

'My hus thrown

Darlene Wallace was left in a coma after being attacked by her violent ex-husband

AS SHE AWOKE IN A HOSPITAL bed with a broken leg, broken ribs and her arms in plaster, Darlene Wallace struggled to understand where she was and what was happening to her.

"There were people around my bed, but when I tried to get their attention I couldn't talk," she says. "It was horrific."

In fact, Darlene, 46, was coming out of a month-long coma after miraculously surviving being thrown over a 100ft cliff.

With no memory of what had happened, she listened in horror as police filled her in on the terrible details. She'd been cycling through the woods near her home when two

Darlene is trying to put her troubled past behind her



With new husband Dennis and sons Roger, 11, and Raymond, five

band had me off a cliff'

men pounced on her and hurled her over a cliff to an almost certain death.

But this wasn't a random attack by strangers. It was the latest in a series of brutal attacks orchestrated by Darlene's violent ex-husband, Bobby Fulton.

Darlene had never loved Bobby. She first met him at church when she was 12 and both their families were members of a cult.

"Women were brainwashed to believe we were second-class citizens, unable to work, watch TV or even cut our hair," says Darlene, who was 19 when the minister announced that she would be marrying Bobby the following weekend.

"I was horrified, but my father had arranged everything behind my back," she says. "I wish I could have just walked away, but the fight went out of me and I knew that they wouldn't give up until they saw us together."

Two weeks later they were married – and within days Bobby became violent.

"He slapped me as we walked through our front door and I was devastated – nothing could have prepared me for that unprovoked attack," Darlene recalls.

"I thought I'd done something to upset him so I ended up apologising, not him."

The beatings became regular, but Bobby threatened to murder Darlene's parents if she ever tried to leave him.

"Sex was a chore," she says. "I was terrified of bringing a baby into our unhappy home, so when I got pregnant and had a miscarriage that left me infertile, I was relieved."

They'd been married 11 years when Bobby and his four brothers bundled Darlene into a car one day and drove her to a remote farmhouse. Once there, she became a domestic slave.

"I worked from dawn until dusk, feeding the cows and chickens and working the land. I fetched and

carried for them, getting beers and food. I lost so much weight my clothes hung off me, so I tied a rope round my waist to keep my trousers up," says Darlene.

By then she had lost all contact with her family, and Bobby wielded such power in the church that she knew nobody would rescue her if she spoke up.

Two years passed before Darlene finally saw her chance of escape.

"Someone was always watching me, but

I was terrified of bringing a baby into our unhappy home... when I became infertile I was relieved

one day the brothers drank themselves into a stupor. I knew if I didn't leave, I'd die. I ran to the phone and called the police."

Within minutes the police arrived to find Darlene bloodied and bruised from where Bobby had attacked her that morning.

She says: "As he and his brothers were arrested, I realised that my ordeal was over."

Slowly Darlene rebuilt her life, moving from a town in Arkansas in America to Alaska to start afresh. She divorced Bobby, who was in jail awaiting trial for her kidnap.

"I got a job as an accountant, made friends, and my old existence seemed like a distant memory," she says.

But the past came back to haunt her three years later when she woke up in hospital after her month-long coma, suffering from amnesia. She was told she'd been pushed over a cliff by hitmen hired by her husband while he was behind bars for her kidnap.



Darlene's violent ex Bobby Fulton

Darlene was 19 when she was forced to marry Bobby



She had broken her ribs, arms and leg, and her skull was fractured. It took Darlene six months to regain her memory back and she struggled to understand how Bobby, violent as he was, could have been evil enough to actually want her dead.

"It was just unthinkable," she says.

Bobby, now 47, was sentenced to life without parole in a prison for the criminally insane in 1998 after being found guilty of kidnapping and attempted murder.

Darlene has never blamed her own family for allowing her to fall into Bobby Fulton's evil clutches, saying they were under the strict control of the church.

She now has a new family to think about, having adopted Roger, 11, in 1998, and Raymond, five, in 2003. In July this year she married Dennis. The couple have been together two years after meeting at a party.

"I struggled to trust men for a long time," admits Darlene. "It wasn't until I met Dennis that I realised what love is."

"What happened to me is extreme, but domestic violence is common.

I hope that my story helps other women pluck up the courage to leave abusive partners before they end up left for dead." ■

By Anna Cook

anna.cook@emap.com

Read Darlene Wallace's whole story in her book *Disappearing Doors* (Lipstick Publishing, £7.99)