

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Bo-Bo is going through his manopause. I never knew it before, but ladies go through their change of life, known as menopause, and men go through their change of life – and I have called it ‘manopause’. In ladies, of course, menopause is the final cessation of the menstrual cycle. It is a natural physical phenomenon. In a man, however, as I have grown to appreciate, at the outset of manopause, there is a loss of identity; a crisis of confidence. It is ridiculous, in my opinion, that a little appendage, measuring about 6 inches in length, could create such a situation as to cause a healthy man to worry about it. After all, it is not falling off, is it? I suppose it is because of the fear of that old adage: ‘If you don’t use it, you lose it.’ Catholic priests, come to think about it, are never supposed to use their little appendages, other than for urinary purposes, of course, even when the sap is rising fast in the prime of their lives. Catholic priests are supposed to hold mass, early in the morning, prior to taking breakfast, at which time, they drink ‘the blood of Christ’ (which, in today’s world, is substituted for a glass of cheap wine, for the most part) and listen to the confessions of the laity. It has been confirmed that Catholic priests have the highest incidence of prostate cancer, proportionately to their numbers, that is, according to the latest medical evidence. Ergo, if a man gets up very early in the morning, drinks a glass of cheap wine, prior to taking breakfast, chants some Latin phrases for about 30 minutes or so, and sits in a dark room, listening to the secrets of the laity – some of the stories of which must be very spicy, I presume – for an hour or so, then, the odds are in favour of such a person, contracting cancer of the prostate gland. Beware of Catholic priests! It could be catching, you know. Getting back to Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, he is highly unlikely to contract prostate cancer because (a) I have never permitted him to drink cheap wine, and he has never had a glass of wine before breakfast and (b) during his prime, he made good use of – you ... well, you know what. Today, however, the frog is suffering from a loss of confidence in himself. Not that he has not been very successful in his 60-odd years of life, but, after all, he did make one very correct and important decision in his younger days: He married me. Actually, My Dear Grandchild, to be very honest, it was I who proposed marriage to the frog; he never thought of the idea before I suggested it, probably because his mother had not instructed him on the wording of a marriage proposal. It was at the time that I was a nurse in Hongkong and I had mistakenly thought that the frog looked like one of the doctors in the hospital at which I used to work. How I could have associated the frog with doctor, I shall never understand, because the frog’s knowledge of the human body could be written on the back of penny stamp. But things did not turn out too badly when Bo-Bo took over the running of the family’s shipping company. The frog did not, exactly, turn out to be a prince, mind you, but he has never stopped me from shopping for clothes on Saturday afternoons.

Now, the frog has this small problem. How to solve it? I have told him that he must accept that the cycle of life is that the old must die and the young must inherit the earth. It is the nature of things. If this did not occur as nature intended, then, the world would be populated by old crocks who were unable to create anything, never mind trying to indulge in procreation. Then, there would be no more people, roaming this planet of ours. It comes to mind, however, that the Supreme Being, who supposedly made us all, erred, being prone to miscalculations in the formula that was employed in con-cock-ting life-forms: Only men are supposed to become old and feeble and look like frogs; women should have been given the gift of eternal

youth and beauty. Frogs are frogs and one comes to accept them for what they are, but ladies should be attractive, during their entire lives. It is totally unfair that they should have deep wrinkles in their little faces, wrinkles that resemble chickens' feet impressions in the sands of time. That expression, 'The Golden Years', is a lie, you know. Age is not golden; it is horrible! Few people look long at an aged lady, as I told the frog, but an ageing (not old, mind you) man, with the correct stimulus from his wife, can continue to enjoy what will, undoubtedly, become a slightly modified life of wantonness. So, ageing men have it all over on ageing women, I suggested to my frog of a husband. He looked in the mirror on listening to my words of wisdom and, with a flurry of this left hand and that funny smirk on his wrinkled face, pushed back his white hair (that which is left of it, of course) and said: 'O.K., make me some coffee! And, then, get ready!' Men! For what reason did He have to consider 2 sexes for the phylum, homo sapiens? One would have been quite sufficient, in my opinion. No matter how old the male of the species homo sapiens becomes, he still tries to rule the roost, even when he is unable to drive away younger, stronger and more virile competitors for the post. Men are, really, stupid things, don't you think?

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady (without chicken's feet)

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