



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I am appalled at the way that the media of Hongkong writes about me and Grandpa as well as other high-ranking members of the Government of China. It has to stop, you know. The media, to my way of thinking – and Mrs Wen agrees with me – should know when to talk ... and when not to talk. It is the same with a child: It has to learn when it is permitted to talk and when it should keep its mouth, shut tight. My mother, always, told me that silence is golden. Well, if the media wants to strike gold, then, it should learn that writing some things will result in proprietors and editors, being invited to garden parties, and advertisements will multiple, in the same way that the Bible states that man must go out and multiply. Success, to a newsman, can only be measured by the quality of the stories that appear on the pages of his medium. The quality of the support that a medium receives is measured by the number of advertisements that appear on that medium's pages, with the stories, draped around the advertisements. Without advertisements, that is the end of it. As the Chinese proverb goes: 'Without sons, my body is light.' I have the power to close down any newspaper or magazine in Hongkong – just by pointing my little finger in the direction of editorial offices. I have spoken to Grandpa about this matter, asking him as to the reason that he permits some of those Chinese-language, fruity named newspapers to operate in Hongkong. He said that newspapers are like garden worms: There is no way to stop them from crawling, here and there, in and out. All that the Hongkong Government can do is to fine them for publishing pornography, violations of this law and that law, and asking, surreptitiously, responsible members of the Hongkong society, those with large property/hotel/trading empires, not to support them with advertisements. As for the English-language Press in Hongkong, I am happy to say that the English department of the Fourth Estate is, completely, controlled, now. It is gratifying to read that one English-language morning newspaper, published daily in South China, is now careful as to how it discusses matters, relating to Grandpa, Hongkong, and the Motherland. I invite the proprietor of this newspaper to some of my functions because of the way that he cooperates with the Administration. It is gratifying, also, to see a Chinese national run an English-language newspaper, with the Caucasian employees, bowing to him in respect. It was not, always, that way, you know. Things have changed for the better, I am happy to write, today. Progress! It is a wonderful thing! It is such a pity that progress did not come to Hongkong, years ago, when the British were here. As my lovely gentleman told me, recently: 'Newspapers should pay attention, strengthening their consciousness of self-discipline and mind never to curry favour with the public.' Wow! What a statement! I, immediately, instructed my cook to prepare Shanghainese spicy chicken, which is similar to curried chicken, every Friday, henceforth. I, really, respect intelligent men; and, the spicy chicken will remind me of his intelligent words.*

*You know, my dear, there is the evil, known as 'news manipulation'. It is one of the many scourges of this day and age. The Western Press is increasingly keen to proliferate news manipulation. The latest example of it was when the United States invaded Iraq. Termed as the 'liberation' of the country and of its peoples, actually, it was an invasion of Iraq by a foreign power, a foreign power that did not have authority, at international law, so to do. China has never done such a thing – and never will. China, naturally, voted against the invasion of this Middle Eastern country in the United Nations because there was no apparent justification for it. One cannot arrest or*

*incarcerate a person just because you think that he is planning to commit a crime. But that was exactly what the President of the United States did: President George W. Bush said that President Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and that he, President Saddam Hussein, was preparing to use them and, as such, Saddam Hussein must be stopped. Of course, there were no weapons of mass destructions, we all knew that. Mr Hans Blix, the United Nations Chief Weapons Inspector, told President George W. Bush as much. The US Press of last March went all out to support the acts of aggression by the US. The US Government even embedded select newsmen to accompany the invading US army, as it raced toward Baghdad, in order to report on the victorious incursions by the most-powerful army in the world on foreign soil. That was a classic example of news manipulation. Now, if China had 'liberated' Taiwan, using the same logic as did the US when it invaded Iraq, you can imagine what the Western Press would have said about us. The media should be the witness of an age, but some newsmen have better eyes than others. While some newsmen are nearly blind. In order to survive, many proprietors of media feel that they have to publish titillating stories about the leaders of countries, or of famous singers and actors. This is wrong. To report on the private affairs of a country's leaders or of its artistes, without express permission, is to ask for trouble. In order to obtain the respect of the reading public, newsmen should learn that to remain silent, even though it is accepted that they know something, which is scandalous of a country's leader, is to be honourable. You will note that the only things that are written about me are those things, which I authorise. I have the Press scared to death of me. That is the way to run a territory. Grandpa hates shallow people – and so do I. I know that some newsmen feel it difficult to restrain themselves when they are in possession of some really interesting pieces of news about my Government, or one of my Ministers, but, if the Press wants to win favour of me and Grandpa and, by extension, with the Hongkong public, it has to learn to restrain itself, at times. After all, it is for the Press's own good, isn't it? As it is written in Beijing: 'Necessary silence in the media is the embodiment of a sober awareness for self-discipline.' In order for newsmen to keep their intuitive knowledge and guard their sanctity, they have to practise to remain silent. Newsmen ought to sit at home for at least three hours per day, just practising to say nothing. This is called exercising the frontal lobe.*

*Talk to you, again, next week, but, in the meantime, don't talk to any newsmen: They can't be trusted.  
Love you,*

*The Chief Lady of Hongkong*

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