

# A POWERHOUSE IN DISGUISE

*Clement Yeung*

"How is Mrs. Kuch this morning?"

"Oh I had the best night so far. They gave me some codeine pills last night and that really helped."

I stared at her emaciated body lying in bed under a white bed sheet. Her face looked very pale and her cheek bones appeared very prominent.

Mrs. Kuch is a German widow who had moved to Canada in the late fifties. She used to work as a nurse in the local children's hospital. There she met several Chinese medical students who were struggling with the English language as she was. Since she had a house all by herself, she asked them to stay with her. The students were understandably happy to have a "mother" to take care of them and to be able to stay close to the hospital. And the rent was nominal.

But she was more than a landlady. She prayed for each of the students and their friends. She encouraged them to have Bible studies together. She welcomed their friends to visit. She shared their joy and frustrations.

One by one the medical students graduated and left. Other students came to stay with her. Christians and non-Christians alike were drawn to her because of her hospitality.

By the time I came to Winnipeg in the late sixties, Mrs. Kuch was already well known among the Asian students. Together with the other students, I was impressed not only with the stories that came out of her house but also the graduates that had lived there before. While I stayed in the dormitory on campus during the school term, I rented a room in her house one summer and experienced her love and care personally.

"I often still think about everyone of you." She said with a weak voice.

"So how many of us have you taken care of?" I was curious.

"Oh, I am not exactly sure. I counted forty-three the other day. May be more. But I thank the Lord that none is lost." She spoke with a heavy German accent.

It was only a few months ago that she was told about her stomach cancer. By the time she came to see me at my office, the cancer had already spread widely. It took her some time to accept the diagnosis. But even during this very difficult time, she remained an inspiration to all the medical staff around her.

"Clement, the hospital chaplain came to see me yesterday. He is a very fine Christian."

There was a sweet smile on her face.

"So did you tell him about your Chinese kids?"

"Of course. He seemed very impressed." She had to take a deep breath before she could continue. "He also told me some of his secrets."

"He told you about his personal secrets during the first visit?" I could not believe my own ears.

"No. It was his second visit. He told me to pray for him because he found it hard to preach Sunday after Sunday. He would rather be visiting patients everyday. But his home church likes him very much and does not want to lose him."

"I thought chaplains were supposed to pray for patients. Now it is the chaplain asking the patient to pray for him. What is going on?" She knew I was teasing her.

"Well, I have a lot of free time these days. Since I cannot move around too much, I have learnt to pray more for others." She whispered.

"Anyone your else here in hospital asking for your prayer?"

"You remember the young bald surgeon

that assisted in my operation? He came in the other day all frustrated after a difficult surgery. He also wondered why I have been so calm and peaceful."

"I know whom you are referring to. He works very hard every day."

"I told him about my trust in Lord Jesus and right away he asked me to pray for him and his family. He said if he had a few more nice patients like me, he probably would have more hair left."

"I can see that you have been kept busy here."

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you what the chaplain called me." She tried to turn her wasted body to the other side.

"You have a nickname already?"

"He called me 'a powerhouse in disguise'. I like that. Just wish they know where the power actual is coming from." She dozed off shortly after that.

She probably was one of the weakest patients in the whole hospital and yet at the same time the strongest in spirit. The chaplain was right. She was indeed a powerhouse in disguise. 

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