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## THE WOMAN WHO THOUGHT THE DOCTOR WAS GOD

By Florence J. Murray

When Doka was a child there was no school in all Korea for girls. Everyone knew they couldn't learn. Often they weren't given proper names. As children they were known as Kim's girl child, when married as Pak's wife, when they had children as the baby's mother. Doka was called Tuipangie by her family, meaning Born in the Back Room.

Her parents were fond of her but never considered her as important as her brother. A son would succeed his father on the farm and care for his parents in their old age, while a daughter would marry into another family and be of no more use to her own.

Tuipangie learned to cook, sew, look after the house, and help with the farm work. Carrying water was always a girl's work and she could carry immense loads on her head.

When she was ten years old her parents arranged a marriage for her though it never occurred to them to mention it to her. When she was fifteen and the boy twelve they were married and she went to her new home and served her mother-in-law. One of her tasks was to see that her husband got off to school in time. When he graduated he got a good job in town and they moved there.

They had four children and were happy till an epidemic struck the place and in two days three of the children died. There was neither doctor nor hospital to help them.

The young mother was frantic with grief and hardly ate nor slept for days till a friend, who herself had lost a child, came to console her.

"Come with me to the house of God," she said, "and learn how you can see your children again."

"Don't mock me," said Doka. "They're gone and I'll never see them again."

"Yes, you can," said her friend. "Come to the house of God with me and learn about it."

"The house of God!" said Doka. "I never heard of that place. Where is it?"

"I'll come on Sunday and take you," said her friend.

"When is Sunday?" asked the lonely mother.

Three days later they went. The house of God was an ordinary house with mud walls, paper doors and windows, and straw thatched roof. They went in. There <sup>she saw</sup> ~~was~~ a strange looking being with a big nose, pale face, large hands and feet, and yellowish hair. Doka had never seen nor heard of any ~~other~~ person like that. This must be God she decided.

God said good words but she didn't hear anything about her children. However, when people were invited to bring sick folk for medicine the next day, she decided to go to see what God would do. Several people there told her they felt much better after taking

But now," she continued, "the spirits have all gone. They won't stay near a church."

For twenty years Doka and the doctor were inseparable. Then, while caring for the girls in the mission school dormitory during a typhus epidemic, the doctor contracted the disease. Her weary body succumbed and she was laid to rest on Dragon Hill.

Doka was heartbroken, but gave her allegiance unstintedly to the new young doctor taking Dr. MacMillan's place. They worked together for several years till Doka began to find the work too much for her. She retired and went to live with her son in a house she owned in a nearby village.

The son was a lazy fellow who used to come to the hospital on pay day to get his mother's salary before she could spend any of it. She was pleased to provide school tuition for her grandchildren but the son insisted on getting more than that. He wanted it all. He continued to come to collect her pension. Once, when he got in debt, he tried to sell his mother's house where she hoped to spend her old age. The young doctor bought it ensuring that the old lady would have a place to live.

Doka nursed the sick in the village, carried on a Sunday School for the children, and taught those who couldn't afford to go to school. She was Grandmother to all.

Once when the doctor went to see her, Doka showed her a complete costume of white silk. "I made these for my burial," she said. "I want to be buried respectably. I've bought a grave site on top of the hill behind the village in a quiet place where I often go to watch the sunset and to pray. I've told my son my wishes so he'll see to it."

On hearing that she was ill the doctor went to see her.

Though very weak she grasped the doctor's hand.

"Thank you for coming," she said, "but you needn't come again for I won't be here. I'm going to Jesus and will soon see my lost children. If only my son were a Christian I'd die happy."

At the Korean ceremony of placing the body in the coffin a few days later the doctor, noticing the coarse cotton clothing, asked where were the lovely silk garments Doka had prepared for her burial.

"Dear Grandmother made those over for her grandchildren long ago," said the weeping daughter-in-law.

At the funeral next day a large crowd of neighbors and old friends and many from the hospital staff gathered to pay their respects. The hospital chaplain who conducted the service thanked God for the life of loving helpfulness that had now finished its work on earth.

"Where are the pall bearers to carry the coffin up the hill?" asked a neighbor.

"Too much trouble and expense," replied the son. "The grave's dug in the back yard."

Her last wishes disregarded by a graceless son, her memory is revered by hundreds, and who can say she has not seen her children?

The end.