

Reading 3

**Victim Awareness: Reading, Analyzing, and Writing
Victim Impact Statements**

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I Knew Before I Was Told

Michelle Chrisner tells of a twin's unique grief

I was sitting in a rocking chair on my parents' front porch just like I had done a thousand times before with my identical twin sister Melanie McMahon. But this time, I was alone and worried sick because no one could find my beloved sister and her husband Reggie. I restlessly began talking aloud, "Where are you, Melanie? What has happened? Please, tell me you are OK." It was then I heard Melanie's voice, "Dead, we are dead...car wreck."

Just then, my parents drove up. My father got out of the car and walked up to me. With blood-shot eyes and a quivering voice, he said, "Melanie and Reggie were killed this morning in a car wreck."

"I know," I whispered to myself.

"They were killed by a drunk driver," he said.

It was April 30, 2000, and I had just become a twinless twin.

Melanie was a part of me. I should have been there to help her. I felt I had failed her as a twin. We were born together. We should have died together.

At Melanie and Reggie's funeral, friends, families, co-workers and teammates gathered for the services. As they viewed Melanie for the last time, they looked

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over at me and started to cry more. It made me uncomfortable, because I knew I was hurting them when they looked at me.

Before the casket was closed, I kissed Melanie on the cheek and held onto her. I couldn't leave her alone all by herself in there. And I didn't want to be alone all by myself out here. I wanted to crawl in the casket with her and never come out.



Melanie and I shared everything together. We could feel each other's pain. We finished each other's sentences. We would say the same thing or have the exact same reaction to something at the same time. We could look into each other's eyes while one of us thought of a color, number or word—the other guessed it right every time. These are just a few things twins can do.

When people tell me they understand what I am feeling, it angers me because they haven't the slightest clue how to understand the loss of your twin. It's too hard for them to believe the closeness, the special bond, twins share.

Even my family doesn't understand. I can no longer celebrate my birthday. Melanie and I have always shared our birthday together, and I will not change that. I don't want cards, presents or even a "happy birthday."

While I have a loving husband, three beautiful children and a family who cares about me, I always feel alone. In losing Melanie, I lost a part of me. I can't look into people's eyes for very long, because it makes me feel as if they will know I am not complete.

I pray no one has to go through what my family and I have gone through. I especially pray a twin will not have to feel the loss of his or her other half. But if they do, I hope that somehow I can ease their heart and mind by knowing they are not alone in this twinless pain. ■

Help for Twinless Twins

If you have experienced the death of your twin, the Twinless Twins Support Group International understands and can help.

Visit www.twinless.twins.org or call 1-888-205-8962 for more information.