



**HOW TO SURVIVE**  
**ANYTHING**  
**A VISUAL GUIDE TO LAUGHING IN  
THE FACE OF ADVERSITY**

**ILLUSTRATED BY ROB DOBI**

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# FOREWORD

My name is Ed Stafford and I'm alive. Therefore, like you, I'm a survivor. I don't mean to be facetious – but there are many times in my life when I could have died.

In 2010 I became the first human to walk the length of the Amazon from source to sea. Four thousand miles, 860 days, seven pairs of boots, and one Guinness World Record. Before I set out (and all along the route) everyone told me I was going to die. On the way I was held up at arrow point by Asheninka Indians, at gun point by drugs traffickers, electrocuted by an electric eel, and arrested for suspected murder by Shipebo people. I suppose the naysayers were right – I could have died. But I didn't.

Fast forward two years and I chose to strand myself naked (and with nothing to help me survive) on an uninhabited island in the Pacific for 60 days. With no-one to talk to, I built an existence from scratch. Eating raw snails and coconuts eventually progressed to managing to light a fire and opening up new possibilities such as roasting feral goats' legs. I built myself a home in the trees and, after two months on my own, even plumbed it with guttering and a rainwater collection tank made from washed-up debris. I proved to myself that I could survive with nothing but two hands and half a brain.







Why do I take on such trips? Of course, I thrive off the adrenaline. But it's more than that. I was adopted as a baby, and that lies at the heart of it: I am genuinely grateful to have even been born. It could easily have been very different. I was lucky and I was given my crack at living a full life. We all are, I suppose. I have no intention of wasting it.

But things don't always go to plan. On one occasion in the Amazon, when I was over two weeks' walk from any human settlement, my GPS died. I wasn't sure if it was the unit or whether there had been a nuclear war as all the satellites had gone down. It didn't really matter. I had to make do with a 1:4,000,000 tourist map of South America and a cheap compass. There was such a high margin for error in my calculations each day that they were a joke. If it hadn't been life-threatening, it would have been hilarious. The advice in this book on how to survive in the wild without GPS (pages 130–133) might just have come in handy. Hindsight is a beautiful thing, as they say.

Sometimes, prevention is better than cure. I was once stranded naked in Rwanda without any form of sun protection, so I covered my head and shoulders in hippo faeces. It stopped me from burning and my girlfriend even commented on how smooth my skin was when I got home. Bonus.

My favourite survival trick is one I stole off an old expedition colleague of mine called Luke. Our plan, in the event that we encountered hostile tribes in the Amazon, was for Luke to whip out his juggling balls and start performing. We figured nobody would kill someone who was juggling. As a non-juggler I just hoped

that our assumption also stretched to jugglers' mates. Happily, we never had to find out.

But you don't have to be in a remote or hostile place to get into trouble. After a late night a few years ago (and feeling somewhat the worse for wear) I found myself locked out of my room in a Central London hotel with no clothes on (it does seem to be a recurring theme). With no desire to bare all in reception downstairs, I just called the lift and pressed the alarm button. As if by magic, a flustered employee fumbling a large set of room keys appeared. Phew. To those unfortunate enough to share this fate, there are some face-saving tips on pages 102–103.

For me survival has never been about He-Man strength or Boy Scout preparation. Nor do I think you need the courage of a bear or the cunning of a fox. I personally think you can survive any situation if you treat it like a game. Games require you to be focused and alert, but importantly they are just that: games. In this state of mind, you are less likely to freeze, or panic and make rash decision, or flap and do nothing. Your adrenaline will be channelled into constructive behaviour and the things you do will seem easier and more achievable. It seems a subtle change in outlook – but it's a very, very useful one.

Enjoy the book and, as the *SAS Survival Handbook* used to unhelpfully say, 'Can you survive? You have to!'

Thanks for that, chaps...

**Ed Stafford**  
**edstafford.org**

**HOW TO SURVIVE...**



## 4

# HOW TO SURVIVE SUPERGLUE ACCIDENTS

Invented by accident during World War II when manufacturers were trying to create clear gun sights, Superglue was later brought to market as an ultra-strong adhesive. It's been gluing people's fingers to broken coffee mugs ever since.

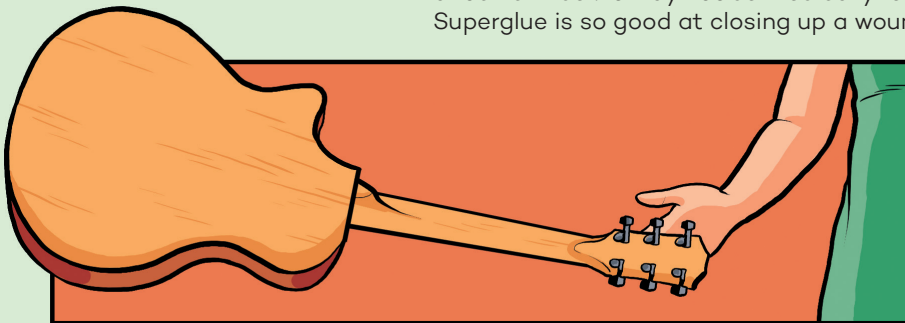


**1** Use Superglue for serious fixes only. Cyanoacrylate – the chemical name for the adhesive – is no joke. It can bear a load of up to a tonne, if bonding metal to metal. It can be used to fix just about anything but the bond is always strongest between less porous materials.

