

*All names used in the following article have been changed to protect the individual's identity!*

Brenda Starr, who is in her early sixties, lived in another state when this incident happened. She had left a very unhappy marriage and was living in a caravan temporarily. A friend who had left a violent relationship came to stay briefly.

In the early hours of the morning when they were both sound asleep, the former partner of Brenda's friend forced his way into the caravan and attacked them both with a large knife. It seemed clear he had every intention of killing them both.

I wonder if any of us can imagine the horror of waking to find ourselves trapped in a confined space with a madman, wielding a knife slicing into our arms, face, legs and chest.

Of course they screamed and he eventually ran out - leaving them both to die.

Brenda says she actually thought she was going to die. She had been stabbed or sliced nearly 40 times. She felt cold and was shaking and knew she had lost a lot of blood, which was continuing to soak into her nightie and the floor.

She thought to herself - so this is what it feels like when death is coming ...

Her friend managed to get to her brother and sister-in-law in another van nearby and they rang the police and ambulance.

Brenda says she does not remember much about the trip in the helicopter to hospital except being aware of flashing lights and feeling upset when she realized they were cutting her favourite nightie off her body.

She was told later that she had clinically died and they revived her in the helicopter.

The man was caught after several days and put in jail - the court case has yet to happen.

Brenda moved to Queensland to feel safer and has established a whole new life for herself and she is amazingly positive in her outlook.

BUT - she lives with constant, chronic pain in one arm. The arm has very limited ability now so there are many things she can't do that we all take for granted, such as opening a door or taking a lid off a jar. She has huge scars over the rest of her body. A whole night's sleep is a thing of the past - the chronic pain in her arm does not allow for more than an

hour or two of sleep at a time.

She still has nightmares that it's happening again and often gets up to check all the locks in the middle of the night - even though she knows they are locked.

Her house is locked all the time - windows and doors - and even when she is in the toilet - knowing the rest of the house is locked - she locks the toilet door.

Brenda says she will never have a relationship with a man again. She is extremely wary of men and takes extra care to check out any workmen who come to her home to work there.

She has formed a wonderful friendship with a man 20 years older than herself and they are great companions and help mates to each other. BUT she has made the rules of their relationship very clear - NO TOUCHING - under any circumstances. Not even a hug or a touch on the arm - nothing.

Brenda has lived with the worry of the court case and the fear of being in the same room with this man for more than a year now and says she feels as though her life is in limbo until it is finished and she can put it all behind her.

She tells me that when she wakes up in the morning she listens to the birds and looks at the blue sky and is grateful for what she calls her second chance. She is determined to enjoy every day.

She says very emphatically that she is not a victim - she will not take on that role - she is a survivor who is not only surviving - she is THRIVING!

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