

TRAIN YOUR MIND LIKE A FIGHTER
TO FACE LIFE LIKE A CHAMPION

IVO IN YOUR CORNER ITO

JAVIER MENDEZ

FOREWORD BY
KHABIB NURMAGOMEDOV



AN EXCERPT FROM

IN YOUR CORNER

TRAIN YOUR MIND LIKE A FIGHTER
TO FACE LIFE LIKE A CHAMPION

JAVIER MENDEZ

with David Ridd

Foreword by Khabib Nurmagomedov

This excerpt contains

ROUND 1 – CLIMB THE WILLOW

Pages 1–19 of the book

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ROUND 1

CLIMB THE WILLOW

“What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember, and how you remember it.”

Gabriel García Márquez

“Relax. This is your fight. You set the pace.”

I said it quietly, but loud enough for Islam to hear over the roar of the crowd. He stood a couple of feet ahead of me in the walkout tunnel. His shoulders squared, gloves tapping together, eyes fixed on the bright lights spilling in from the arena. The floor shook from the crowd above us – feet stomping so loud and fast that you could feel it in your ribs.

It was September 2019, UFC 242: Khabib vs. Poirier.

Sweat soaked my shirt the second I stepped into the venue on Yas Island. It was called the *Arena*, but it wasn't a normal, sealed, air-conditioned arena like so many others. Or an outdoor arena with a nice breeze. To be honest, I'd have preferred either. The desert heat of Abu Dhabi pressed against the walls, and inside we were boiling. Even close to midnight, it felt like a sauna.

The venue was constructed specifically for this event, and it was sold out, packed to the brim with people moving and chanting in waves around the Octagon. You could smell all the sweat and perfume, the disinfectant and nerves. But in the center, the black chain-link cage was still empty. Spotlights shone on the mat already marked with blood from the earlier fights.

I checked the time. They'd wave us out soon.

Paul Felder was preparing to face off against Edson Barboza in the co-main event, but next on the main card was ours, Islam Makhachev vs. Davi Ramos. It would decide who broke into the Ultimate Fighting Championship's (UFC's) top 15 Lightweight rankings.

The heat made it so I didn't have to worry too much about Islam getting cold before the fight. And we had already been in the UAE for weeks, acclimatizing. His brother in all but blood, Khabib Nurmagomedov, was the main event later that night – the reigning Lightweight champion facing off against the interim champion Dustin Poirier in a unification bout. It was the only time in their careers that Khabib and Islam shared the main card, and the only time Khabib's father, Abdulmanap Nurmagomedov, was able to corner them both in the UFC.

Abdulmanap, the Great One, stood on the other side of Islam. He had one hand on Islam's shoulder, rubbing small circles to keep him loose. We had left Khabib in the locker room to warm up for his fight, even though he wanted to join us in Islam's corner.

I wiped more sweat from behind my ear. Not that it did much.

Finally, the official leaned in and gave us the nod. It was time.

"Relax," I repeated. It's the last thing you can give a fighter before they walk out. Calm.

The announcer's voice boomed over the speakers –

"Islam Makhachev!"

The crowd roared louder.

Islam rolled his neck once, exhaled, and stepped forward into the light. His walk-out music started, and the stadium rippled, chanting his name as we snaked our way toward the cage. I rarely feel nerves this late in my career, but the more you connect with a fighter, the more you feel them. It used to bring me horrible

insomnia, but if Islam felt nervous too, he didn't show it.

He was loose, steady – never been a guy to waste energy on theatrics.

Beside the steps of the Octagon, the cutman inspected Islam's fingernails, toenails, mouthguard, and everything else to make sure he was ready. Then he greased Islam's face with petroleum jelly to help slip the strikes. It reduces friction so the skin doesn't tear. After that, he rechecked his gloves. Abdulmanap leaned close to Islam and whispered another coat of calm, a final piece of advice to keep him focused and ready for the battle ahead. I didn't hear, but I didn't need to. Abdulmanap and I always seemed to be on the same page.

Father's Plan.

"Remember, *The Matador*," I added. "You're the matador now, Islam. Let him rush. Not you. You control the tempo." I patted his shoulder. "Stay focused, stay relaxed. It's your fight."

Abdulmanap smiled.

Islam looked at both of us, nodded, then gazed at the steps of the cage he was about to climb into. He knew – we all knew – the moment he stepped in, he had to be ready. It was his fight. Not his parents', brothers', or friends'. Not mine.

