Knock, knock!

The sound of knocking disrupted my sleep. I got up from my bed in the office of my house and sluggishly walked to the window to see who knocked. A shiny blue and white car with “Dekalb Police” scribbled on the side of it was parked at the end of our driveway. Two bulky men in blue uniforms were at the door. Questions started running through my mind, trying to make sense of the fact that police officers were at my door. My parents opened the door and the men say “ You guys need to leave. Right now.  The house no longer belongs to you.”

I had no time to feel emotion. I grabbed my little brother and our valuables and followed my mother while my dad and my 15-year-old brother emptied out the house that I wasn't allowed to call mine anymore. Within a day, everything was taken out. Neighbors slowly drove by, watching my family being displaced with their eyes full of judgment. June 22, 2015, I was evicted out of my house. I was 11 years old. We hotel-hopped until my parents bought a 2 bedroom apartment. My parents shared one room, and my brothers and I shared the other. As the new school year started, things got a lot worse. Both of my parents picked up extra shifts to make our lives comfortable, but that meant I saw them less. But when I did see them, I noticed that they were growing farther apart. Many times I would be doing my homework and be disturbed by the sounds of their arguments.

My older brother did his best to shield me and my little brother from the fights, which oftentimes meant putting himself in between everything.  I’d always worry that my parents’ arguments would end in a divorce and I’d fear that my older brother would resort to self-harm or worse because of what he dealt with. Life at home wasn’t good, and life at school wasn’t any better. Not only was I forced to keep my grades up, but I was bullied relentlessly. Every day there was something about me that someone didn’t like and had to make fun of. Whether it was how I looked, my schoolwork, or just my presence, I was teased for something. Never, throughout that entire year, did I think anything good was going to happen. But I kept going. I smiled when I wanted to frown. I laughed when I wanted to cry. For myself and for my little brother, to keep his hopes up. For my older brother, to help him feel like he was doing something right. For my parents, so they wouldn’t have more to worry about. I kept going, trying, and progressing.

1 year later, I graduated as one of the top students in the 6th grade. My older brother got a scholarship from a prestigious organization known as the Simon Scholars, and my parents celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. My 6th-grade year was definitely my hardest, but it’s the year I’m most grateful for. It helped me grow as a person. I gained so much strength in that 1 year, it’s unbelievable. Things that are good aren’t easy to obtain and the willpower to go through hardships to get to the good thing is even harder to obtain. In that year, the desire to just stop and give up was great. But the desire to keep going, no matter where the end destination, was even greater. You will want to give up, throw in the towel, stop, but you can’t. Going through tough times will give you the strength to go through anything life throws at you. And the end destination will always be better and more beautiful than you could ever imagine. “Fall down seven times, get up eight.”