

**On September 27, 2002, my life was changed forever. I lost my best friend and soul sister, Michelle. She was 26 yrs old.**

Michelle and I were attending a wedding that we had planned for several weeks. We were both so excited to get dressed up and go out together. We spent the night picking out our clothes, doing our nails and just hanging out. That night, as we lay in bed talking about a friend of ours that killed himself several days earlier; Michelle asked me if I believed in life after death. I told her no, that for some reason I didn't. She then told me that she did. We stayed up for hours talking about what we wanted to see and do before we died. Both of us felt that nothing could be that bad, that we would want to kill ourselves. We talked ourselves to sleep that night. The next day was Friday, September 27th. We both went to work and had planned to leave work early, in order to get ready to go to the wedding. If it wasn't e-mail, it was the phone, and if it wasn't the phone we were always with each other. Our plans were that Michelle was going to meet me at my house and we were going to get ready together. We decided to take her car to the wedding. We made plans to go out after the wedding to meet a couple of guy friends and go downtown to a bar and hang out.

Michelle and I arrived at the wedding in Joliet at about 7:30 pm. We mingled and had a couple of drinks. We didn't want to drink as much as we usually did, because we had a pretty far drive afterwards, so we each had about 3 or 4 drinks. We had dinner and left about 10:45 pm. Neither of us felt like we were drunk so it didn't seem like a big deal that we were going to drive. We had driven in the past after a couple of drinks and never thought anything of it. As we left the wedding, excited to go meet our friends, I drove because I was better at directions and knew my way around the neighborhood. We took I-80 going east. As we were driving we had the radio loud and we were having a good time like we always did. I remember Michelle had made a phone call to the friends we were going to meet and told them we would be there soon. When she got off the phone she said to me, "I'm going to clean up the CD's from the backseat so we have room for our friends to sit". While I was still driving on I-80, Michelle took off her seatbelt and reached between us to clean up the back seat. At the same moment, a car cut in front of me and I got scared. I slammed on the breaks to avoid hitting him and our car skid into the guard rail. All I remember is feeling the car flip several times. When the car stopped, it was upside down on the road. At that point I unhooked my seatbelt and crawled out of the car. I just remember turning to my right to look for Michelle and she was not there in the car with me. I started to freak out because I couldn't find Michelle. I was yelling for her and screaming out, "Michelle where are you?" For some reason I knew in my heart that something was very wrong and I was petrified. I looked behind the car and saw Michelle lying in the middle of the highway on her side. She was about 2 or 3 car lengths from where our car landed. I ran to her as I was crying and screaming, "My baby Michelle. NO, NO, not my baby Michelle." It felt like I ran 2 miles to get to her and as I reached her she was laying there with a pool of blood coming from her head. I was trying to reach out to her but I was pulled away by witnesses. We were both taken to the hospital where Michelle died shortly after.

I had several cuts and bruises, but nothing major. They had to sedate me several times to calm me down, as I could not believe my best friend was gone. I was hospitalized for several days

because I was very distraught and suicidal. When I was released I went straight from the hospital to jail and was charged with reckless homicide for the death of my best friend. I felt that I could not continue to live without her, she was my life and we were inseparable. I felt like I had no reason to live. I wanted to end my life. I didn't want to live with the pain of losing my best friend and mostly, for being responsible for it. I was told not to talk to her parents because of court. That was so hard for me because we were very close and I loved Michelle's parents very much and wanted to be there for them. Michelle was their only child. The pain that I have caused so many people - Michelle's family, my family, all of our friends - will live with me every moment of my life. Every time I think about killing myself, all I can think about is the night before Michelle died and how I now want to live for Michelle.

think about that night, every second of every day. I think about how alcohol can ruin so many lives and how it was not worth the life of Michelle. Michelle, I love and I'm sorry. Please forgive me. When I lost Michelle, I lost a piece of my heart.