



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I see that former, disgraced Legislative Councillor Gary Cheng has joined the reporting team of Express Weekly, the Hongkong gossip magazine. This magazine publishes a potpourri of all kinds of alleged scandals, all of which I do not like to read. However, I have to read this medium as part of my duties to Hongkong and my people. After all, I have to know what is going on – and to whom – in order to update Grandpa. If I do not read about such rubbish, I have no idea who is dating whom, who is supposedly sleeping with whom, who is paying child support for bastards, and what kinds of misunderstanding certain people have with Grandpa. That is a very important duty that I carry out on a daily basis, but few people realise my sacrifice and how heavy are my responsibilities. All that most people do is to complain, complain, and complain. Ah! The life of a Chief Lady of Hongkong! Hats off to the owners of Express Weekly! Forgive and forget, Confucius would have commented on learning that Mr Gary Cheng, a felon, has been employed as Deputy Chief Editor of this gossip magazine. It gives him and Express Weekly a great deal of credibility, don't you think? Clearly, this is an example of the rehabilitation of a felon: He is being welcomed back into the loving arms of the bosom of Hongkong society. In view of the fact that he was jailed for bribery, theft and false accounting in 2001, I suppose senior management of Express Weekly will not permit Mr Gary Cheng to get anywhere near the petty cash. That would be putting too much temptation in his path. According to my information, students of penology have yet to find an answer as to the reason that criminals return to their criminal activities after paying the State the penalty for their crimes. It seems that they cannot shake the monkey off their backs. Once the monkey of criminality gets hold of a person, he is there for life. Recidivism is very common for people of the ilk of Mr Gary Cheng, according to recent penological studies. No doubt, Express Weekly will be keeping a close eye on him and will make certain that he does not have first-hand contact with advertisers: Can't be too careful, you know. Of course, public relations people will love him, now that he has that high position because, knowing of his weaknesses, it would be easy to get their messages into the medium, without senior management, knowing what was taking place. In my opinion, most PR people are not much better than paid liars, in any case, so that they will have a lot in common with Mr Gary Cheng. I do hope that he will be safe, though, because many people mistakenly trusted him when he was a Legislative Councillor. Poor chap! He just could not help himself. It was like a drug, I presume, with all those temptations, staring him in the face, every day. It reminds me of the story of the son of an Eastern potentate, who took his manservant into the desert on a three-week trekking holiday, along with his favourite, white Arabian stallion. One night, he told his manservant that, in the event that he died on the trek, he had willed the stallion to him. Whereupon, the manservant, promptly, stabbed the young man to death and buried his body under a piled of rocks. When the manservant returned to his former master's house and told the father of the young prince that the young man had fallen off his horse and died, the father did not believe the servant. The mufti – a Muslim scholar, who interprets the shari'a, which is the code of law, based on the Q'ran – on examination of the manservant, determined that he had, indeed, killed the young man. The manservant, then, confessed everything and threw himself at the foot of the mufti, begging for mercy. And he was granted his wish because the mufti said that the young prince contributed to the criminal act by tempting his manservant to kill him and to steal the horse. The lesson to be learned from this little tale is that one should never allow temptation to be put in the path

of somebody, who is known to have more than a little flaw in his character. In the case of Mr Gary Cheng, the little flaw in his character was a chasm, not a chink. If Mr Gary Cheng commits another crime while in the employ of Express Weekly, the question is whether or not a magistrate of Hongkong would determine that Express Weekly was partially responsible for Mr Gary Cheng, being a recidivist. Come to think of it, you know Mr Gary Cheng would make a very good spy for Beijing because he is so used to telling lies and cheating. For what reason is he not in the employ of the Government of China? I must talk to my friends about hiring him. A good spy, like a good, hard man, is difficult to find, you know. It seems to me that Mr Gary Cheng would be the perfect employee for that special branch of the People's Liberation Army. He has all the attributes and qualifications: An exceptionally good liar; a thief; knowledge of accounting – so that he knows how to cook the books – and he knows how to hide his criminal acts (it took the Hongkong copshop a very long time to nab him, you know). Certainly, Mr Gary Cheng could not do any worse than did former President Bill Clinton, who was proved to be a perjurer, as well as being an amiable practitioner of cozenage. And President Bill Clinton did not have to serve any time in jail, unlike Mr Gary Cheng. Which goes to prove that Hongkong's standard of justice is higher than that of the US.

Now, aren't you glad that Grandpa is here?

Love you,

Chief Lady of Hongkong

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