Victim Impact Statement – Evangelia Gallacher

How can I put into words the impact on my life, that the loss of my younger brother, fondly called Nick by us and Nicko by mum and dad, has had on me. I am Nick’s elder sister. Nick has been in my life since his birth 10.3.1966 until his death on 27 July 2011 – aged 45 years. I used to baby-sit Nick for mum, then when he was a young child, aged 6, my husband and I looked after Nick when mum and dad had a 3 month overseas holiday back to their country of birth, in 1972. Now my life is fragmented; I can’t begin to comprehend or even accept that I have lost a younger brother to a vicious, senseless murder. I can’t believe this has happened; I argue with my family trying to understand the reality of what has happened in my life and that this has happened to us.

 My life has dramatically and irreversibly changed. I go through acceptance then denial. I have lost faith in mankind because I can’t understand why someone who had been brought up in a Christian household to respect life and be responsible for their actions could end up in this situation, murdered.

Nick was a loving brother who helped anyone in need. Nick’s passing was not as it should have been, by natural causes, but as the result of a cruel and senseless act of violence. Nick’s death has changed me as a person, I have become disheartened, sometimes cynical, and short tempered and sometimes an angry person with a heaviness in my heart which washes over me at times in waves of depression and sometimes just being numb with disbelief. I then recall the good times I shared with Nick and how he is not part of our family gatherings anymore, even just dropping in for a chat like he used to. That’s when the reality of his absence hits me hardest.

Nick was our youngest sibling. He was a good hearted, happy and a loving family member. He had values and respect for the lives of others. He took the responsibility of putting his life on hold to look after mum and dad while I continued working. Dad suffered a severe stroke in 2007 and went into nursing care until he passed away in 2009. Nick continued to look after mum at home until she became too ill and infirm, ultimately requiring full-time care in a nursing home. The loss of dad devastated our family. I was coming to terms with Dad’s passing only to be shattered in discovering that Nick was missing. When we reported Nick’s disappearance and then found out he had been murdered, we elected to keep this information from mum while she was in hospice care, ill with cancer and I lied to her, telling her he had gone on a holiday. This was very difficult for me to lie to mum, to spare her the anguish we were feeling. As difficult as it was, we kept up this pretence for three months telling her he was still away on holiday. Three months later, in October 2011, Mum passed away without learning what had really happened to Nick.

 My last companionship with Nick was when I visited Wollongong to see mum, a week before his disappearance. My daughter had invited Nick to her baby son’s Christening in Newcastle and during my visit, Nick told me he would like to attend the Christening but if he did, mum would not have any family visits over the weekend so he would stay home to keep her company. That’s the sort of person Nick was. Thinking of his mother’s comfort and well-being.

I have seen and felt the sadness in my older brother’s life since the loss of Nick. Like me he misses and grieves for Nick. He is suspicious of society in general and is angry at the misleading portrayal of Nicks life; Nick was a happy go-lucky person who would help anyone in need. Nick and my older brother lived together so Nick could look after his older brother in his aging years. In order to help his brother, Nick took care of the household and car maintenance . I have stayed with my older brother on occasions when I visit Wollongong and have noticed that he does not sleep at night like he used to; his health is affected, he has nightmares, reliving the brutal pain Nick would have suffered . Nick was a single man who was kind and compassionate. He did not abuse or hurt anyone and was always ready to help anyone.

I grieve the loss of Nick who was our brother and a friend. Nick was the youngest in our family and he kept me young at heart, the one who should have outlived his older siblings. I miss Nick who should be here to enjoy life’s experiences with us, and grow old with us. This impact statement cannot convey the loss and effect Nicks’s death has had on me and my family. My days are interspersed with depression, sadness and normality. Our parents taught us to have morals and principles in life, one of them being to forgive, however I am finding that hard to do. I cannot accept the reality of what happened to Nick nor will I ever understand or forget it. I grieve for and miss my brother Nick.