His. Alone.

No one ever steps into the cage with a fighter. We can only watch. A corner like me stands on the outside – a few feet away, but it might as well be miles – observing everything unfold in real time. Every fight, like every fighter, is different. A good coach's job is to see potential in a fighter; a good corner's job is to prepare them. That's why I have to be focused. Hardly blinking. Tunnel vision scanning for opportunities we're not taking, encouraging

what's working for us, and correcting actions to stop us from getting caught off-guard.

Islam had specific strengths, but our goal was to push his strengths against the opponent's weaknesses. Game plans are important to all fights, but champions adapt. That's why I'm always conscious of the fear of going to the wrong side, riding into the opponent's power, where all their strength is coming at you full force. I'm also conscious of showing weakness to the opponent, of running from them, rather than standing your ground and facing them. To let them know they can't hurt you – they can't break you – you're there to beat them. You'll stay standing. You'll keep coming. You'll outlast them.

They can't beat you – *ever*.

But that's for the fighters. What being in the corner teaches you most about is control.

Namely, you don't have it.

A lot of people in my circle talk about control because, in a fight, it's a good thing. It means you're setting the pace. It means the other fighter is chasing you, that you're perfectly executing the game plan you decided on, and that everything you did to train and prepare is working. What control isn't, is power over others. Over outcomes. You have absolutely no control over what your opponent will do. You have no strings puppeteering their every move.

You train. You prepare. You act. You react. You fight.

You endure.

Funny thing is, I learned that before I ever knew anything about fighting.

THE WILLOW TREE

When I was five years old, the willow tree towered over me.

It felt like a skyscraper. This mess of hanging branches blocking the sun. I stood beneath it, barefoot in the schoolyard, my toes digging in the dirt. Sweat rolled down my back as I craned my neck to try and take it all in. I was nervous as hell. Scared. Because behind me, my teacher stood – arms crossed, angry – waiting for me to make a move.

“Go ahead, Javier,” she said in Spanish. “Climb.”

This was 1965, in Tangancícuaro, my hometown in Michoacán, Mexico. It was the only school around for thirty miles, in a village on the outskirts of what my family called El Valle. Our home sat a few miles east, on a small plot of dry farmland – a simple one-room adobe with a swept dirt floor, *lamina* roof, and a clay *fogón* stove in the kitchen. We were the last house in a short row, tucked between guava trees near the river where we bathed and played.

From the day I was born until we left Michoacán, this was home to me, my four brothers, my parents, my aunts and uncles, four cows, two chickens, and sometimes my grandparents. Mind you, this is mostly according to my oldest brother, Jesse. At five years old, all I really remember is playing tag with my brothers between the guava trees, the time my brother Mike was gored by one of our cows, and the willow tree at school that morning, miles from home.

Standing in front of my teacher, I knew in the back of my mind that it was too far to run back. But I know I wanted to run, because I had done *something* to get myself into trouble. For the life of me, I don’t remember what it was. It’s possible it could have been a fight, or I could have been a talker, disrupting class. Or maybe it was just

that I forgot my shoes.

What I do remember is that this, the willow tree, was a punishment.

“Adelante,” my teacher said, nudging my back. “Go.”

If I had looked behind me at that moment, I would have seen the eyes of all my classmates watching. Laughing. Teasing each other, happy they weren't in my shoes – or lack of – but all of them still eager to see what might happen next. The only one who really knew was my teacher. She had seen this all play out before. I wasn't her first unruly kid.

Slowly, reluctantly, I approached the old willow tree. I found a grooved handhold, then a foothold, took a deep breath, and started to climb. When you're a kid, you have no perception of how tall something is. It could have been only a few feet that I climbed, or it could have been Mount Everest. Regardless, the mission from my teacher was simple:

Find a good, solid branch ... so she could whip me with it.

My older brother Jesse will shrug and tell you, “Yeah, of course. Of course. That was a common enough punishment back in the day. Especially for Jav.”

He's not wrong. Control is something most kids lack. And adults, sometimes unfortunately, get to choose how they wield it. That power dynamic can make kids afraid, stripping them of their confidence, and sadly, many kids don't emerge stronger for it. And the 1960s in Mexico, I'd soon find out, were the same as the 1960s in the United States. Kids “required” discipline, and almost every respectable adult was ready, and sometimes too eager, to dish it out. It wasn't right, it wasn't good, I've never repeated it in my own home – but it happened. What can you do?

