



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I am really quite fed up when I hear people tell me that I have approached my golden years and that it is time for me to relax and enjoy life. What a lot of nonsense! I can assure you that there is nothing golden about old age except, perhaps, that sometimes people give you more room to walk in a crowded shopping arcade and, on occasion, upon boarding an aeroplane, the stewardess will assist you in putting your hand-carry luggage in the compartment above your head. Which is very nice, of course, but I would still prefer to be young and to be able to do such small chores myself ... only in the event that I cannot find a good-looking, young man to do it for me, of course. I ask you, my dear, what is golden about having to wear glasses just to read a newspaper or the receipt for a new dress, to suffer the agony of looking at sagging flesh, to note the appearance of chickens' feet at the corner of one's eyes, to be horrified at seeing enlarged veins on one's legs, and to view a bottom, which no longer retains its former rotund shape, that rotundness, which caused young blades of old to look twice at me? And, worst of all, I note that I am shrinking! What is golden, I ask you, about losing one's passion for life and living? When I was young, I thought the world was mine, and that all I had to do was to go out and pick the fruit off trees, trees that I could call my own. Well, when you approach the so-called golden years, the fruit on those same trees suddenly tastes sour, and, in many cases, the fruit hangs on boughs, which are too high for people of the golden years to reach, in any event. Even if the fruit were attached to lower boughs, I would not be able to eat very much of it because, when one attains those horrid, golden years, one cannot eat very much of anything: One loses a great deal of one's appetite, compared with days of yore. I dare say men, when they approach their golden years, suffer similarly although differently. When I told my doctor of what I thought of the so-called golden years, he offered me some pills, saying that I was still going through a change of life and that the pills that he was prescribing would calm me. I told my doctor that there was no conflict or crisis in my life and that my menstrual cycle had ceased quite some time before. I told him that I did not fear the onset of menopause and had accepted it as an integral part of life. But for what reason, I asked my doctor, does the onset of menopause mean that a person has to lose one's zest for life and living? As I was talking to my doctor, my mind wandered to men and how, when the sap no longer rises for them, how 'manopause' affects their 'mandomship'. For a man, as he approaches his golden years, he loses the hair on his head, he no longer has firm, strong muscles to attract females, his teeth turn more brown, he tends to expel more gas from both orifices after eating meals, his skin starts to take on the appearance of a snake, and his body starts to shrivel up, the worst case, being a hunch in his back. I don't know which is worse: A woman, having attained menopause; or, a man, having passed through his manopause?*

*When Mr Tung Chee Hwa resigned as Chief Executive of Hongkong, with immediate effect, it was clear that manopause had taken possession of his mental faculties. He could no longer think while standing, or even when walking; he could not debate with most of the Legislative Councillors of Hongkong of his day, even the likes of pea-brained, Chim Pui Chung, or chain-smoker and heavy wine-drinker, Andrew Wong Wang Fat, and, then, even when he was seated; his use of the English language had deteriorated, markedly, to just a few hundred words, with his favourite word, being 'shallow'. Time, definitely, had left its mark on this sixty eight year old man; and, it was just as well that he resigned his position as the Chief Executive of Hongkong because, had he stayed on for any great length of time, he may have done a great deal more harm to the territory and its human inhabitants than he, already, had done, mostly by his non-action – which is even worse than mistaken action. In the case of this man, manopause caused him to be unable to reason, almost totally. Which strongly suggests that men and women, when they reach a certain age, should be required to step down from office. In my opinion, it is*

*just as well that Andrew Wong Wang Fat was not re-elected to the Legislative Council because, clearly, he is well past it. He was the one, you may recall, who did not want the Hongkong Government to pass legislation to ban smoking in public places. He even went on television, cancer stick in his mouth, claiming that the Government had no right to proscribe smoking, anywhere. Such stupidity! He is a smoker, clearly intent on killing himself, but he could not reason, logically – even though the statistics were in the intelligence bank: Smoking kills.*

*When a man is young, he is controllable by the woman in his life. But, when a man reaches his manopause, he is, almost, uncontrollable. As Dr Lawrence Peter said, many years ago, a man, who is firmly set in his ways, is unlikely to want to change and, the longer that he embraces his habits, good or bad, the more difficult it is for him to break them or even to have another person persuade him to make a change. A man, who lives by himself, works for himself, and spends his money as he sees fit. It is a sad state of affairs! Once he marries, however, he works for his wife and may only buy those things for which he has obtained express permission. Meanwhile, his wife may spend his money as she feels so inclined. A married man, once he passes through manopause, is quite likely to forget the reason that he was chosen to bring sperm into the family unit. He is quite likely to go mad and to try to buy a new motor car or some other stupid thing. The woman, who has passed through menopause, however, will only purchase necessities, such as Celine handbags, Bally shoes, Escada clothes, and Cartier wrist watches. A woman, My Dear Grandchild, is the granite pillar of the family whether or not she has passed through menopause. A man, at a certain age, becomes an obstacle to good reason and an obstacle to the family unit – as well as being quite useless for certain other duties. Talk to you, later.*

*Chief Lady*

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