



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I mark the manner of our canine friends, applaud their actions, revel in their antics, and take great pleasure in watching them eat. Dogs ask little of man, other than a little love and affection, a place to drink and to eat, and a place to sleep when exhaustion overtakes them. Man, on the other hand, is never content, it seems, and as soon as he has most of his worldly wants, he craves power. One sees this from the savages of the forest to the people who rise to the pinnacles of power in the United States. And, sadly, one sees it in Hongkong, too. For the life of me, I cannot understand the reason that Grandpa has taken on a job for which he only gets paid the equivalent of about \$HK1 million a month. He does not need the money. How many meals can he eat per day? How many shirts can he wear in the course of a single day? How many jade rings can he buy me? He has complicated his life, quite unnecessarily. And, as his life becomes more and more complicated, so is mine. My Dear Grandchild, you have no idea how difficult it is to be the wife of a leader of men. You cannot understand how intertwined are my days' activities with those of Grandpa's. From the moment that I wake up in the morning to the second that my head hits the pillow in the evening, my activities are dictated by the exigencies of politics. After doing some research, I have become concerned about the maintenance of my health, especially after reading allegations that the late President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinians may have been poisoned by his enemies. I read that some of the Emperors of China were killed by their servants, who fed them poisons. And so I asked Grandpa whether or not I should employ a food-taster. In that way, I told him, if the food-taster drops dead after tasting congee, which had been prepared for me, then, I know that somebody is trying to kill me. Grandpa said that I was too concerned and that the people of Hongkong love me and would not consider trying to do me in. I remember, however, how the people of Philippines used to claim to love President Ferdinand Marcos when he was in power. Things turned completely around in a twenty four hour period: Love and adoration turned into hatred. Ah, yes, people are fickle, especially in the world of politics. Of course, in the Philippines, you have quite a number of maids and drivers, most of whom are only partially educated, but, unfortunately, they make up a large proportion of the electorate. A stentorian leader of some of these semi-educated people could well unseat a President. In Hongkong, there are quite a number of Philippine nationals, but, luckily for me, they cannot vote and can be kicked out of Hongkong at a moment's notice. But there are, also, those Chinese, semi-educated people, who do have the right to vote and, unfortunately for me, they do exercise their rights when a leader emerges among them. It is one of the weaknesses of a democratic system because, more often than not, a leader of the electorate is unworthy and is thinking, only, of obtaining power. Some people possess, innately, that charisma which, in the fullness of time, makes them leaders of men, whether or not they seek fame. Grandpa and I possess that charisma: It is the bane of our lives. In the world of the dog, there is very good order; without the requirement for elections of the top dog to lead the pack. The alpha male dog and the alpha female dog are the only pair that, legally, may mate and bear puppies. They, also, lead the pack in the hunt for food. That food is not just for them, but also for the entire pack. When squabbles break out within the pack, the alpha male settles the dispute in short order. Life for a dog is simple, purposeful and, for the most part, productive for all members of a pack. Security is assured because the pack defends each and every member on the basis of the axiom that in unity there is strength. Nobody had to teach a dog this axiom: It is instinctive. Grandpa feels very strongly about the people of

Hongkong and, as he has told me, so many times in the past: 'The people come first ... after me.' Grandpa, it could be said, is the alpha male of Hongkong, and I, the alpha female. I recognise that there are those people in Hongkong, who act contrary to the law of the pack, but they will get their comeuppances in time. Whoever said that this is a dog's life did not fully understand that the life of dog is one, which can be very wonderful. When I am reincarnated, I think that I might like to return to earth as a little Yorkshire Terrier.

Ah, well, life at the top is a difficult row to hoe, is it not?

Love you, all.

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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