**Fighter**

How could the word fighter have any more negative of a connotation? To be a fighter was to be angry, mean, and stubborn. To be a fighter meant standing up for one’s self by the use of fists, or in my case, harsh, unforgiving arguments. To be a fighter stood for hurting others to protecting one’s self and one’s ideals. Yet, they told me I was a fighter. They told me I took my anger in situations and used it to fight to get my way. Because of this, I was under the impression that my unwillingness to give up or back down had made me into the worst thing a person could be: a fighter. To be a fighter could never be a respectable thing, so I never attempted to find a speck of pride in who I was. Jake Tyler taught me otherwise.

To admit that one of the most influential and inspirational people in my life is a fictional character is something that I am in no way ashamed of. Chris Hauty’s film, *Never Back Down* captures more than the struggles of a misunderstood outsider in a new town trying to make right of any wrongs he faced. It followed Jake Tyler’s transformation from an angry, irrational brawler to a skilled MMA fighter with the ability to overcome obstacles of the past and to channel negative energy into focusing on the desired outcome and working hard to get it. In this determination, his feelings, frustrations, emotions, and struggles are mine. His fists and my mouth are one. He may be a fictional character, but he is as real to me as real could ever be to a person.

What I lacked, and what Jake Tyler gave me, was the ability to realize that you can choose to blame your circumstances on bad luck or bad choices, or you can fight back. To be a fighter was not to be angry, or spiteful, nor was it to hurt others. To be a fighter was to channel negative energy into strength and positive energy: to recognize what one felt was wrong and instead of letting it defeat you, letting it allow you to grow stronger. I finally understood why they called me a fighter, and because of Jake Tyler, I now knew that being a fighter is the greatest thing a person could be. Strength, perseverance, and determination are not things to be ashamed of. We each have our own way, our own fight, our own battle, and being a fighter means never giving up and never backing down because as Paulo Coelho said, “it’s better to lose some of the battles in the struggles for your dreams than to be defeated without ever knowing what you’re fighting for.”