



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I must tell you, My Dear Grandchild, that I was almost scared out of my knickers on the passage through Egypt. The Vice Captain of The Crystal Serenity, Mr Atle Knutsen, issued an official Memorandum to all of the crew. It stated:*

*'During our transit through the Suez Canal we will have Suez Canal Crew onboard. For your safety please lock your cabin doors at all times and if you have any valuable be sure to lock them in your safe.*

*'Through our time in Egypt please be aware of your surroundings, if you should see anything unusual report it to the Bridge right away.'*

*I can assure you that, on reading this Memorandum, I went to the onboard shop and bought three large padlocks to put on my cabin door and interior doors, but my butler said that the ship would not permit any private renovations to accommodations. Luckily for me, I had my Filipina maid with me so I told her to sit in the cabin for the entire time that we were in Egypt. It was just as well because, just after leaving the country, a couple of tourists were blown up by a terrorist. The Middle East is a horrible-looking place, as far as I am concerned, with most of the land, being reddish-yellow sand. The people are very poor and I feel for them. But there is no reason that poor people should be dishonest people. In China, we have a few poor people, but they are all honest. If they were not honest, then, the government would take the necessary action to make them honest. In Egypt, the government of that country has a full-proof method of making them honest, but I shall elaborate on that matter in my next letter. While my Filipina maid was guarding all of my treasures in my penthouse suite, I was on a trip to Luxor. This is what I saw: Miles and miles of nothing but sand and rocks and hundreds of deserted bricks shacks. With an armed escort in order to guarantee my safety, our bus drove for the best part of three hours, from Safaga to Luxor. The bus was stopped every thirty minutes or so at military checkpoints. Fifty calibre machine guns, manned by Egyptian soldiers, were everywhere. I suppose the Egyptians are still afraid that the Jews of Israel will come over the border, just like the 1967 war and destroy the armies of this war-torn country. At every stop, I recalled the Memorandum of Vice Captain Atle Knutsen: 'Please lock your cabin doors ... Please be aware of surroundings.' I talked to the onboard guard and asked him whether or not his machine gun was loaded. He showed me the bullets, already in the breach of the gun. That made me feel a little better, but I was wondering what protection I would have from an aerial assault on my bus. What is the use to travelling to this country when one has to be concerned that, at any time, one could be killed by terrorists? Why is Egypt the target of so many terrorists? It must be something in their blood, I reasoned. China does not have this problem. In ancient times, that is in the days of Moses and his mob, it was considered that the proper thing to do was to squash an enemy before he has time to squash you. While I did not see anybody shooting at anybody, I noted that many of the deserted houses had been holed, obviously by bullets. The question was, of course, did the Israeli soldiers attach these houses, or was it a case of ethnic cleansing on the part of the Egyptian Government. I recalled the communiqués from Beijing: Beware the Egyptians, bearing gifts. This communiqué was issued because on November 17, 1997, sixty two people were killed and twenty four people were injured at Luxor in an attack by terrorists of the main fundamentalist Gama'at al-Islamiyya Group. Fifty-eight of the victims were tourists; the six terrorist attackers were later shot by police. The Group claimed that they carried out the attack in order to secure the release of their leader, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, who had been imprisoned in the*

*United States for conspiring to blow up the World Trade Centre in 1993. Egypt is a very democratic country, just like China. The present President is Hosni Mubarak, who was elected in 1981 and is, still, running the country after four terms in office. He heads the National Democratic Party. Obviously, he likes the job and the people like him, clearly. But he does not appear to be able to stop terrorists, killing tourists or robbing cruise ships. I must tell you that, by the time that my bus arrived in Luxor, I had to rush to my hotel room in order to change my knickers. Talk about peeing in one's pants. What I do for my country!*

*Next week, I shall tell you more about Egypt and some of my terrifying experiences.  
As always, love to my people.*

*Chief Lady*

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