



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

The fact that the Planet Venus should pass across the face of the sun in this year of my reign is very telling: It tells me that something terrible is going to happen. What do you think? William Wordsworth (1770-1850), an English romantic poet, is credited with the line: 'The child is father of the man.' I do not see any reason that a grandchild cannot be the mother of this mother and, as such, I ask you for your opinion about the passage of Venus across the face of the sun. Does it mean that an evil cloud is passing in front of my life? The Venus event coincided with some people, saying some rather unfair things about Grandpa, you know. If the moon can affect the tides of the earth, for what reason cannot Venus affect the affairs of man, or a single man, on this planet? On the same day that Venus did its thing, that is June 8, the second day of that week, people started to call Grandpa 'distant', 'elusive', and 'weak'. It is a lie! I sleep next to him, every night, and I can tell you, in confidence, that he is not in the least bit weak. Of course, he is not what he used to be, but that is due to the passage of time, you understand, and the pressures of his office, which weighs heavily upon my shoulders, as well as his. It will happen to you and yours, in the fullness of your life, you know. It is nature's way of telling you that it is time to make way for the next generation; let youth guide the world through to the next millennium. What is especially worrying to me is that my friends in Beijing will hear of these things and will ask me whether or not they are true. These matters are very delicate, you understand, and they are hardly the subjects to bring up in The Great Hall of The People, during a formal dinner party with the Beijing hoi polloi. Most people do not understand how high politics works, My Dear Grandchild. I shall tell you, but I must ask you not to pass on this secret to anybody else. You see, Grandpa, actually, is very strong and very strong-willed. He is a follower of Confucianism. The teachings of Confucius make it very clear that one should not spoil the child by sparing the rod ... across its bottom. Grandpa may only appear weak, when called upon so to give the impression – because he is under strict orders from Beijing. When it is appropriate, he will be like a man of iron and, conversely, if a mandate is handed down from on high, he will take on the mien of a mouse. But do not be misled, Grandpa will, always, be Grandpa, my loveable frog.

What people in Hongkong fail to appreciate is that Grandpa's mandate is for him to carry out his duties in accordance with the requirements of Beijing, not the requirements of Hongkong people. That is not to suggest that he does not care about the interests of the people of Hongkong, on the contrary, he is one of them ... well, nearly, anyway. But I ask you, My Dear Grandchild, who are 'they' to get off, calling him horrid and untrue names? There are only seven million people in Hongkong while, in the Motherland, there are about one billion three hundred million human beings. As I told Grandpa, only the other day: In politics, as in war, sometimes the few have to be sacrificed for the good of the many. If politics is to be equated with pragmatism, which it is, of course, then, the requirements of the Motherland must take precedence over the requirements of Hongkong and its handful of smelly humanity. From my way of looking at things, the people of Hongkong had been badly spoiled under the British. They have adopted a demeanor, which is not, exactly, conducive to the precepts of the Motherland in its Great Leap Forward. For what reason should Hongkong have what the Motherland has not? If there is fruit on the dinner table, it is to be shared by all who sit at the table. Fair is fair! The people of

*Hongkong are asking for things that the people of the Motherland do not have and, because the people of Hongkong cannot satisfy their demands, they are picking on Grandpa, blaming him for this and that. Which is totally unfair. I recall the Latin sentence, originally penned by Confucius, but plagiarised by Lucan (39-65 A.D.). Lucan was a Roman poet, who wrote the famous work, The Pharsalia, which is an epic account of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. This is the Latin sentence: 'Quicquid Multis Peccatur Inultim' [When whole multitudes join (in mutiny), the guilt goes unpunished]. On July 1, once again, it is suggested to me by Mary Chan, my manicurist, that half a million people will take to the streets of Hongkong, demanding this and that. It happened last July 1, also, you know, so it is entirely possible for there to be a repeat performance. Grandpa will be blamed, I suppose. Poor little dear! But it would be impossible to jail the entire bunch of protestors, would it? So, they will go unpunished: 'Quicquid Multis Peccatur Inultim'. Now, translate that situation into the language of the Motherland: In would move the tanks of the PLA (the **P**eople's **L**iberation **A**rmy) in a flash. And that would be that. One of the main problems with Hongkong, one that I raised on my last trip to Beijing, is that the small contingent of PLA soldiers, based in Hongkong, does not have any tanks. Even if they had tanks, there is no square in Hongkong, which is big enough to accommodate them in the event that they were needed in a hurry to quash a mutiny, rebellion, or something. Something, really, ought to be done to rectify this situation. Any suggestions?*

*Grandpa is taking me to meet another squillionaire, tonight, one who has a jewellery business. I do so love such people, don't you?
Talk to you next week.*

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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