



**YWCA**  
EDMONTON

A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN

## Warrior Angel

*Susan Dunnigan*

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Emerging from my chiropractic appointment, I hide tears as my teenage son brushes past for his turn. My body is fine, but my heart is overflowing with emotion.

A few minutes earlier, while prone on the chiropractic table, my eyes locked on a sculpture sitting on the shelf. This forged steel creation depicts an angel with powerful raised wings, who is brandishing a sword. Although only about twelve inches tall, its momentous presence enveloped me.

My lips parted and “That’s a warrior angel” spilled from my heart. My chiropractor smiled, intuitively understanding the attraction. I peppered him with questions about where he got it, would the artist commission another, etc. Just before leaving my appointment, he asked me to wait a moment. He picked up the sculpture and presented it as a gift, stating that it clearly was meant to be mine. His gesture touched my soul and released tears.

Quickly crossing the waiting room, I meld into a corner chair and seek composure before my son returns. The cherished gift rests by my feet. I dare not touch it, knowing that barely contained tears can quickly break the dykes. To create emotional distance, I scan magazines. However, my mind remains with the sculpture and I plunge into self-reflection.

Focusing on initial impressions, I recall blowtorch heat deposits that adeptly illuminate the angel’s chakras and a spirit that dominates the metal’s dark hues.

The sculpture resonates with me as the parent of a young man with an intellectual disability.

The naked truth is that my son’s disability inherently makes him vulnerable in a superficial world that values everything he is not. I live the duality of the warrior angel, switching from Dr. Jekyll to Ms. Hyde in a heartbeat. I smile, thinking about the small lessons along the way, like how to reframe hurtful insults. It really does help to reach beneath “stubborn b----“ to find the true meaning, “determined advocate.” I can live with that.

I am firmly rooted in a vision for my son that most would consider mundane. The dream is for an ordinary life of belonging and contribution, typical of most citizens. It means steadfastly prying open doors of opportunity while safeguarding my son as he learns his way into adulthood.

Whereas the warrior angel is forged steel, I often feel like forged jelly. In those times, the strength of my convictions keep me moving forward, jiggling with each step.

A voice penetrates my introspection. “That’s a warrior angel”. A woman now sitting beside me has noticed the sculpture and readily grasped its essence. We smile, at once connected to this piece and sharing a bond as women.

Just then my son reappears, looking renewed and intrigued with the mound of steel at my feet. Pausing to take a deep breath, I pick up my cherished acquisition and prepare to face the world once again.

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