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Man Is Stabbed in Attack After Admiring a Stranger

By CARA BUCKLEY and KATE HAMMER
Published: August 19, 2006

It all began harmlessly, the victim, a 28-year-old man from Queens said, with a comment he made to a woman who walked past him early yesterday on a Manhattan sidewalk.

But things quickly escalated into an ugly and ultimately violent confrontation that led to the man, Dwayne Buckle, being stabbed in his abdomen with a steak knife, and to the arrests of seven women, ranging in age from 18 to 31 who are accused in the attack, the police said.

The encounter began about 1:55 a.m., at Third Street and Sixth Avenue in the West Village. Mr. Buckle, a sound mixer who lives in Jamaica, Queens, was standing in front of the Independent Film Center. He has been working on an independent film, "The Minority," scheduled to be released next summer. Mr. Buckle said he often hangs out in front of the I.F.C. to chat with film people, to watch life in the Village.

Mr. Buckle was trying to decide whether to get a drink or go home when, he said, a petite young woman in a white skirt passed by, surrounded by girlfriends. He did not know any of the young women, but he liked how the woman in white wore her hair. He also liked the woman. And so he said, "Hey, how're you doing?" The woman gave a half-smile and kept going. But one of her friends, Mr. Buckle said, shot back a caustic remark. She made fun of his jeans, he said, and ridiculed his sneakers.

"She said they were cheap," Mr. Buckle recalled yesterday afternoon, still groggy during an interview from his hospital bed.

Mr. Buckle retorted in kind, and an argument started. Sarcastic remarks were tossed back and forth. Suddenly, he said, one of the women lightly slapped Mr. Buckle's cheek, Mr. Buckle said, while another spat in his face. And, to their horror, Mr. Buckle said, he spat right back.

That is when, Mr. Buckle said, the entire group attacked him, raking their nails across his face and hitting him in the back. Other people joined in, he said, including some men. Mr. Buckle is 5-foot-10 and weighs 175 pounds, but said he struggled mightily to breathe and protect his face from more than a dozen flying fists.

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The fight broke up, but not before Mr. Buckle felt a nick in his abdomen.

“I didn’t even know I got stabbed until the very end,” Mr. Buckle said. “I looked down. I saw my shirt was full of blood.”

The group of young women fled, but the police, responding to a 911 call, caught up with them moments later two blocks away at the corner of West Fourth Street and Jones Street. One of the women, Patreese Johnson, 19, was found with a bloodied serrated knife. The women, from Newark and East Orange, N.J., were arrested and were charged last night with gang assault and criminal possession of a weapon, the police said. The other women were identified as Venice Brown, 18, Renata Hill, 24, Chenese Loyal, 19, Lania Daniels, 21, Khamysha Coates, 31, and Terrain Dandridge, 19.

Family members in New Jersey were shocked to learn of the trouble the women had gotten in. Dell Barron, Ms. Johnson’s mother, said her daughter attended church twice a week until recently and was generally mild mannered.

“Patreese tries to keep the peace with everybody,” said Ms. Barron. “You yell at her too hard and she starts crying.”

Mr. Buckle, meanwhile, underwent surgery yesterday at St. Vincent’s Hospital Manhattan. He was well enough, though, to receive visitors at his hospital bed. His right eye was nearly swollen shut, a long thin scratch marked his face and tubes ran into his nose and under the sheets.

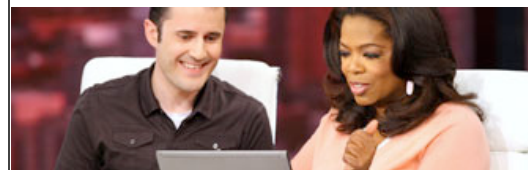
“It’s not a crime to say hello to a human being,” Mr. Buckle said. “Now, I think I’ll know which girls not to talk to.”

Colin Moynihan contributed reporting for this article.

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