



From 'Just' a Mom to 'Warrior' Mom

Book review of *Tiny Titan*

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“I’m just a mom”, says Ann Yurcek at the beginning of her inspiring book *Tiny Titan*. But after reading about all the obstacles that this mother has had to fight to help her children, the reader is in awe of Ann and knows that “This is no ordinary mom”. *Tiny Titan* is filled with treasures to uplift those who have been challenged or overwhelmed by life. Through adversity we watch Ann, her husband, and her children become wiser and stronger. Yurcek’s gift to us is to share her insights so that we, too, have the opportunity to gain wisdom, to become more deeply spiritual, and to make a difference.

The first part of *Tiny Titan* is entitled: “The Miracle”. It is about Ann’s baby ‘Becca’ and the emotional rollercoaster involved in caring for a critically ill child. Any family that has cared for a child who is critically ill or severely mentally ‘challenged’ has experienced much of the darkness that accompanies that prognosis: divorce, bankruptcy, welfare, depression, family disruption, hopelessness, and isolation. The Yurceks are not spared many of these ‘secondary disabilities’ that accompany having a critically ill child. However, Ann Yurcek is no ordinary mom. She not only fights for Becca’s life, but also creatively keeps her family intact. She battles the many systems that are supposed to help her to keep Becca alive, not oppose her. Yet, whenever Ann loses a battle or feels powerless, someone in her life provides a miracle. ‘Angels’ keep appearing in her life in the form of a nurse, a special doctor, a friend, an anonymous Santa Claus, a mentor, a pastor, church members, or grandparents.

Ann evolves from a ‘just a mom’-- who thinks that the professionals know more than she does-- to a ‘warrior parent’—who becomes a medical expert about her child’s condition and fights to get whatever Becca needs to survive.



As Ann says, “They [doctors] read the charts while we read the children”. But Ann recognizes that even her warrior spirit is not enough for Becca and the rest of her family to survive. Life becomes so overwhelming that Ann finally surrenders her impossible situation to her Creator. She is now on a spiritual journey that will impact both her and her family. By the end of the *Tiny Titan*, Ann acknowledges that “Talking to God had become a normal part of who I am... whether Becca lives or dies is in God’s hands”. Her spiritual transformation empowers her to deal with the ceaseless crises that have become a way of life for her and the entire family.

Part Two of *Tiny Titan* is entitled “Miracles By the Dozen”. This ‘warrior mother’ has learned from her experience with Becca that is a privilege to allow people the gift of giving. Now she wants to fulfill her dream of adopting a needy child so that she can give back. Ann, with the support of her husband (who at this point should be awarded sainthood), feels called to adopt ‘the family no one wants’ ...all six of them! But by this time Ann is no longer a rookie mom. She is on her way to becoming an ‘expert mom’. Her husband Jim, who in the previous chapter has lost his job in the carpeting business because of the family’s situation, is miraculously on his way to become a surgeon. Her biological children are mature beyond their years and have a vision of their own. Ann’s six children have learned from their mom how to turn life into an art. They have seen the healing power of a sewing machine that can magically turn used clothes into fashion statements. They, too, have learned how to transform someone else’s cast-aways into a beautiful gift. Through financially helping the family survive, her biological children have all learned a strong work ethic.

But the newly adopted six children do not know about ‘family’. Life for the Yurceks is about to turn into chaos with no help from the system that first lied to the Yurceks by telling them that these foster children posed no danger to their biological children. Then the system broke promises of services to help them with their adopted children. All of her newly adopted children had been traumatized emotionally. In addition, all six of the children are victims of in-utero exposure to alcohol. They all have fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. The ‘warrior mom’ now has to battle a whole new system: the fragmented, bureaucratic Mental Health Care System. So, Ann learns how to navigate this broken bureaucracy, which is as disabled as her adopted children.



B O O K R E V I E W

We now have Ann Yurcek, the ‘Expert Mom’, who has much to teach all of us. She tells us: “Little is gained out of easy times; only the hard truths make real change”. The hard truth? “We as a society are not giving our children with extraordinary gifts and challenges the support to be successful”. The system sets up families, who want to help needy children, to fail. She challenges the existing mindset of people without disabilities who make decisions ‘for us not with us’.

The Yurcek family is a success story. But *Tiny Titan* is not the end of Ann Yurcek’s vision. She and her children have already made progress in changing the ‘system’ in their state. Some other states are beginning to make changes in their medical, mental health, and foster care systems as a result of Ann Yurcek’s efforts. It is now up to us to follow her example. Take the first step. Read *Tiny Titan*. Begin a journey that has the ability to enrich and empower all of us.