

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I take the bus on my shopping sprees to Pacific Place and Landmark, these days, because it is much more convenient than taking out the motor car and having the problem of trying to find a suitable parking place and, then, fighting the traffic up Cotton Tree Drive after my shopping sprees in order to arrive home in time to meet Bo-Bo, my hard-working husband. Hongkong is such a congested place for people, such as I – even the free travellers from across the Shenzhen border are invading my favourite shops, their bags, full to overflowing with cash. Where do you think they get all of that money? Anyway, that is the subject of another letter. What I have observed, during my bus rides, is that there is quite a number of middle-aged ladies on the same bus that I normally take and, believe it or not, most of them are single. I struck up an acquaintance with one European lady (I think she is about 55 years old although ladies rarely divulge their true age) and I learned that her husband had left her for a younger Chinese lady – after more than 15 years of marriage, too. She has become very chummy with me of late and so we went to have luncheon at a 5-star hotel at Pacific Place. Her name is Mary Tweedy. The following is the conversation that we had last Saturday, leaving out the matter of what she was planning to purchase:

Mary: I'll tell you, Betty, Hongkong is a graveyard for single, middle-aged ladies, be they Chinese or gweipo.

Betty: What do you mean, Mary?

Mary: Well, I am still vibrant and a very sensual lady and need, from time to time ... you know what. But I am unable to satisfy most of my requirements, at all!

Betty: There must be quite a number of men out there who would love to take you out and, who knows what may follow from a romantic evening of wine and good food.

Mary: I wish it were so, Betty. But it isn't! Unless I am willing to do something silly, I shall never be able to be with a good man, again.

Betty: That cannot be so! Are there no organisations that a single, middle-aged lady, such as you, can join in order to meet a suitable partner for dating, if for nothing else?

Mary: Other than a Church, the short answer is: No!

Betty: What are you going to do, then?

Mary: I don't know. I, really, don't know. You have no idea just how frustrated I am these days. Look, for the past 3 years, I have not even seen a man's private parts, let alone experience the pleasures that only a man can give, as used to happen often during the time that I and my former husband were in love. Oh! I wished that I could have behaved differently in years gone by!

Betty: Yes. We all wished that we had acted differently in years of yore. Life can be very trying. Remember Parmenides: The unity of opposites?

At this time, Mary started to cry. I felt very sorry for her. I, nearly, cried myself, actually. When I returned home to Bo-Bo, I made very certain that he had a wonderful dinner and, after that, I poured him a nice glass of his favourite wine and, then ... I need not elaborate, do I, My Dear Grandchild? I was so touched by that which Mary had told me that I thanked my lucky stars that I have Bo-Bo to share my bed and do those things that a loving husband is supposed to do, such as polish my shoes, buy me flowers on my birthday and other important dates, and keep my bed warm during the cold winter evenings. Husbands, I realised after thinking carefully about Mary's problems, are precious things that have to be nurtured, daily, very carefully. Love

and loving are fleeting, as Mary discovered. I was going make certain that I do not become another statistic on a Number 40M bus. With confirmation that there are so many single, middle-aged ladies out there, all trying everything to hook a man, I felt that I had to do something ... otherwise, it would be very difficult to unhook Bo-Bo from a middle-aged lady's vintage hooks. With this in mind, I determined that, henceforth, I would make Bo-Bo some freshly brewed coffee every morning and, also, I would learn how to make the real, French croissant. No more store-bought stuff. I, certainly, would not like to lose Bo-Bo because I have spent so much time in training him that I would hesitate to start over again with a different member of his sex – assuming that I could find a man, worthy of my training, of course.

The plight of single, middle-aged ladies of Hongkong is, clearly, one that needs Government attention, in my opinion. Just because a lady is upwards of 45 years old, it does not mean that she cannot function as a female should function. I dare say that a well-proportioned, middle-aged lady could outperform a younger lady because of her experience in life. However, I know that men, no matter how old they may be, look for younger women to woo, leaving the middle-aged ladies to themselves, by and large. For single, middle-aged European ladies of Hongkong, especially the less attractive ones, I am certain that unless a man is a sot, it is in the middle of a very dark night, or the man is half blind, they would have little chance of competing against young, comely Chinese ladies. I exclude one-night stands from this letter, you understand, because I am not referring to that kind of woman. I am referring to decent women who want to have a meaningful relationship with a gentle man, and I mean, truly, a gentle man. I see nothing wrong with a single lady, desiring the company of a good man, do you? When attractive girls are in their teens, they do not consider the plight of single ladies as they reach the age of 40 years or older. Then, one day, if an attractive girl has not found a mate for life, she will, suddenly, look in the mirror and note that her face has changed, considerably: Her eyes have little bags under them; her flesh is no longer as firm as when she was younger; her hair is turning colours and it requires tinting, monthly; wrinkles have appeared in very embarrassing and noticeably places on her face; and, so on. When a young girl is in school, looking at handsome men, it never occurs to her that, like men, she will grow old, too. I know myself that I have lamented, on many occasions, that it should only be men who grow old, not women. That is the reason that we are known as the fairer sex, you understand. Yes, life is very cruel, allowing ladies to grow old. But, as we age, what are we to do if, for some reason or other, we have no man to dry the dishes, clean our shoes, etc?

Something should be done about this situation. Talk to Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen (), before he leaves office, will you?

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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