

Opening My Eyes with Clara Christie Might



The first thing I saw was a bright glare. As my eyes slowly got accustomed to the light, I found myself surrounded by people. It is then that I saw her – short curly hair, a glowing smile and bespectacled eyes that shone of intellect. “Dr. Clara Christie Might,” I read the name tag on her coat with some difficulty. “Dr. Might!” I tried shouting at full volume. However, I could only muster a whisper. I gave it another go and this time she could hear me. She looked around in surprise and said, “Who said that?” Finally, her gaze stopped at me. “Did you guys hear the newborn, too?” she asked the other people in the room, but they all shook their heads and looked puzzled. It seemed, only she could hear me. We had a connection!

After a few minutes, Dr. Might and I were alone in the room. She seemed confused but smiled at me. “Are you my mom?” I asked her. “No, dear. Your mommy is in the operating room. We have to patch her up before you two can meet.” Dr. Might pointed to a woman lying unconscious on a bed in the adjacent room. “But don’t worry, little one. Mommy will be just fine.” She reassured me. “My name is Clara and I am a doctor who takes care of mothers and their babies. To be precise, I am a gynecologist and obstetrician,” Clara continued. “Oh, that makes sense,” I wanted to say more but felt really faint. I saw the expression on Clara’s face change to concern as I passed out.

I don’t know how long I was out. Slowly, I opened my eyes and found myself in a glass box with tubes and needles sticking into my body. But I felt a lot warmer and better. “Hey, you are back,” Clara’s voice greeted me. “You are in an incubator. Sometimes babies enter the world prematurely, so we take care of them in this box until they are ready come out,” Clara explained. I was impressed by how caring and intelligent Clara was, and thanked her for it. In that moment, I decided to be a doctor and help alleviate the suffering of other human beings.

“Would you tell me a little more about yourself?” I was eager to learn about my saviour. “I would love to share my story,” and so, she began. “I was born in Winchester, Ontario on June 5th, 1895 – the youngest of ten siblings. I attended school in Calgary, where my family had moved in 1903. At the age of twenty, I received teachers training and taught at a school in Calgary for four years. Then I decided to pursue medicine, first at the University of Alberta in

Edmonton and then at the McGill University in Montreal. There, I was the only woman in my class,” she provided a peek into her early life. I was in shock, “The ONLY girl in your class!”. “Yes. Those days, women rarely embarked on higher education, let alone in medicine. Although, things have improved a lot, there is still a shortage of women in science and technology related disciplines,” she offered some insight. “In 1925, I became one of the first few Canadian female doctors. Later, I specialized in obstetrics and gynecology at Yale University Hospital in the US, becoming the very first obstetrician in Alberta on my return to Calgary in 1927,” Clara’s story was getting more inspirational by the minute.

“So, many firsts!” I acknowledged her unmatched credentials. “What else did you do in life?” I was curious. “I married Orrin Might in 1937. We donated our first home to the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre in 1965. Over the years, I have invested more in social and cultural initiatives in Calgary. I am particularly proud of the Nat Christie Foundation which I formed with a six-million-dollar donation to honour my late brother. The foundation is engaged in welfare projects in the Calgary region,” Clara’s love for her family and her city was tangible. “Wow, you donated six million! Then you are a great philanthropist. I heard this word when I was in my mom’s belly,” I was excited to showcase my vocabulary. She giggled, “I guess, you could say that. Well, enough about me. Tell me, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

That question triggered a flurry of thoughts in my mind. Although, I was an infant, I had been gathering information in the womb for months. Until then, it had felt like collecting pieces of a mega puzzle. I had heard about the human genome project and how it could help cure genetic defects and diseases. I had found out about famine, drought and hunger, and the miserable condition of children in parts of Africa and around the world. Now I knew what I had to do about all of it. Clara’s story was the stimulus to bring all these pieces together. “I will study genetics and medicine. I want to figure out remedies for genetic disorders and offer all human beings an equal chance at a healthy life,” I asserted decisively. “You have not only inspired me to become a doctor, but also shown me other ways to give back to the society. In time, I will establish my own charitable foundation to help children around the world. No kid should have to worry about food, water, clothing and basic amenities. I know the demons of malnutrition and poverty continue to haunt children across the world and I will not sit idly and let them consume our future generations. The journey will be undoubtedly hard and replete with obstacles. But I have a beacon to show me the way–It is you, Clara Christie Might.” I kept going passionately. “My, my, such grand plans! I am glad I met you.” I saw pride in Clara’s eyes. Indeed, she had opened my eyes both literally and metaphorically.

I finished my short story and waited in anticipation. There was a moment of silence and then the room erupted in applause. I felt happy, not just because the audience loved my story, but mainly

because I had shared my inspiration and future plans with my classmates. Dr. Clara Christie Might's life had shown me the way and I had now shown it to others.

References

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