

“96 per cent of my body was burnt.”

A HORRIFIC BUS CRASH LEFT CATRIN WITH A ONE IN 1000 CHANCE OF SURVIVING.

Some of my favourite memories are of spending Christmas in France on family ski trips. So after I graduated and didn't know what I wanted to study at university, I decided to spend four months in France, working and skiing in my spare time.

I was travelling by bus returning home to the UK when, suddenly, the bus crashed and caught on fire. My body flew forward, and then everything went blank. I remember someone pulling me out of the bus as I was screaming out in pain. My arms had turned yellow, grey, black and blue and there were little bits hanging off, but I still couldn't understand what was happening. Someone wrapped me in a special absorbent towel and put an oxygen mask on me. I don't remember anything else until three months later, when I woke up from a coma.

My family came to the hospital straight away. Then the doctors had to tell my mum devastating news: that 96 per cent of my body was severely burnt and I had a one in 1000 chance of surviving.

To get me new skin, the doctors did a special operation covering 40 per cent of my body with skin that they got from people who had died and were organ donors. They also asked my mum and brother to donate skin, since living skin grows back. Using a medical tool that looks like a cheese grater, they shaved skin from their thighs and knees. It was extremely painful for them. They also shaved my head and transplanted skin from my scalp to other parts of my body. All of this happened when I was unconscious.

Waking up from the coma unable to move, speak or know what was going on was petrifying. While I was in the coma, my muscles deteriorated. I couldn't even close my mouth. My mum and dad were at the hospital every single day, so they were there



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POSITIVE THINKING CAN HELP YOU DO THINGS YOU NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D BE ABLE TO DO.

when I woke up. They didn't tell me everything that had happened all at once because it would be too traumatic. They told me bit by bit over a period of time.

Seeing my body for the first time was shocking. The hospital workers were bathing me and I looked down at my legs. They were red and the skin was raw. I could also see some parts of my body where the new skin was. That was the first time what had happened really sunk in.

Discovering the doctors had shaved off my long, dark hair was even worse. My hair has always been my favourite feature and I thought it was just tied up at the top of my head. I used to tell my mum that I couldn't wait to shower and wash my hair. When I looked in the mirror and saw my bald head, it was one of the biggest shocks.

Through speech therapy, I started learning how to talk again



Now, most of my wounds have healed.

and reusing my mouth muscles. I also did intense physical therapy every single day.

There were definitely times when I felt like giving up, but my family kept me strong. It also helped reading all the Facebook messages from my friends and tweets from people who were reaching out to me. I didn't want to let them down.

Now, I have five more months of intense physical therapy and most of my wounds have healed. I've even gone skiing again with the help of a non-profit for people with disabilities.

I have my down days, but for every down day I have 10 good days. Positive thinking really can help you overcome anything and do things you never thought you'd be able to do.

AS YOU TO: EMILY LAURENCE