



**KOROWAI WOMAN**  
Tyler Wellman, Class of 2017

# WALKING WITH AN ANGEL

Tamra Travers, Class of 2016

**I**went for a walk with an angel today. If she wasn't an angel, she was nearly one.

I don't know why I was feeling lonely, or why I drove to the other side of town for a simple walk, or why I even began walking with her at all. But the warm sun and cool breeze drew me out of my studies and into a journey with this unforgettable angel.

I first saw her intriguing figure from across the pond. She was beautiful and worn. But her energy and smile bounced with every step. Her short, white hair hid under a floppy sun hat

and her used-to-be-white Keds crunched the gravel path as she moved, almost dancing around that pond, tugged along by a big fluff of golden fur with a wet tongue.

What started as a brief exchange with a smile and a pat to the fluffy friend turned into a journey around the pond and into her intimate experience of life that I could never forget. She opened her soul to me; raw and exposed, she shared it with me.

I almost passed her by, assuming she would rather not be bothered. Or was I hoping not to be bothered on my pleasant, lonely walk around the pond? But something about her radiant

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smile and that curious dog named Mango captured me. And we began to walk together.

The soul sharing didn't begin right away, and I assumed we would keep it brief and distant. Surely discussing the weather, the park, Mango, and the birds we saw along the way would fill our time. Before I realized what was happening, she was opening herself to me. She knew nothing about me on which to base her trust. I was just another stranger on a walk around the pond. But she did. And how much she gave!

She spoke of a husband who suffered from polio. A mother who passed from breast cancer. A father who died at 36 from cancer. Two brothers who also battled cancer as young men. Her own journey of breast cancer and "a heart that started going crazy." And then, she began to speak of her two beautiful children.

Both suffered from rare genetic syndromes, like hers, involving their hearts and hands. It makes sense that the heart and hands would develop together. Isn't it from your heart that your hands do their work? She held her beautiful hands out for me to see—all bare and exposed. Scars trailed down her arms, reaching back up toward her heart. I imagined the embryonic struggle—that I later found resulted from one mutated gene—for a tiny protein vital for the development of the heart chambers and upper extremities. With no family history of the syndrome, this gene was altered specifically for her.

These scars uniting heart and hands continued to extend down to her uniquely shaped fingers, and were unlike any I had seen before. She held her hands open and wide, welcoming me into these intimate extensions of her heart and life-long battlegrounds.

Joy sparkled in her blue eyes and she walked on with courage as she spoke with awe of her precious babies. Together they

faced struggles upon struggles. Both children were constantly in and out of hospitals, going through surgery after surgery, and taking numerous flights across the country for the best care. Both were misdiagnosed at first, but it seemed that both lived full lives in their short years. As I began to react with grief, she instantly expressed her gratitude for the years she had with them. She said she might not have had any time at all.

She spoke with a mother's pride in telling of their bold and courageous journeys. The oldest lived to be sixteen, and with his last wishes, he encouraged his baby sister to be all that she could be. And she honored his plea. After endless work and achievement in some of the best schools, universities, and abroad, she passed suddenly at the age of twenty due to an infection.

This family surely was blessed with so much heart that their anatomical flesh could not contain their strength. Her inner courage and boldness was so evident, and yet contrasted with her playful, dancing figure on this beautifully sunny day at the pond. I couldn't understand why she was so open and honest with me. Why did she trust me? Why was she filled with so much joy? How could that smile not leave her face? Where did her bouncing energy come from? Why do I feel such a profound connection with her soul?

I do believe in divine encounters. And I believe this was one. Whether she is an angel, or a beautiful woman with the soul of an angel, it makes no difference to me. I still had the honor of sharing a walk with her, and receiving her soul gift to me. I can't thank her enough.

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