This is my earliest memory. And, to this day, it's what I remember as my first fight.

I lost.

FIGHT CONTROL

The willow tree was the very first ring I ever stepped into, and the crowd watched as I climbed, knowing that what came next would hurt me. I knew pain was coming, but I had to find it in myself to face it anyway. Looking back, the difference between me and a fighter like Islam that night in Abu Dhabi is that I climbed the willow tree to be punished – it wasn't a choice.

It was discipline, not self-discipline, that brought me there.

So, you have to wonder, *why on earth would someone do that willingly?* Why would they climb the willow if they didn't have to? Why would they choose to step into a cage with someone whose sole purpose is to hurt them? To beat on them until they bleed?

Islam lowered his head at the steps of the Octagon, blocking out all the noise and the crowd and the lights of the arena, finding his focus. I took my place beside Abdulmanap and Islam's manager, Rizvan Magomedov, in the corner leaning over the black chain-link fence.

Davi was already inside, waiting. He's shorter than Islam, but standing in the cage looking down at the steps, Davi seemed to tower over him. Finally, Islam opened his eyes, rolled his shoulders, bounced left to right, and stepped alone into the cage.

There are endless answers to that question – *why we fight* – but one I always circle back to is that we climb into the cage or the ring

because it's the one place in life where we can fight back. It's the one place where we can see the hits coming at us, and actually do something about it.

Because at five years old, I learned that sometimes you can do a hell of a lot right and still lose. I could follow instructions, climb a tree, and brace myself for a hit – but none of that changed the outcome. Someone exerted control over me, and all I could really decide was how I reacted.

In life, this happens a lot more than we care to admit.

Like I said, control in a fight is a good thing. But so many people still want that other sort of control in life. They want the type of control that *guarantees* success – the instant win, the get-rich-quick. It's easy to see why: we want to feel secure, safe, and steady. Maybe we even have good reasons for it. Our family. Our community. Our own moral compass telling us that when we're finally rich or successful, we'll be charitable. But wealth doesn't determine the generosity of spirit, only the value. And what kind of success is *guaranteed* success anyway?

None. It's an illusion we convince ourselves is true.

The most dangerous phrase in our world right now is “win at all costs.” There's always a cost. Even if we don't see it. I don't want my fighters to be “winners” because that's all winners do: they take any avenue they can, any shortcut, any advantage, to win. Winning is short-term. You win an argument, you win a prize, you win a battle. You don't win a war, you end a war. You don't win at life, you live it. The real question is: *how will you live it?*

I've never wanted to train winners. I want champions. Champions win, of course – but they do it for more than themselves, more than one fight, more than one belt or trophy or medal. A

champion constantly challenges themselves to do better and be better – victory is an offset of their mindset. Their drive. And becoming a champion, unlike a winner, is a lifelong achievement. You win once, you choose to live like a champion forever.

But this illusion of control still holds us back. It tricks us into believing the world owes us something. You’ve probably been around long enough, seen enough, so you know – the world doesn’t owe us anything, and it won’t hand us anything either. Anything we get, we’re lucky or we work hard for. There is no in between.

We can still prepare for the fight ahead of us – we can control the pace, make a game plan, train, and prepare – but only when we relinquish that illusion of guaranteed outcomes, of being owed something, of a win-at-all-costs mindset do things really start to change. What’s Gandhi’s quote? *To change the world, we must first change ourselves.* Well, giving up the illusion of that other kind of control is the first step. The first step to faith. To trust. To love.

To building a legacy that outlives you.

THE CHAMPION’S MENTALITY

Islam walked slowly across the mat as the announcer introduced his opponent in the blue corner, a world jiu-jitsu champion: “Davi ‘*The Tasmanian Devil*’ Ramos.” Islam nodded, bouncing loosely side to side in the red corner, introduced as a combat sambo world champion.

He raised one hand to the cheering crowd, pointing one finger to the rafters and the sky. Some people think that means he calls himself *number 1*, but he’s pointing toward God, who he believes guides and deserves credit for his every move.

When he lowered his hand, Islam wasn't smiling inside the cage. He was focused. Every bit of the training, discipline, and sacrifice it took to reach this moment was visible in how he carried himself – a kid from a mountain village in Dagestan, a place most of the world hadn't even heard of a decade earlier. He was composed. Confident. Ready for battle.

