

One's greatest struggle in life is often defeat. Whether the defeat comes in the form of a loss of a game or loss of a loved one, those who are unprepared for the battle often get swallowed whole by the opposing army. To the contrary, there are those brave hearts that choose to make the way toward a new hope in the distance, no matter how winding the path or how dangerous the journey. On March 6, 2005, the outcome of the battle I was about to face seemed unpredictable, until I realized that somewhere, even far off in the distance, was a prize worth fighting for. Somewhere, after the struggles and sleepless nights, there would be iron-clad armor waiting to protect me and shield me from future disasters of inner defeat.

The phone call did not wake me that night. It was the stabbing cries from my parents downstairs that chilled my body and woke me from what may have been sweet dreams. I warily made my way down to where they were, only to now see first hand the tears my ears heard being wept upstairs.

I started to cry, not knowing what was really going on, just instinctively knowing that something terrible had happened. My mother looked up at me, eyes barely open, face scrunched, my father's hands to his face. Somewhere between the sobs it came out. My older brother, of twenty-one years, had been found dead. His battle lost to drugs. The painful sound of saddening cries did not compare to the stabbing throbs now within me.

The days, the weeks, and the months following my brother's death are indescribable. The days are not clear in my mind, except for the day of his funeral, which I can still picture without fog in my mind.

My family held each other closely, probably of a fear that one of us might disappear any moment, not to return again. We went up to the casket, and there he lay. It was the first time I had seen him in years, and it would also be the last.

Driving away from the grave, you pray the pain stays there, buried in the ground. But, it doesn't. It follows you.

After March 6, 2005, I questioned the world and my beliefs. I kept asking why and wondering if my fate or my family's fate would have the same outcome as my brother's. But with these questions and emotions came a blooming desire.

I began to want more out of my own life. I wanted each minute to be spent as if I were taking my last lick of a tootsie pop. I wanted to go somewhere with my life. I decided that no matter how far my brother's death sent me back, it would eventually allow me to get that much further in the end.

I am now fighting the battle of overcoming tragedy. I know that the even has changed me. But as a brave heart, I wear an armor of determination. I know that I cannot let the misfortunes of life interfere with where I want to go physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

I plan to keep on the fighting the battle, because I know it will be worth the struggle. I plan to be victorious.