NEVER
BACK DOWN

Kevin Nowak
Foreword

This book is dedicated to two powerful inspirations in my life. First and foremost it is dedicated to the glory of God.

It is also dedicated to Ethan Scott Patterson, a cancer survivor from Hampton, Georgia, who passed away on November 15, 2010 at the age of 17. He was diagnosed with Ewings Sarcoma in November 2002 and fought through 48 weeks of chemo and 5 weeks of radiation. After the last chemo treatment, Ethan was told that the treatments damaged his heart to the degree that he had developed cardio myopathy. He relapsed in November 2007 but was restricted to oral chemo because the heart disease was so severe. Ethan was found to be cancer free in May 2010 but the toll on his body proved too great and he passed away in November. What Ethan leaves behind is a story of courage, resolve, and victory.

Ethan had an amazing attitude in spite of the challenges he faced. Some of his favorite things were WWE Wrestling, sushi, video games, and girls. He made jokes during tough times to help those around him feel more at ease and never complained about anything. He had a big personality and an even bigger love for life. Though his body eventually surrendered, his fighting spirit never did. This book seeks to capture in some small way Ethan’s courage, perseverance, and joy.

Never Back Down is a collection of poems written to honor Ethan’s fight and to encourage individuals who are currently battling cancer. I am excited that you are one of the 60,000 cancer survivors or caregivers around the world who will receive this book. You are a major inspiration to me and the primary reason I write poem books and speak at Relay For Life events.

The poems in this book are about a feeling deep within your soul born out of sometimes painful experiences. They are written to awaken in you the conviction that challenges are inevitable in life. They testify that any journey worth pursuing in life will face threats, hurdles, and distractions. The poems are a light shining into the darkness to drive out doubt, the desire to quit, and the temptation to bear the burden alone. The poems are a rallying cry that every one of us has a choice as to how we respond to these challenges.

We will take a stand. We will move forward. We will rise up. We will keep the faith. We are unyielding. We will never quit. We will never turn aside. We will never bow to fear. We are resolute. We will Never Back Down.

Kevin Nowak
Kevinpnowak@yahoo.com

Please “like” my Facebook page to receive additional poems and updates throughout the year at: www.facebook.com/pages/Kevin-Nowak/75984344572.

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Never Back Down

It seems impossible to stay tough.
It is just so hard to remain bold,
Once the cancer enters our lives,
Once the cancer starts to take hold.

We do our best to fight a good fight,
But the situation feels so unbearable.
Cancer has its way of inflicting pain,
Causing emotional distress that is terrible.

Yet here we are determined to stay strong,
Even as things around us begin to crumble.
We will not be taken down by cancer,
In our journey we will not stumble.

Fighting cancer involves finding a little faith,
And persevering in the roughest circumstances.
It is also about holding on to what is important,
And making the most out of all our chances.

Each day our energy and passion are restored,
And our hope is renewed and replenished.
We will keep battling and moving forward
To see this thing through until it is finished.

We will keep going until there is a cure.
Finishing this fight is the only answer,
Because someday we do want to live in a world,
Where nobody hears the words “you have cancer.”

We will rise up and take our stand.
We will not fear. We will not frown.
In this battle we fight against cancer,
We will never back down.
David vs. Goliath

There is a big giant known as cancer,  
And it is trying to tear me apart.  
It wants to take away my spirit.  
It wants to crush and break my heart.

It stands there overshadowing me,  
Staring at me with its menacing frown.  
Its sole objective is to destroy me.  
It is trying to take me down.

Most would say the odds are against me,  
But in their words I do not take stock.  
I am determined to fight this cancer,  
So I reach in my bag and grab a rock.

With fiery determination in my heart,  
I take my slingshot and pull it back.  
I want to stop cancer’s destruction.  
I want to stop cancer’s attack.

As the cancer makes a move to get me,  
I am quick to let my rock of hope go.  
It strikes cancer right between the eyes.  
It is an amazingly powerful blow.

Cancer realizes it has made a mistake,  
As it stumbles and falls to the ground.  
With the threat of cancer finally gone,  
A new level of peace is found.