I've spent the last forty years of my life in professional combat sports – first as a world champion Kickboxer, and more recently as a coach to some of the greatest champions in mixed-martial-arts (MMA) history – fighters, leaders, and legends like Islam Makhachev, Khabib Nurmagomedov, Cain Velasquez, Daniel Cormier, Luke Rockhold, and Frank Shamrock.

I don't see myself as a better coach than any other. There are far better wrestlers, judo masters, sambo specialists, boxers, Thai boxers, Brazilian jiu-jitsu experts, and even kickboxers. My only real difference, when it comes down to it, is time. I have been fortunate enough to be in this sport and the rising MMA profession longer than almost anyone. Like most coaches, I have a particular skill set, but the one I pride myself on is the mental game.

I trust in the old adage that *where the mind goes, the body follows*, and I believe 90% of fights are lost before the fighters ever step into the cage. That's not because they aren't prepared. On the professional stages of MMA, everyone is prepared, everyone is talented, and everyone has a deep background in one martial arts specialty or another.

The question every fight asks is: *Are they ready? Can they handle the pressure?*

Every day, a fighter wakes up knowing that when they step into that ring or climb into that cage, they're going to get hit. It's also possible that they're going to get hurt or injured, because their

opponent has *one* goal, and it's that.

Hurt them. Take them down. Win.

The fighter has to find the heart to face it anyway. They have to face the willow switch they know is coming, and do something about it. They can't be afraid. They have to find somewhere in themselves the strength to endure that possibility. And, for a few minutes, for a few rounds, fighters put their entire lives on display. Where they came from, who they are, and what they believe. Every single day, hour, and minute of training is out there for the world to see.

Make no mistake, the cage is a theater of live performance. Fighting is as much a show of expertise and training as a singer's or a dancer's performance on a stage. And just like on a stage, there is absolutely *no* hiding your skill, talent, or training as a fighter. Either you put in the work and the time to hone your technique, or your opponent will show you how they did it. And it might hurt when they do – a lot.

For whatever reason, fighters choose to step into the cage. They choose to climb the willow tree, knowing that what's coming next might hurt them. The question I want to answer for you in this book is *how* to find the courage to take that risk. To face that challenge. To step into the cage. To climb the willow. How, and *what the hell* to do once you're in there.

Not all of us are fighters. But I guarantee you this: *we all hurt*. We all take hits. We all have goals that challenge us. Dreams that push us forward. We all fight battles that, most of the time, others don't even know we're facing. Like a fighter, sometimes we choose the fight: *I want to lose fifty pounds. I want to do a pull-up. I want to learn a new language. I want to write a screenplay. I want to become a champion MMA fighter.*

But sometimes the fight chooses us: Sickness. Foreclosure. Betrayal. Loss.

Whatever the challenge, to reach those dreams, to overcome those hardships, to endure and outlast and inspire, we need a strong mind. We need endurance. We need training.

We need focus.

Not all of us are fighters, but all of us are fighting something. And I want you to hear this:

As hard as it hits, life is not your enemy.

It's a special, sacred opportunity to be brave enough to face what's in front of you. The fight ahead may be daunting, it may scare you, there may be things outside your control that made it happen in the first place, but who you are on the other side of it is stronger than you can possibly imagine. And I want you to choose to face this fight like a champion.

That's what this book is about.

THE MENTAL GAME

When the bell rang, Round 1 began, and Islam faced Ramos down – complete focus, zero fear. The crowd cheered as the fighters squared off. Ramos opened with an early kick, trying to set the tone, but Islam didn't rush. He stayed patient, reading every feint, every twitch of muscle, blocking the impact, choosing his responses carefully. Throughout the first round, Islam followed the game plan exactly as we structured it: the Matador to the bull.

He knew Ramos was strong and would rush, so Islam kept the fight standing while maintaining his angles. He stayed deliberate

in his strikes, measured in his movement. Islam's greatest weapon, his queen, was his grappling – but that was Ramos's strength too. To win, Islam's performance that night couldn't be the result of adrenaline or reaction, but rather of planned, controlled execution of the game plan.

There are two parts to every fight: mental and physical. The physical is a given when you compete at the highest levels of any sport. The athletes who climbed the ranks did so through extreme discipline, dedication, and sacrifice. But the mental game – that's where even the best fighters can falter. As the corner, it's my job to make sure that doesn't happen. We get the full view of every potential mistake, every opening that flickers by, every risk or possible success – but we still can't throw a single punch to change any of it.

