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Section Introduction: Fighting for Hope

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Fighting For Hope

With life come many different types of struggles. We all have and will experience hardship in different ways. Whether it is the loss of a loved one, the struggle to fight for what's right, or the need to hope against hope—these experiences impact us in ways we might never imagine. These experiences can lead us to take action. They challenge us to be strong, to overcome. They can change the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us. They can completely throw our lives off balance in the most jarring of ways, leaving us scrambling to pick up the pieces of a life that seemed so normal yesterday, but so foreign now. It's not an easy thing to imagine, but deep down inside, while we cope with shock and sadness, a part of us is learning how to be strong through it all—a part of us is learning how to persist, to fight for hope. No matter what we have been put through, we survived.

The contributors in this section demonstrate incredible skill, but it's the message of hope, determination, and perseverance that makes them so extraordinary. We hope readers will feel the strength each author embodies. Whether these stories are relatable to a situation you have been through, or help you understand a struggle you've never experienced, they encourage readers to see the power of hope and the need to fight for it.

Although these four stories—"The Courage to Speak," "Tip Jar Girl," "Lighthouse," and "A Letter To E,"—are vastly different, they shed light on an unfortunate fact of life: tragedy and loss happen. Still, we persevere. In "The Courage to Speak," Casey Burke shines a bright light on the epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses and the need for all of us to fight for greater accountability and safety. Tip Jar Girl," by Valerie Torres, highlights the struggle of fighting against the stigma attached to children with parents in prison. "Lighthouse," by Cameron Vazquez, is an emotionally-compelling series of vignettes surrounding the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. And in "A Letter to E," Zoey Leigh Woldman takes readers on her journey in which she recounts her story of being separated from her love and her tireless efforts to make the distance work. "

These authors were able to find something within them that pushed them to keep going, no matter how devastated they were. There are no guarantees in life. We are not all dealt the same cards; therefore, it is sometimes difficult to imagine what a person has been through. We are honored to present a variety of stories that convey the importance of finding strength and hope in our struggles.

—Jessica Bowden, Destiny Reyes, Vanessa Rojas-Castillo