

When I stood up over the years

reclaiming

hope

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When I stood up from the dinner table as a child of 8, I was terrified.

My first time paralyzed came before I even knew what the word meant. I was too young, too invincible to know that this could happen to me. And for the first time in my life, I was truly scared.

When I stood up from laughing with my friends as a child of 10, I didn't know there was a pattern to my illness. I thought the nightmare was over when really it had just begun. And for the first time in my life, I knew I had friends to lean on.

When I stood up from my desk in high school with the same familiar pain, I thought it was all over. I hadn't needed pills or doctors' visits in over three years. But it was back with a vengeance.

And for the first time in my life, I realized there is no such thing as being invincible.

When I stood up from my bed after months of not being able to, I cried with happiness only to fall again. The life of

doctors and pills came back to me as soon as it left. And for the first time in my life, I realized that this condition feeds on hope.

When I was no longer able to stand, my mother stood up for me. She fought like a tiger with research and data, but her cries fell on deaf ears. And for the first time in my life, I realized medicine isn't about people anymore, but rather greed and hubris.

Now, at the age of 15, wondering when I'll be able to stand shouldn't be one of my concerns. I shouldn't know a life of walkers and wheelchairs.

I should feel invincible like I felt as a small child. I should be learning

how to drive instead of learning how to cope. My mother should be crying tears of joy rather than those of hurt.

But for the first time in my life, I realize what strength is. I realize what kindness is. I realize what hope really is.

Hope is standing up even when it's nearly impossible, because you know you must.

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