The distance between us and the fighter is where faith lives.

Abdulmanap knew that in every fiber of his being. The very first time we met, when he came to visit my gym, American Kickboxing Academy (AKA) in San José, he showed me.

Despite a language barrier – my English and his Russian – we understood each other. And the first time I coached alongside Abdulmanap, we talked about his fighters – him letting me know what to focus on, what to be aware of, and how to approach each one. One particular fighter Abdulmanap had me focus on was Abubakar Nurmagomedov, Khabib's older cousin.

"Abubakar might need more," he said. "He is someone who needs the ..."

Our interpreter couldn't find the word. Abdulmanap pushed at the air.

"The *push*?" I asked.

He nodded, smiling. "Yes. The push."

I took that advice to heart. One afternoon during a training camp that Iran alone, we were out on the track for conditioning. The Dagestan fighters ran 800-meter jogs, followed by 400-meter sprints, with one minute of rest between sets. We were almost half-way through the workout when I saw Abubakar was faltering a bit – not pushing himself like I had seen before.

So on the next round, I changed up the game plan and put Abubakar up front. He led the team through the 800 and 400, and they all finished well enough, but because he had to lead, Abubakar was gassed after the 400-meter sprint. Hands on his knees, lungs burning.

“Coach, can I rest?” he asked, trying to catch his breath.

“Why?”

“That was fast, Coach. I led. I’m tired.”

“Okay,” I said. “Okay, go ahead. Rest.”

He sat down, eventually lying on the track, breathing heavy, sweat pooling beneath him. A minute later, the timer chimed, and I waved the others forward for their next jog.

“Coach, wait!” Abubakar sat up fast, watching his teammates pull away. His face was flushed, chest still heaving – but something had already shifted in his eyes. “I’m ready now, Coach,” he said. “I want to run, too.”

“No, no,” I said. “You rest. You’re tired, right? Rest.”

He stood up quickly. “Coach – I’m ready. I want to run!”

But it was too late – his team had already started without him. Then, Abubakar had to do the hardest thing for a competitor – he had to watch his brothers go on without him. He had to watch as they worked hard, pushing themselves through pain, encouraging each other to dig deep, for two full rounds. And each round,

Abubakar grew more and more anxious, more and more eager to join them, afraid of the growth, building, and bonding he was missing out on.

As the team started on their third round, Abubakar came up to me, more sincere than ever before. “Please, Coach,” he said. “Let me run. I want to run.”

“You sure?” I asked.

“Yes, Coach. Yes!”

“Then catch up,” I said. “And I want a 1:20 on the 400. If not, two more sets.”

“Yes, Coach,” he said, already sprinting.

I thought of Abdulmanap and smiled. He just needed the push.

And that’s the first step: *to want it for yourself*. To have the courage to face the thing you know might hurt you because of what might become of it. You can tell a fighter to run, to work, to dig deep—but it’s only going to matter if they decide they’re not finished yet.

This was just one day of training. Abubakar would still need my help to push him after that, and he would be the one to push his brothers during other training camps when they needed it. But on that day, at that practice, the switch flipped. In that moment, when Abubakar picked himself up, where he forced himself forward when he had nothing left, after his coach took the pressure off and said he could rest—that’s when training shows you what you’re made of. That’s what you remember during the fight.

And that’s what fight camp is for.

FIGHT CAMP

In the months leading up to any bout – boxing, kickboxing, MMA – we hold fight camps to prepare. For a few weeks, a few months, fighters become singularly devoted to the upcoming battle. Whether conditioning, strength building, pad work, grappling, sparring, game planning, or fine-tuning combos and high-level mental prep before the big day, they have one focus.

The next fight. That's it.

This singular focus is what I've found to be one of the most effective ways to build a habit, shape a champion, and train a mindset.

At UFC 242, we had fight camps for both Islam and Khabib. Both are spectacular fighters, the best in the world, but they're also vastly different. They have different skill sets, mental attitudes, and ways of approaching challenges. That means, like all of us, they need different methods of coaching. I have to be a different corner for each of them.

Yet, the moment that cage door closes, they still have to be ready.

Islam held out for two rounds against Davi Ramos, showing us everything he had worked on with his coaches and his brothers during fight camp: all the technique, the power, the precision. Everything came into play, and Islam executed it all perfectly.

