



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Bad news from The Crystal Serenity: I have been forced to make a formal complaint! We were at sea on the way to Darwin, Australia, on the morning after leaving Thursday Island, the Captain, having made another mistake by anchoring off the coast of the island on a Wednesday. (These Norwegians keep forgetting the days of the week!) Anyway, I was eating a new dish, Huevos Rancheros (Mexican fried eggs on a tortilla, bathed in a slightly spicy sauce) when two, smartly dressed Japanese officers walked through the area of The Buffet on The Lido Deck where breakfast was being served. They bowed politely to the male and female Japanese passengers, seated at the next table in front of me, but these officers, adorned in their pure white uniforms with gold epaulets on each of their shoulders, which signifies their rank, completely ignored me and all of the other Chinese and European passengers, seated in this functional and quite smart food outlet. It was, of course, a very rude gesture, to be sure, and I would, normally, have overlooked it because people, so often, are shy to speak to me due to my exalted position as The Chief Lady of Hongkong. However, I had recalled in the back reaches of my mind, in the weeks, prior to this incident, that the Japanese officers usually only recognise their own countrymen and country women, overlooking all the other people. This is in contrast to the European officers on board this passenger liner, who recognise all races and are most courteous to everybody. Even Captain Glenn Edvardsen stops to talk to me when he sees me, walking through the many splendid places to visit on this wonderful cruise ship. I remembered, also, on that sunny Thursday morning, that I had seen Mr Yuki Yamamoto, the Deputy Captain of The Crystal Serenity, also a Japanese national, drinking a great deal of sake and red wine in The Silk Road, the specialty restaurant, serving only Japanese food, on a number of occasions in the evenings. He was, always, in the company of Japanese ladies, too. One can always tell when a Japanese is over-indulging, especially when imbibing alcohol, because his pale yellowish skin turns quite pink (this is not a reference to Communism, I hasten to add). If a Japanese, on the other hand, stays under the sun for too long a period of time, his pale, yellowish skin turns a bright yellow, leading to a brownish tint. That may be one reason that few Japanese ladies sunbathe or even swim on board. Another reason could be, of course, that most of them are flat-chested with bow legs. These are the telltale marks of a Japanese. That is, of course, when they are not carrying their cameras, which is another telltale mark of a Japanese. To tell you the truth, I have been thinking of publishing a book, outlining how one can tell a Japanese person from a European person and/or a Chinese person. With Grandpa, because he looks so much like a frog when he drinks too much, he just croaks and, then, falls asleep no matter where he is and regardless of the company. Some people claim that he sleeps most of the time, in any event, but that is a little unfair because I know that, on occasions, he is awake, especially at mealtimes. Anyway, so as not to digress, what worries me about the fact that Japanese officers on this ship are recognising only Japanese passengers is that it is, among other things, racial discrimination. I would expect to be greeted, first, when seen in the company of a group of people because of my rank, but, if push comes to shove, let us speculate, say in an emergency on board this vessel, I want to be treated equally ... well, nearly, anyway. If the ship is about to sink say, in a situation where we are swept overboard by a huge tsunami, cresting forty feet and more, and we are all drowning in the swirling undercurrent, I want to be treated equally, too. For what reason should the Japanese victims of a tsunami be treated better than I in an emergency? Will the Japanese officers try to help the Japanese

first and leave the Chinese to their own devices? Should we not all drown together? We are all in the same boat, you know, and in the ocean, it is all the same water, is it not? I know that the Japanese think of themselves as being the most superior race on this earth, but there are only about one hundred and forty million of these people, versus one billion, three hundred million Chinese people. What these statistics mean is that Chinese are better at procreating than are the Japanese. Talk about doing the rabbit 'thing', then, look out, here come the Chinese!

And, now, My Dear Grandchild, I have to lodge my formal complaint to the Hotel Director, Mr Herbert Jäger. He is Austrian and, being a second-class German, he will understand the reason for my complaint.

Talk to you next week.

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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