



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

*All of this talk about democracy, duty and love, one would think that people, such as I and Grandpa, are not with the programme, to coin an American expression. If Grandpa's doctor had not forbade him from visiting patients, who had contracted SARS (**S**evere **A**cute **R**espiratory **S**yndrome), he would have spent many of his most-valuable hours in going from one public hospital to another, from one cheap housing estate to another, talking to SARS victims. It was left to me to design a special SARS bubble, made of clear, pure plastic, to envelop my entire lithe body so that I could go to give comfort to the elderly, the SARS infirm, the very sick and the ... well, you understand. Of course, I wore my plastic gloves, also, as well as prescription goggles so that, when I touched somebody, who may have been infected with the SARS virus, I would be completely protected. There are still no reliable statistics as to whether or not one can catch SARS through touch, through eye contact, through touching an infected door-knob, or through sitting on a toilet seat, which had been used by an infected person. I was very afraid that I might pass SARS to Grandpa should I become infected, too. Getting back to love and duty, when that horrible bus accident occurred, last Thursday week, Grandpa was one of the first on the scene. How many other leaders of men would have done that? Taking special care, Grandpa flew in his helicopter all the way into the New Territories in order to see for himself what caused the accident. It was a terrible tragedy, but Grandpa – poor dear, he hates to see blood, you know – brushing aside any consideration for his own safety, boarded his helicopter and gave the order: 'Follow the trail to the bus crash site!' You may laugh, but do you think that the President of the United States (US), Mr George W. Bush, would have gone to a bus accident site? This was the first terrible accident of its type and Grandpa determined that he would get to the bottom of it. You see, he was listening to the people, just as he promised. Better governance is on the way. In fact, it is here, now. It was early in the morning that the accident happened, but Grandpa was up long before the accident was reported, going through official Government documents in order to prepare for his long day. As soon as his personal secretary told him of the accident, he put everything to one side and ordered his people to arrange transportation to the crash site. He had to be visible and to establish an investigatory committee in order to punish the guilty and reward the bravery of those who tried to help. I don't want to labour this situation, so suffice it to say, Grandpa cares.*

Did I tell you that I met the new Prime Minister of China, Mr Wen Jia Bao, the other day. He looks like a nice man. I like him. His wife looks nice, too, although she did look a little mousy. I remember Mrs Li Peng when I was up in Beijing, recently. My! She has become terribly fat over the past few years! Too much maan tao (buns). It is interesting that her hair is greyer than her husband's. One of the perquisites of office, I suppose, is not to have grey hairs. Mr Wen Jia Boa doesn't say very much, you know, but that is to be expected: He's the new man in the block. I'll tell you the truth, however, I am not too happy with one aspect, relating to him. Against medical advice, Prime Minister Wen went to meet SARS patients as well as the doctors, who were on duty, administering to their needs. The policy is not consistent: Grandpa was told not to go, and he followed medical advice; Prime Minister Wen was told not to go, and he went against the medical advice. Not clever, I would have thought, but, after all, this is One-Country, Two-Systems, isn't it? Luckily, I met him before he went to the hospital. I am as

brave as anyone, but I am not stupid. It is good that we never moved from our flat into the Governor's Mansion because, now, we don't have to entertain outsiders at home. What attracted me to Prime Minister Wen was the quiet way in which he handled the Press. I told Grandpa: 'See! Learn from Prime Minister Wen. Talk and say nothing; and don't use words, such as "shallow", "stupid", "bad-mouthing" etc.' I don't think Grandpa listened, very carefully, so I wrote it down on a piece of paper for him and put it in his pocket. Do you think that people of the ilk of the Prime Minister of China go to a special school where they are taught to engage in doublespeak and clapping?

*Must go, now.
Love you,*

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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