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In the calm before the storm I seized the eerie quietness in my home to open my textbook. He wasn't home at the moment which was a rare treat for me; at last I could study for my biology regents in peace. Storms are like that, you just never know the damage they cause until after they hit, and hit hard.

Suddenly, I heard a loud blood chilling scream coming from down the block. I knew it was him. I ran to the door, flung it open and saw a horrific sight. He was holding his side through his blood soaked t-shirt. Right then and there, if I hesitated or panicked, he would die. Instinctively and immediately I ran to the phone and called 911. Health class never prepared me for something like this. In fact this never happened before in the small town of Plainview. I listened carefully to the operator's directions until the paramedics arrived. At 15 years old, I had to act decisively, step in and take charge of the situation because my dad was at work and my mom was emotionally distraught. As I watched him being carried away on a stretcher, I was scared. Had I done enough? One of the paramedics turned to me and said, "Good job kid; you saved your brother's life." Whew! I couldn't believe this statement until I found out that he had a lacerated liver and a punctured lung. My brother was on the way to the hospital and I wasn't even allowed to go in my own home because it was a crime scene. With the detectives looking for clues and questioning me, I had to relive the events that took place over and over again till late in the evening.

My earliest memories are of my brother's struggle with the insanity of drug addiction. Despite the turmoil and drama my brother had created, I found a safe haven. I joined the Robotics club. There were people there, like myself, eager to learn and take on new challenges. I participated in the FIRST Robotics Challenge every year and enjoyed it tremendously. Last year our team's robot came in 2nd place out of 75 schools at the regional event at the infamous Hofstra University. I gained a sense of pride. Aside from the awards and honors, what I really valued is working with healthy spirited friends as a team. This club was the springboard that propelled me into my passion for engineering.

Storms are still raging in my house, but I remain focused and determined through all kinds of weather. Looking in the mirror I see a confident, self reliant, optimistic individual with enthusiasm for life and learning. People tell me I saved my brother's life, but the truth is I found a new sense of direction. During these years I have grown to see that I choose my own path and make my own footprint. Although, my brother has put my family through a great deal of pain, he did teach me one good thing. Ironically, he taught me by example the value of

life.