I came into the battle as an underdog.  
Many felt as though I would be defeated,  
But I believed and kept my faith,  
Now my victory over cancer is completed.
Hero

You did not set out to be a hero,
But that is exactly what you are.
In this battle we fight against cancer,
You have helped to carry us far.

You have courage and guts,
That are truly second to none.
You have gone through so much,
So your battle could be won.

To all of us you are a hero.
You are someone we all admire.
You are someone with strength and spirit,
Someone with determination and fire.

You have amazing heart and passion,
And a confident bounce to your stride.
When it comes to our individual lives,
We are glad to have you by our side.

You may not realize how many things
To us that you have passed on.
You have shown us through your battle,
That hope and grace will never be gone.

You have taken on the enemy called cancer,
And through your truly amazing fight,
We realize with just a little bit of faith,
A cure for all might be in sight.

Thank you for being an inspiration,
And allowing us to look up to you.
Hero, on this night let me just say,
Thank you very much for all that you do.

(Signature Survivor Poem)
Our Fight

It is a sad day when you get the news. You are in shock and complete disbelief. Throughout your body is a sick feeling, And nothing anyone says brings you relief.

You have never felt quite this alone, Like you are trapped on a scary island, But understand I am there with you. United we are going to make a stand.

We will get through this together, Exactly as we have always done. Though we are not sure of the outcome, Two people have a better chance than one.

I am your caregiver and your teammate, So pushing you is what I am going to do. I know you better than anyone else. There is nothing you cannot get through.

It is a difficult road in front of us. The odds against us will keep piling, But I will keep you motivated. I will keep you happy and smiling.

There will be times when we will laugh, And other times when we will cry, But as long as we stick together, We are going to be able to get by.

The key to this battle is determination, So if our passion can be sustained, We will have success over the cancer. A hard-fought victory will be obtained.

What began as your fight became my fight, Now together it has become our fight. As a team we will keep going and working, Until your cancer-free days are in sight.
Down in the Valley (2010)

Cancer has me down in the valley,
And I am all alone on this day,
Cancer has me down in the valley,
And I’m afraid I am here to stay.

Cancer has me down in the valley,
I have never felt quite this low,
I am down in the valley,
Really got no place to go.

I am down in the valley
And feeling pretty flustered,
But despite how I am feeling,
My strength must be mustered.

Cancer has me down in the valley,
But a way out is what I seek.
Someday I will leave this valley
And stand on a mountain’s peak.

The only way out of here
Is for me to climb,
But I have to be patient,
Because it will take some time.

Cancer has me down in the valley,
But heart is what I am about.
So moving in the right direction,
I am taking steps to get out.
Never Give Up

When something goes incredibly wrong,  
I cannot get caught up in discouragement,  
Because if I truly open my eyes and look,  
I will see that He provides encouragement.

When I know I have a bad day coming,  
And the results are going to be devastating,  
I will rebound from the disappointment,  
Because He will have blessings waiting.

When I fail terribly at something,  
And am thinking of throwing the towel in,  
He will be there to give me the strength  
To get back up and try again.

When certain destruction is coming for me,  
And it is closing in so very fast,  
I do not worry. I trust in God,  
And He helps me to get right past.

When I am at my lowest possible point,  
I am not out of the reach of His rescue.  
He is God the Creator of all,  
And there is nothing He cannot do.

Nothing can be the end of the road.  
I will never reach the end of the line,  
Because God is with me all of the time,  
So I know I will be just fine.

I will bring my problems and troubles to God,  
And He will overflow my cup,  
So as long as I have Him in my life,  
I will never give up.
Better Than When You Came

When you head out for a little travel,  
And you find yourself in a new place.  
You have a chance to make your mark.  
You have a chance to show your grace.

Because in that particular moment in time,  
If you stand up and act unselfishly,  
You can experience something special.  
You can see how the world should be.

If you truly want to love your neighbor,  
And it becomes your primary objective.  
You need to put your words into action,  
And make sure your behavior is reflective.

Do something special for someone else,  
Something that they will never forget.  
Reach out your hand and help out,  
Someone that you have never met.

