

Losing My Friend and My Leg

Dexter Carey

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What is a *prosthesis*? Read the box to learn more.
2. Read the biography of the author on the next page. Keep in mind his point of view as you read.

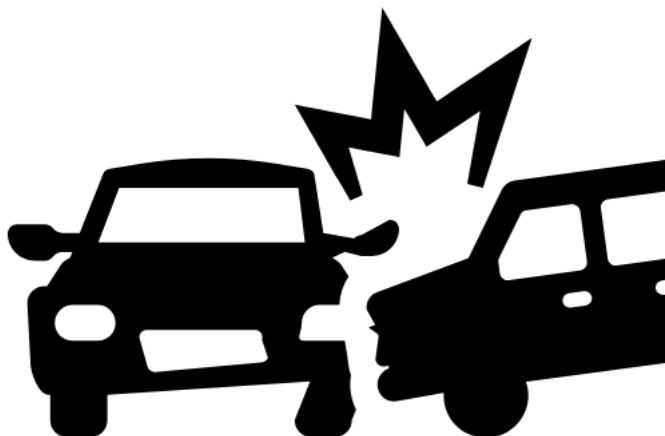
A Night at the Club

On February 9, 1994, I was in a car accident. I lost my leg below the knee, and I lost a very close friend.

On this night, I went to a nightclub with five friends. We had some drinks, and we had a good time. When we left, I had trouble with my car, but we managed to get it started. On the way home, we talked about our night at the club. It was filled with good times. We were good friends.

An Accident and Great Loss

While we were driving, the car broke down. I could not start it again, so we decided to push it to a gas station. We noticed that vehicles were speeding by. As cautiously as we could, we kept pushing my car down the road. The cars kept going by, some very fast.



Suddenly, my friend yelled, “Watch out, watch out!” That’s when a car hit me and my friend from the back. We were pinned between the two cars. At that point, our lives changed forever. My friend lost his life. And I lost the lower half of my leg.

When I found out that my friend died and I lost my leg, I felt overwhelmed with sadness, disbelief, and confusion. I was in so much shock and pain. I knew that healing would be a very long road.



What Is a Prosthesis?

A *prosthesis* (noun) is an artificial body part, such as a leg, a hip joint, a heart valve, or teeth. *Protheses* is the plural of *prosthesis*. *Prosthetic* is the adjective, as in: I had hip replacement surgery, and I now have a prosthetic hip.

John Amanam (left), is a skilled craftsman from Nigeria. He uses his expertise in fine arts and sculpture to create prosthetic devices that are a better match for people with darker skin tones.

The Long Road to Healing

Learning to walk on a prosthesis was my next step. I had to learn how to walk all over again. First, I had to get fitted for my new prosthesis. They took a lot of measurements to get the correct fit. Once that was done, I had to do a lot of physical therapy to get mobility back in both of my legs. It was a challenge, but I never let that stop me. I'm so grateful for those who helped me to be able to walk again. My doctors encouraged me. The rehab staff kept pushing me. My family and friends supported me. I never gave up.

Living for Two

Being able to slowly walk again gave me inspiration to strive harder to make a full recovery – physically and emotionally. My life was spared; my friend's life was not. I live with this every day. It's something I will never forget. I live for two now with his memory forever in my mind, body, and soul. My strength comes from his spirit living within me. He helps me heal inside and out. I will never forget the memories we shared.

I struggle with the physical and mental scars of that accident. I try to take one day at a time. I am on a quest to live my fullest life. I want others to know they are not alone. We should help each other and make sure people feel hope and love. Everyone needs to have the sense that someone cares.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. In your own words, describe what happened to Dexter.
2. According to the author, what helped him recover?
3. Read the article on p. 8, "Learning to Live with Two Prosthetic Hips." Compare and contrast these two stories. How are they similar? How are they different?



Dexter Carey is a student at Delgado Community College in New Orleans, Louisiana. He lives his life with a "heart of service," a way of life that is centered on serving others with love, humility, and a genuine desire to make a positive impact on their lives. He works part time at Lake Wellness Center Detox where he supports patients in recovery. He is also a recovering alcoholic.