



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*The next time that you complain that I am picky, just remember this story. As I told you in my last letter, I am, now, sailing on this floating, 5-star hotel called, The Crystal Serenity. If you ever travel on such a cruise ship, please remember that it is very important to establish a routine as early as possible. Let me explain, there are oodles and oodles of delicious food on this ship, and there are armies and armies of fatties, both males and females, who stuff themselves in the manner of French farmers, who force-feed their poor geese in order to produce large goose livers, which are, then, manufactured into Pâté de Foie Gras if the livers are not sautéed in butter and eaten hot with a lovely glass of Chateau d'yQuem. So, unless you want to be a fatty, eat everything in moderation. For lunch, for instance, I usually eat just a salad because, in the evenings, I have to eat dinner in The Crystal Dining Room where I make my grand entrance after everybody else is seated. Taking the arm of the maître d'hôtel, I allow myself to be directed, almost as in a glide, to my private table, just next to the window, amidships (Amidships is a term that they use on this vessel, which means in the middle of the ship: The pointed end of the ship is called the bow and the other end is called the arse). It is Table Number 1A – naturally. This allows all of the Hongkong people on board to view me in my best finery, festooned as I am in some of the best jewellery that Grandpa can buy for me in my town (sometimes, I must tell you, privately, he does not have to pay because his friend owns the shop. All I have to do is to sign the chit). It is important, My Dear Grandchild, that leaders of a country or territory, always, maintain a certain aloofness and decorum to one's serving staff. At the same time, a good leader of men has to set the example for one's serfs. Clothes, I must tell you, do make the woman. Ask yourself, have you ever seen a successful naked woman? Point taken? Getting back to establishing routines aboard this cruise ship, I have to tell you what I heard while waiting for the lift to take me to The Crystal Dining room. In my Penthouse, I have a staff of one Austrian butler, Peter, and two maids, Irina, a Russian lady, and Chanda, the Filipina assistant of Irina. From this trio, I am able to learn all of the gossip on board. Well, on the day on which I am referring, I overheard an elderly American lady tell a butler – not Peter, by the way – that she wanted to make a formal complaint to the Captain. She said that she had been snubbed! The conversation went along the following lines: 'Here I was, sitting at a table with seven other people, all of whom are not my friends or relatives. One of the men at the table did not talk to me, but he talked to others at the table. The previous night, these people all talked to me, except that man, and I talked to the people quite a lot. So why not last night? Even the Captain did not look in my direction. I consider this a terrible insult to me and all Americans. It must be reported.' The butler stood in front of this elderly American lady, not daring to say too much lest he, too, incurred her wrath. As the lady grew tired of complaining, the butler said that he would see what could be done. Then, my lift came and I was gone – almost in hysterics, I must add. I sit at my own private table in The Crystal Dining Room and feel a little sorry that others do not enjoy the same benefits as I. However, not everybody can be the Chief Lady of Hongkong, can they? As for talk, well, I am discriminating and do not curry favours for subordinates.*

*Wait for my next letter from Penthouse 1A and watch your weight.*

*The Chief Lady of Hongkong*

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