Use your resources and your generosity,  
To give a stranger a great surprise.  
Step in and help out new people,  
Whenever the opportunities arise.

Extend kind words and thoughts,  
To everyone who passes you by.  
Make sure to always pass along thanks,  
For everything you get to try.

Reach down deep and try to give  
This new destination a fresh start.  
Love is something that is contagious,  
So make sure that you open your heart.

One thing about your travel is certain.  
The lives of others will never be the same,  
When you come to a new place determined,  
To make it better than when you came.
The Day

Because of cancer our lives have uncertainty,
Each and every morning when we wake up,
But what if today things could be different?
What if today there was going to be a shake up?

What if today was not going to be normal?
What if today was going to be awesome?
What if today would be unlike any other day?
What if today our time had finally come?

What if all of the pain and the fear
Was something we learned not to expect?
What if instead hope and excitement
Became the things we worked to resurrect?

What if it was not tomorrow?
What if it was not some future date?
What if instead the time was now?
What if we decided not to wait?

What if we stopped conceding to cancer,
And decided to quit being so passive?
What if we decided to make a difference,
And have an impact that was massive?

What if we took some real chances out there,
Where before cancer only caused us to fear?
What if we rose up in tough circumstances,
And made this evil disease disappear?

What if we opened doors previously closed to us,
Even in times when they appeared shut tight?
What if we actually followed our hearts,
And brought the cure back into sight?

We have to believe we can do the impossible.
We have to believe nothing will stand in our way.
In our battle against cancer the time is now.
In our battle against cancer this is the day.
Steps

There comes a time in this life,
When we wonder if we should stop.
It seems we are fighting an uphill battle.
Will we ever reach the top?

The road to curing cancer is long.
The road to giving up is very short.
But because we believe in our cause,
This is not a battle we will abort.

When fighting for something important,
It is sometimes hard to keep our will,
But we have to remember taking steps
Is much better than standing still.

When taking steps on the road to success,
The journey sometimes goes slow,
But as long as our feet are in motion,
Who knows how far we can go.

It is time to walk with passion,
With each of these steps we take.
If we can just keep moving,
What a difference we can make.

Taking step, after step, after step,
We are moving in the right direction,
And with every small step,
We are that much closer to perfection.

As we continue to take more steps,
Eventually cancer will be left behind,
Because by traveling down this road,
A cure for cancer is what we will find.
Red Sea

You are trapped. Yes, you’re trapped,  
Because the enemy is on the attack.  
You feel trapped. You feel scared,  
Because the sea is at your back.

You are trapped. Yes, you’re trapped,  
Because you have got no place to go.  
You feel trapped. You feel scared.  
How to escape you do not know.

You are trapped. Yes, you’re trapped,  
Because you’re back against the wall.  
You feel trapped. You feel scared,  
You are sure that you will fall.

Don’t be scared. You’re not trapped,  
So put away all of your fear.  
The Lord is with you all of the time.  
He is close. He is near.

Don’t be scared. You’re not trapped,  
Because the Lord is on your side.  
He will make a path for you.  
An escape route He will provide.

Don’t be scared. You’re not trapped.  
Believe and do not be faint-hearted.  
God has big things in mind for you.  
So the sea is going to be parted.

Don’t be scared. You’re not trapped.  
The Lord will remove you from this land,  
So lift up that faith of yours.  
Reach out and take His hand.

Don’t be scared. You’re not trapped,  
Even when destruction is a possibility.  
Just put your faith and trust in God.  
Remember what happened at the Red Sea.
Warrior

It came as a surprise without warning.  
It arrived like a thief in the night.  
Cancer entered my life without notice,  
And filled my world with fright.

When I found out I had to face cancer,  
Instantly I painted a negative picture,  
But then I realized I had to stay strong,  
Because I had reached a critical juncture.

Cancer wanted to take hold of me,  
But my spirit it could not keep.  
I was going to have to reach inside.  
I was going to have to dig deep.

Exactly how this thing would turn out,  
Unfortunately only time would tell,  
But I was prepared to bring my best.  
I was going to fight hard and excel.