**2** Be careful around clothing. Not only will it ruin it, but chemicals in Superglue have been known to react with natural fibres such as cotton, wool and leather, releasing a heat so intense it can smoke and cause burns.

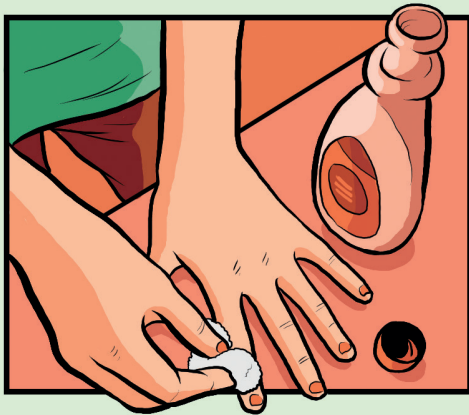
**3** Keep it away from your skin – unless you have a cut or are a rock climber. It may not be medically recommended, but Superglue is so good at closing up a wound that Army medics

use it on the battlefield. Climbers and guitar players put the glue on their fingertips to decrease sensitivity.





**4** If you do get in a sticky situation, roll with it. First, try to separate your skin from the item it's adhered to by rolling it off slowly. This will minimise the surface area and make the separation less painful.



**5** Keep some nail-polish remover to hand. Acetone is the most effective compound for softening and removing Superglue. Coincidentally, a nail emery board is a pretty effective tool for rubbing away stubborn glue.



**6** Go natural. If you like to live chemical-free (though you probably wouldn't be using Superglue in the first place), everything from margarine to salt to dishwashing powder is also said to soften cyanoacrylate.

# 6 HOW TO SURVIVE A SPAGHETTI SUPPER (WITHOUT THE SPLATTERS)

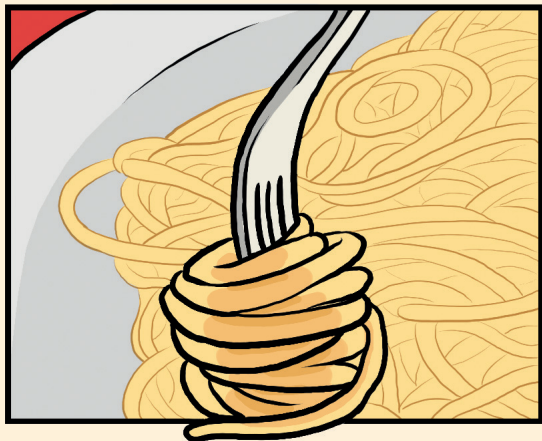
**Mamma mia!** Italians are so opinionated about the *right* way to eat spaghetti, it should probably be an article of their constitution.

**1** First, cook it correctly. Good spaghetti etiquette starts with cooking the pasta just right. Too *al dente* and the strands won't wrap around and stick to the others as you twirl. Beware, overcooked spaghetti is deemed equally offensive, as is breaking the noodles before boiling them.

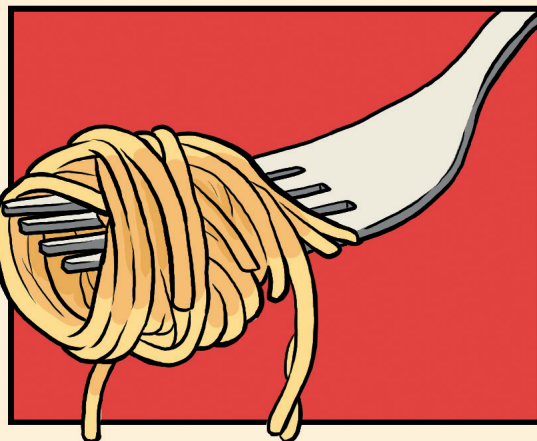


**2** *Never* use a spoon. Unless you want to upset nana, do not use a spoon to help you twirl your spaghetti. Italians say these utensils are for children, amateurs and for eating soup. If given a spoon, it's for mixing the noodles with the sauce right after it's been poured over the pasta, or for eating a very liquid sauce (as is often served with angel hair pasta).

