

I Survived a Serial Killer

NEARLY 3 DECADES AFTER JENNIFER ASBENSON ESCAPED THE CLUTCHES OF A MURDEROUS MONSTER, SHE REVEALS THE NIGHTMARES THAT STILL HAUNT HER—AND THE STRENGTH SHE NEVER KNEW SHE HAD

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Photographs by
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Facing Fear

“People tell me I have changed,” says Asbenson (in the Desert Hot Springs, Calif., area where she escaped). “I am absolutely stronger. My life is a story that can help others, and that gives me hope.”



HAIR & MAKEUP: JACQUL JORDAN/ZENOBIA; INSET: AP/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



A Killer's Secrets
Andrew Urdiales, 54 (in a mug shot), murdered eight women over 10 years without being detected. Asbenson was attacked in the middle of his killing spree.

Sometimes it hits her in unexpected moments. Being around new people fills her with a vague sense of dread. A large gas can send her into a panic, causing her body to shake and making her feel like fingers are closing in around her throat. If a stranger—especially a man—unexpectedly yells or begins speaking loudly, she wants to flee and find someplace safe to hide. “I see things differently than others do,” says Jennifer Asbenson. “I feel very lucky to be alive.”

It has been almost three decades since Asbenson, 45, got into a car with serial killer Andrew Urdiales—and almost didn’t get out. On the outside the writer and mom of a grown daughter quietly takes delight in the normal life she has built for herself in Cathedral City, Calif., where she lives with her boyfriend of three years, Gregg Aratin, 60, a radio station sales manager, and their dogs. But on the inside the nightmare she survived can still grab hold of her, even though Urdiales, who ultimately confessed to killing eight women, hanged himself in his cell on San Quentin’s death row in November. The shocking case, and Asbenson’s story, is covered in the latest episode

