flaws in your character. You are obviously very immature, arrogant, and way too self-absorbed. You don't understand the importance of responding immediately to the very people who made this amateur blog even halfway enjoyable. I am done with you, and I intend to make sure you know exactly what I mean. You should not be in a position to influence other people through your worthless blog and advice. I really do hate you.*

**Then Graham logs on to Facebook, where he finds that Lisa has written several statements on his wall that demonize and insult him.**

**What about this exchange should give Graham cause for concern? What about it should cause Graham to rest easy?**

Do you think that Lisa is a harmless fan? After all, she's a woman who lives overseas. How much of a threat could she possibly pose to Graham? Perhaps Graham should just e-mail a quick "sorry," set the record straight, explain that there's been a misunderstanding, that he's really a good person, and that he was just busy?

Or do you think that Lisa is the kind of Internet nuisance who should be put in her place? Perhaps Graham should fire off an angry e-mail that teaches her some politeness and manners? Perhaps Graham should share Lisa's e-mail address with all of his friends and have them respond with some derogatory comments of their own?

Or do you think Lisa is dangerous and that Graham should send her a curt e-mail asking her to not contact him ever again?

All of these tactics are the opposite of what Graham should do.

In reality, Lisa's gender has little to do with the potential threat she poses to Graham. That she lives overseas *might* be cause for relief, assuming she really does live overseas.

Indeed, Graham may falsely assume he knows more about Lisa than he really does. He's relying on what she's told him, but he doesn't know if any of that information is truthful or factual. Graham is underestimating Internet fabrication, which happens all the time. For all Graham knows, Lisa lives near him and has been following him around for weeks and months without him noticing her. That she knows he owns a blue suit and a red tie suggests as much.

For that matter, Graham can't even know for sure if Lisa is really a woman. It's possible that her entire Internet persona has been fabricated. She might really be a teenage Internet troll who finds enjoyment in wasting people's time online. She might be a convicted felon. For all Graham knows, she might even be his next-door neighbor.

Lisa is behaving like a cyberstalker, and it's very likely that she is one. Three details give this away: She's described herself as Graham's "biggest fan," which puts Graham up on a pedestal. She's sexualized Graham. Then, when she didn't get the response she wanted, she went from adulation to demonization, and her behavior appears to be escalating.

Many people think of cyberstalkers as mere annoyances. Yet cyberstalkers can be potentially very dangerous. These stalkers tend to target victims through Internet chat rooms, discussion boards, social networking sites, blogs, and e-mail. They've been known to steal their victims' identities, send viruses to their victims' computers, bully their victims online, and defame and malign their victims' reputations.

Lisa might physically lash out at Graham's family, too. Often the person most at risk in a stalking case isn't the person being stalked. Rather it's the person or people the stalker sees standing in the way between them and their target.

Not all stalkers escalate to violent behavior. Many of them are only a constant yet annoying presence in someone's life. Lisa's recent e-mail, however, is cause for concern. She's gone from e-mailing once every other week to several times in one week, and the tone and content of the e-mails have dramatically changed as well. This could be a sign that Lisa's behavior is becoming worse, more threatening, and that she might eventually turn physically violent or destructive in other ways. For instance, Lisa has already tried to damage Graham's reputation

online. She might show up at his place of employment or even his residence.

If Graham continues to communicate with Lisa in *any* way, he'll only encourage her advances. Negative communication is still communication. If he argues with her, he'll incite her, causing her to become even more obsessed. If he's nice, he'll still increase her obsession. And if he asks her to leave him alone, she won't.

His best strategy is to mitigate or reduce the risk that Lisa will evolve from a nuisance into someone who is set on harming him physically, emotionally, financially, or professionally. He will want to cut off all contact and save copies of all communication from her. If Lisa escalates—by contacting him by phone, leaving handwritten notes at his home, threatening him, mailing him gifts, increasing the frequency of her contact, contacting him by multiple methods (phone, text, e-mail, fax), or revealing that she's somehow gathered more personal information about him—he should contact an intervening resource for help. He might consult law enforcement for a restraining order, or a lawyer, private investigator, or legal consultant. If Lisa begins marring his reputation online, he might consult a firm that specializes in repairing online reputations. He also might contact his Internet service provider and see if they will take up the cause.

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How did you do? Did you get a perfect score? Or did you call some of them right and some of them wrong? Most people, if they are being honest, tell me that they guessed correctly on some, and not so correctly on others. You might be the same. That's because gut feelings can be right sometimes—and they can be wrong a lot more often. When it comes to your personal safety and well-being, however, wouldn't you want to use a method that has a better track record? By the end of this book, you will know that method, and you will be able to put it to work for you in your life.



**CHAPTER 1 RAP SHEET**

- You can't tell if people are dangerous just by looking at them.
- You can't always take people at their word.
- Dangerous people are good at blending in.
- If you ask the right questions, you can learn how someone is likely to behave by listening to his or her answers.
- You can't walk a mile in a dangerous person's shoes because dangerous people wear a different kind of shoe—one that doesn't fit you.