Between rounds, Abdulmanap and I encouraged that confidence.

I told him he was “doing beautifully,” and to “stay relaxed and keep it up.”

Before the final round, Abdulmanap, having known Islam since he was a young boy, knew exactly what he was capable of. He knew Islam was a champion long before the world knew.

“Perfect, Islam. Perfect,” he said. “Keep the distance. In two

minutes, you will take him down.” He fanned Islam with the towel and looked him in the eyes. “Take him down.”

Islam nodded, put his mouthpiece in, and stood. Ramos came into Round 3 knowing he was behind on points and, trying to make up for it, rushed Islam with punches. Almost exactly two minutes in, Ramos became overeager, and Islam showed himself to be a true matador, catching Ramos by surprise with a beautiful knee to the jaw. The hit dazed Ramos, and Islam pressed the advantage, taking him down hard to the mat. Ramos scrambled, trying desperately to correct his error, but Islam had already emerged in a full guard and stayed in control the remainder of the fight. Like clockwork, Islam executed what Abdulmanap, in his corner, knew he could.

The fight went the full distance, and Islam won the bout by unanimous decision.

The pride on Abdulmanap’s face said it all.

For one fight in a long life and career, Islam put everything out there. His heart, his skill, his dedication, his culture, his life. And he proved, through mental and physical discipline, what it took to succeed. Everyone in the arena saw it. The visual evidence of his drive. His heart.

But obviously, the challenge here is that most of us aren’t fighters.

So how do we show our growth to the world? How do we prove to ourselves that the work we put in is working? How do we keep moving forward? And what does *fight camp* mean for us?

A fight camp is for fighters, yes, but the idea is for everyone. It means choosing one thing worth showing up for. Just one. Something you’re ready to face, or something you have to be ready to face. Something to commit to and train for. Something that pushes you – but also pulls you forward. We choose one fight, and we build

our days and our strategy around it.

We make every single choice in our lives in service of that fight.

It's not forever – just right now. One fight in a long life. But that one fight becomes the most important thing, because it's the one right in front of us.

This book is structured as a fight camp – 18 rounds of training to develop the mindset that will carry you through and make you proud of what you leave behind.

Each round is rooted in my own experience, grounded in stories from my life, and designed to sharpen how you approach challenges, pressure, and growth. These rounds outline how I've trained dozens of world champions to stay composed under pressure, and how you can apply those same mindset practices in your own life.

What's in your heart right now could be a lifelong dream or a simple mission. My role is to prepare you, to stand in your corner as you fight, and let you discover what's on the other side for yourself. The lessons we'll explore are the ones I share with my fighters. They come from a lifetime of mistakes, challenges, victories, setbacks, and – more than anything – experience. Hard-earned, hard-fought, sometimes wish-I-didn't-have-it perspective. Some of these lessons I've never shared before, because they weren't meant for everyone.

But if you're here, I believe they're meant for you.

These stories go back to the source of everything I teach and coach. Just like my life, they center around fighting, but they show what Cain Velasquez calls "The Universal Translation": *what we learn somewhere can be applied everywhere.*

Most people I meet are already fighting. They're just not

calling it that. It might be the quiet fight to get healthy, to build a business, or to keep steady when things feel like they're slipping. It might be a fight for your career, your kids, or your identity. It might be the push to finish something you started years ago – or to finally start the thing you've been putting off.

Whatever it is, you're here now.

This book isn't about becoming someone new, but about learning to approach your life with the same mindset we instill in fighters: focus, discipline, resilience, and honesty – especially when the going gets tough.

Because if it matters to you, I have to be honest with you, it's *going to get tough*.

Inside the cage or outside of it, when the pressure hits, when you're tired, when things don't go according to plan, you fall back on the foundations and structures you've built. Or crumble beneath the ones you haven't. But one fight is not a thousand. One fight is a thousand little choices toward one goal. And no matter who you are, those little choices will make a difference.

Big or small, the fight is coming. When it does, I want you to be ready. I'm here to walk with you, round by round. I'm in your corner.

Let's get to work.

END OF ROUND 1

ROUND 2 IS WAITING

Round 2, *Why We Fight*, picks up a year after the willow tree, in 1966, with a storm at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Seventeen more rounds follow, built like a fight camp, with the lessons Javier shares with his fighters.

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