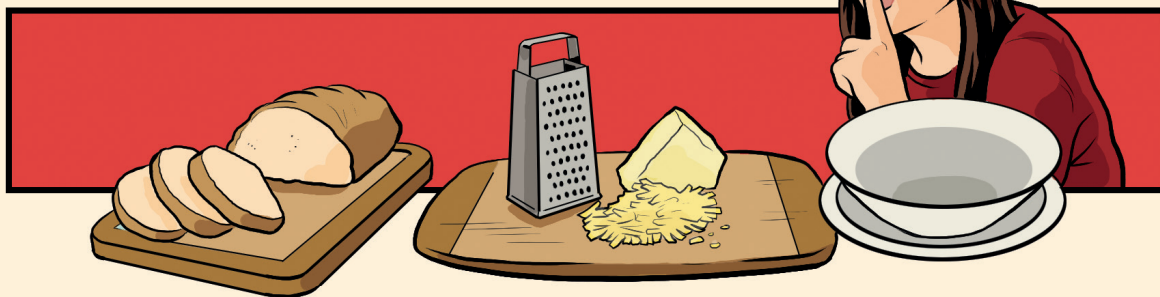
**3** Master the twirl. Separate some strands from the pile, stab your fork into them, then twirl your fork so all the pasta strands wraps around it. Proper distribution of sauce will ensure the strands stick to each other so everything stays in place.



**4** Never cut or bite the pasta. The trick is to start your twirl with an amount of pasta that will create the perfect-size mouthful, i.e. one that will go into your mouth cleanly and doesn't require any slurps, sucking or biting to cut away excess pasta.



**5** Don't mention bread, cheese or bowls. Whether bread should be served with pasta or not, which type of cheese should accompany it, and if it should be served in a shallow bowl or on a plate are debates that have been raging across Italy for centuries. Unless you think you can hold your own, leave it alone.





## 7

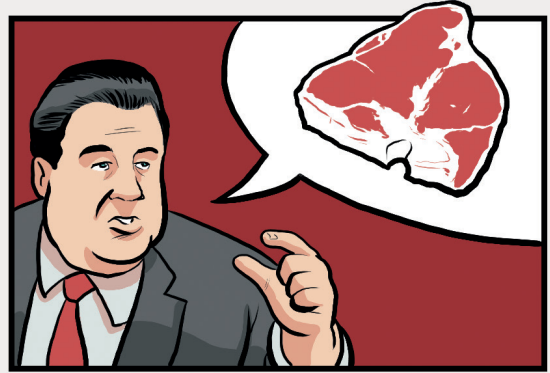
## HOW TO SURVIVE

## OFFENDING A MAFIA DON

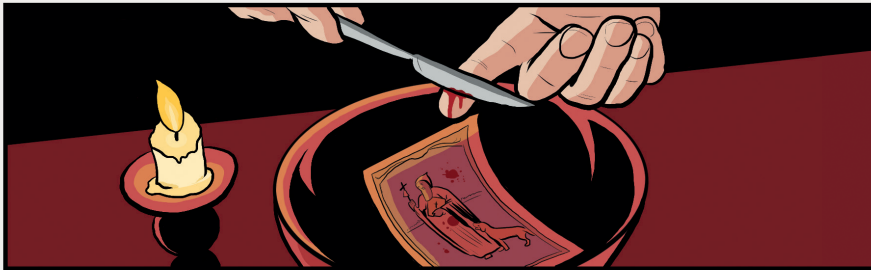
Pssst, there's a guy who knows a guy who says he can tell you all you need to know about holding your own in the presence of a mob boss. Here's the lowdown...



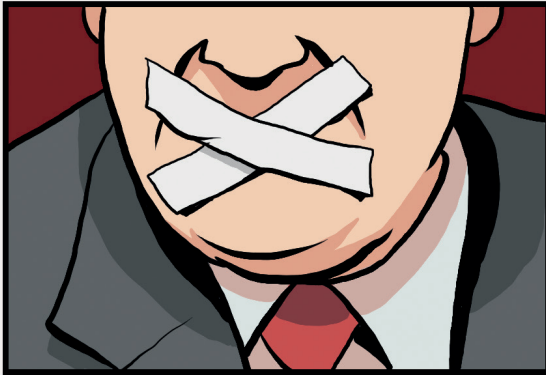
**1** Pick a good nickname. Adding a 'y' to the end – Sammy, Jimmy, Tommy – is a good start, but it's even better if you can incorporate a reference to a physical trait: One-eye Louis, Fingers Freddy, No-neck Sal, etc.



**2** Learn the lingo. The boss is called a capo, his boss is a don; if you have a problem and want to talk with the boss, say you have a 'beef' and would like a 'sit-down'.



**3** Get made. If you've impressed your new amigos, you may get invited into the 'family', a ritual known as 'getting made'. Expect a very tense sit-down with the capos and the don, during which a picture of a saint is burned and blood is drawn from your trigger finger.



**4** Take the code of silence. Also known as an 'omerta', this 'blood oath' of silence and allegiance is more important than your wedding vows. The penalty for stepping out of line? You'll be knocked off, of course.

**6** Be entrepreneurial, but not too entrepreneurial. Never start your own racket without the permission of local capos.



**5** If you're called upon for a favour, drop everything, immediately. Being part of the *family* is believed to be more important than religion and even your real family. And never disrespect women, especially your wife. This rule goes way back to the beginnings of the Sicilian mafia and remains a central tenet today in Italy and the USA.