Admitting defeat and walking away,  
To my life those things did not apply,  
Instead positivity, faith and hope  
Were the things never short in supply.

I had learned to bravely march forward,  
As ready as a person could ever be.  
I would stand face to face with this disease,  
Ready for everything it would throw at me.

As I survived I proudly wore purple,  
And I represented it time and time again.  
I continued to go against my cancer,  
As many times as it took to finally win.

The cancer tried to bring me down,  
And it did its best to be my destroyer,  
But instead I decided to fight back.  
I chose to rise up and become a warrior.
Tonight I Light This Candle

I miss being able to see you.
I miss talking to you every day,
But up to God’s Kingdom in Heaven,
You have finally found your way.

Tonight I light a candle for you,
To let you know I still care,
But that is not the end of it.
I have a message I want to share.

In just a few short hours,
This candle may burn out,
But the passion you have put inside me,
Will always be what I am about.

Tomorrow this candle that I have lit,
It may be taken and it may be gone,
But the admiration that I have for you,
That will continue to rage on.

You are still with me,
In every breath that I take,
And you are still with me,
In every decision that I make.

You have given me precious memories,
And those memories are here to stay.
They are treasures for my soul,
That can never be taken away.

So tonight I light this candle,
But this candle is only a small part,
Of the deep love for you,
That will always be in my heart.

(Signature Poem)
Thank You

All of those fun times that we laughed,
And all those sad times that we cried,
We have so many good memories
Of all of the silly things we tried.

But the thing that I remember most
Is beside me you would always stand,
And whenever things got tough for me,
You were there to give me your hand.

You see, you are my friend.
I am who I am because of you,
So whenever you are behind me,
There is nothing I cannot do.

Through your help and inspiration,
Life’s mountain I can climb,
And I know that I can count on you
Any place or any time.

To you I say thank you
For being with me every day,
For directing and guiding me
And helping me find my way.

To you I say thank you,
For being with me to the end,
And most importantly, simply,
For always being my friend.
Final Destination

Having cancer enter into my body
Was never a scenario that I planned on.
Now I am in a brand new situation,
Wondering if I will have a leg to stand on.

Having everything that I know on the line
Has me scared and overcome with fear.
As the minutes and the days go by,
My confidence and optimism start to disappear.

Cancer has broken through my initial defenses.
Now it tries to push me against the ropes,
But it can never destroy my dreams,
And it will never end my hopes.

As I move forward in this ongoing battle,
My passion and my courage must be optimized.
That is my best chance to win this thing,
And for success to be recognized.

I can’t be afraid to show my passion
And to wear my emotions on my sleeve.
The fact that I will overcome the cancer
Is something in my heart I deeply believe.

Pain lies ahead and throwing in the towel
Might sometimes appear to be inviting,
But for me it is never going to be an option,
Because I am going to come out fighting.

I am not going to be a victim here.
I am not going to just sit back,
Instead I will give it everything I have,
When cancer comes on the attack.

I will meet the cancer head on,
With all of my spirit and determination,
Because I know a victory over cancer,
In the end is my final destination.
Taken Away

Cancer takes away what I am able to do,  
And quickly my whole life is changed.  
Cancer takes away some of my plans,  
And my schedule must be rearranged.

Cancer takes away pieces of my health.  
I am not able to do all I did before.  
Cancer tries to take away my time,  
Trying to give me less when I want more.

Cancer takes away certain parts of my life,  
But on other parts I must draw the line.  
There are things cancer can never touch,  
Things that are always going to be mine.

Cancer cannot take away my faith,  
Even as my battle goes longer and longer.  
I find no matter what I am confronted with,  
The faith that I have only grows stronger.

Cancer tries to strip away my love,  
But my relationships will not come apart.  
For my God, my family and my friends,  
There will always be deep love in my heart.

Cancer tries to take away my dreams,  
But through my battle I have learned to believe,  
And understand there is nothing I cannot do,  
So my dreams are all things I can achieve.

My dreams, my faith and my love  
Are things that remain with me everyday,  
So no matter what cancer throws at me,  
My hope will never be taken away.