



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I am not very happy with the Filipino domestics of Hongkong. They are earning, what is the equivalent of, about ten thousand dollars per month, you know, when you factor in their minimum monthly pay – a little more than three thousand six hundred dollars – their free medical services, their free accommodation, their free food, a free economy class ticket back to the Philippines, every two years, and, for many, even free uniforms. What more can they expect: A free supply of condoms? I told your Grandpa that they are earning much too much money, considering everything. He said that he inherited that problem from the British. I learned from my good friend, Mrs Deng Yu No, that, in the Middle East, Filipino maids only get paid about one hundred American dollars per month. That is about one fifth of what they get paid in Hongkong. Times are tough, just now, and, if most of my people have to tighten their belts a little, for what reason should not Filipino maids tighten their brassieres? Misery likes company, you know. But these people want to go on strike and have refused to be reasonable! What cheek! 'Chuck them out!' I told your Grandpa. 'And bring in help from across the border. Keep the money in the family (the Chinese family, that is).' But, No! He would have none of it. He would not say a word – as usual – and just walked away from me – as usual. Whenever, he is faced with a problem, he hides. He is such a big, fat, softy (but loveable) frog. If one wants to be a country's leader, one has to have the courage of one's convictions. One has to be like the surgeon: One deft stroke of the scalpel, and, Presto! Westo! The job is done. I have, already, changed my Filipino half-a-deck for a Chinese half-a-deck; and, I have told all of my friends to do the same, too. I told your Grandpa that, if all of the Filipino half-a-decks were to leave Hongkong, as they threatened, the cleaning services department of Government could save tens of millions of dollars a year because, then, they would not have to clean up Central Hongkong on Saturday nights, Sunday nights, and Monday mornings, following the camp-out of the Filipino women, over the weekends. I know that the management of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd would love to see the backs of these people because they use the ground floor of the bank's headquarters building as a common eating hall on weekends and public holidays; and, they leave all of their chicken bones on the ground after they finish eating. Most of these people are not very clean, you know, because, in the Philippines, I have been told that they only know how to eat, using their hands (I hope that they wash their hands after doing their business in the fields, that is, prior to sticking their fingers in their mouths in order to eat their fried pork or rice cakes or what-have-you).

I was talking to Mrs Joanne Pierce – she has a permanent suite in a posh, five-star hotel in Central – and she said that she avoids the Mandarin Hotel on weekends and holidays due to the 'attacks' of the Filipinos. I do not go to hotels, any more, because it would not be correct for a Chief Lady to be seen in such a public place, especially one of the ilk of the Mandarin: There are a lot of terrorists in the world, now, and I am not certain how good is the security at our hotels. One cannot be too careful. However, according to Mrs Pierce, the security staff of the Mandarin has to be very vigilant on weekends and holidays, even to the extent of watching out, near the hotel's toilets. It seems that the Filipinos like to try to use the Mandarin's toilets so that they can tell their friends that they had a wonderful time, there. The hotel's toilets have to be carefully watched because, otherwise, people, such as Mrs Pierce and people of her social standing, could find themselves, sharing part of a toilet with

a Filipino. Which is just not right, is it? Filipinos should be cleaning the toilets of the Mandarin, not using them for themselves. The use of luxury toilets, of the type of those of the Mandarin, should be reserved for us, not them. For us to have to rub bottoms with them is like lowering standards, isn't it?

There is, also, of course, the matter of the way that Filipinos talk. One cannot walk in front of a couple of jabbing Filipinos – unless one is willing to take the chance of going completely deaf. They talk so loudly, my dear! As I sit in the back of my car, passing through Central on the way to the Convention Centre in order to attend an official function, I swear to you that the jabbering, twittering, tweeting sounds of the tens of thousands of Filipinos are like huge flocks of birds, all fighting over worms. I cannot get Grandpa to pass any noise-pollution laws to cover this matter because the costs of policing the Filipino 'flocks' would be too great. Anyway, even if one imposes fines for loud jabbering/tweeting/twittering, how could one collect? These Filipinos don't have any money, after Sunday night – because they have sent all of their money to the Philippines. Just look at the records of the Small Claims Tribunal and one can see how many Philippine nationals have cheated on bills. As with most young children, these Filipinos should be seen, but never heard.

I am off to have a pedicure, now. Must keep up appearances, from the tip of my head to the end of my bed.

Love you,

Chief Lady of Hongkong

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