



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I was not a bit surprised that the first land auction in the previous twenty months or so was a success. I, in fact, forecast it. But, what many people of Hongkong seem to fail to understand is that it reflects on the success of the Chief Executive of Hongkong – and I, of course. The Tuesday, May 25, land auction brought in nearly \$HK3 billion into my coffers ... Oops! I mean the coffers of Hongkong, of course. As I told my manicurist: 'I wonder how many people of these four hundred and sixteen square miles, which constitute this territory, realise that the only reason that that land auction was a success was because of the hard work of the Chief Executive ... with me, Betty, encouraging him.' It is said that the popularity of the Chief Executive, today, has fallen to a one-year low. It should not bother the poor dear, actually, because, after all, which child enjoys taking foul-tasting medicine? The job of the Chief Executive is a thankless one, you know; it is the type of job that requires unpopular choices to be made, nearly every day, resulting in unpopular determinations, having to be engraved in the history books of Hongkong. As all housewives know, in order to produce a ham-and-onion omelette, one has to shed a few tears as one peels the onions in preparation for cutting up the vegetable. So it is with the Chief Executive: In order for him to do that which is best for his people, it is necessary that, in preparation for the grand plan of the Motherland, some tears must be shed – by the people of the territory. It is part of being the most-powerful man in Hongkong; it goes with the territory, you know. The people of Hongkong, however, would do well to reflect on the fact that the biggest property moguls of the territory showed up for the May 25 Government land auction. How did they get there? Who prompted them to join in, in order to boost the price of the land on offer? The answer, of course: The Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, the man who suffers, daily, at the hands of his critics because they do not fully understand how the wheels of politics turn in Beijing. For the richest man in the world to attend a land auction of the type that was staged by the Hongkong Government on May 25 indicates just how successful was the prodding of the Chief Executive. Whereas Mr Tung Chee Hwa, Hongkong's most-lovable grandpa, is very well educated, it is well known that most of the leaders of industry in Hongkong have little formal education and their doctorate degrees are only honorary ones. In fact, My Dear Grandchild, it is fair to state that, if one has sufficient money, one may buy a doctorate degree from just about any leading university – anywhere in the world. According to my very close friend in Israel, Mr Li Ka Shing, the Chairman of Cheung Kong (Holdings) Ltd, could have added another doctorate degree to his collection if he had done the right thing by the Government of Israel. The learning institution, which was ready to confer on Mr Li Ka Shing, the title of Doctor of Laws, was Technion, located at Haifa, Israel. However, since Mr Li Ka Shing did not spend enough money in Israel, the idea was shelved, at least for the time being. But the door is, still, not shut and barred, I have been told, and, should Cheung Kong agree to take over some of the communication assets, belonging to the State of Israel, at a price of about twenty million American dollars, the honorary doctorate would be his. That would give this multi-billionaire at least five doctorates to hang on his living room wall. They are all honorary doctorates, of course, because Mr Li Ka Shing is not, exactly, an academic. His son, Richard Li Tzar Kai, has followed Dad, also, you know, and is only half educated. Like father, like son, as the saying goes. But, at the same time, how many half educated people can compete with the likes of Mr Money Bags?*

*On another subject, when the supposed finger of Buddha came to Hongkong on the same day as the historic land auction was held, I was not surprised at the turnout of the devout. I was thinking, however, when I die and leave my body to science, would one of my digits be preserved for posterity? After all, if Prince Siddhartha Gautama can attain the transcendent state, known as nirvana, and become The Buddha, as it is said he did in about 528 B.C., can I not sit under a Bauhinia Tree, which can, in time, be known, as the bo tree, Hongkong's tree of awakening. I am not suggesting that I should compete with the Buddhists of Hongkong, but I see no reason that, in the fullness of time, it would not be wrong for my people to venerate me a little bit, too. After working my fingers to the bone, am I asking too much to expect a little gratitude from my people? Grandpa gets no thanks for his hard work, you know, and he does not expect it, but fair is fair, as I see it. Buddha only gave the world an idea; I have given some of the best years of my life to Hongkong. And all I ask is for the preservation of just one of my metatarsal bones, to be kept in a glass case on which the inscription would read: 'The digit of Betty, who loved Hongkong so much, that she bequeathed this bone for her people.' Note that I am only giving one bone ... mustn't spoil the masses, you know.*

*Well, time for exercises. Must keep fit in order to be able to wear my new dresses, you know.*

*Love you,*

*The Chief Lady of Hongkong*

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