

Sickly once, she creates ripples

We'll make it to Cabinet one day, says SMU girl

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SHE spent the better part of her growing years at home instead of at the playground.

Prone to frequent bouts of asthma and skin allergies, Lim Ke Xin fell sick easily and often. Treats like ice-cream were out of the question as they would cause her to cough for weeks on end.

Yesterday, however, her graduation ceremony was her coming-out party.

The 23-year-old from Singapore Management University took to the stage as her cohort's valedictorian and had an audience of over 500 cheering raucously, with a bold promise that she made to the guest-of-honour, Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

"SMU has not produced a Prime Minister ... a Minister or an MP, but it is only a matter of time. (Mr Tharman), there will come a day when you (will) find SMU alumni among your fellow Cabinet members. Class of 2005, shall we begin by naming our candidates most likely to be MPs," she confidently declared, to wild applause from the audience.

The Bachelor of Accountancy degree holder is a far cry from the a sickly child with protective parents and a grandmother who would take her straight home after primary school.

She recalled how, in secondary school, she had to describe her favourite childhood memory in an essay competition. While other students wrote about excursions to the beach or the zoo, she struggled to come up with a subject.

Such was her inability to identify with the outside world.

"I finally wrote about what I saw from behind the window grilles at home, such as the people at the basketball court downstairs," she said.

All that changed during the four years she spent at SMU.

Encouraged by her friends, she even completed her first high element obstacle



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This year's SMU valedictorian Lim Ke Xin, flanked by her proud parents.

course during her university's orientation camp. That, she said, "was when I discovered myself and boosted my confidence."

She had fallen and hurt herself on a similar course when she was 11 and still bears a scar under her chin as proof.

Ms Lim told TODAY that she would not rule out a career in politics at a later stage.

"SMU has taught me that the sky is the limit. I'm always looking for ways to give this back to the community. I like to help others in need by volunteering at old folks' homes, for example. It doesn't matter how, as long as I can make a difference," she said.

For now, though, Ms Lim wants to concentrate on her new career with PricewaterhouseCoopers, where she started work just three weeks ago.

And while she has no problems with academics, graduating with a high 3.95 grade point average, she now intends to work on her Achilles' Heel: Sports.

"I could never play sports such as basketball well as I am afraid of being hit by the ball. But I am hoping to pick up golf. I also enjoy jogging to keep myself healthy," she said.

Said Ms Lim's mother, Madam Choo Chai Siang, 50: "She was very shy as a child, but SMU transformed her. She's now more outspoken and independent."