



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I cleaned up the house, during the Chinese New Year holidays, polishing the silver and doing things that I knew the lazy Filipina maid did not do and, while I was polishing some of my necklaces – I never allow Ruby, the Filipina maid, to touch my jewellery – I noted that, at a cursory glance of myself in the mirror, there was another wrinkle. Gads! What is happening to me? I thought wrinkle time was over, but, no, there was another one. It looks just like a chicken's foot, at the corner of my left eye. That is going to cost Bo-Bo some money when I get Dr Wong Kam Seng to fix that problem. I can't go around with a chicken's foot, invading my perfectly, well-defined facial features. Don't think that I am being egocentric or narcissistic because I do not possess such tendencies – at least, not knowingly – but, to a lady of my position, being married as I am to a member of one of the highest advisory bodies in China, I have to watch my looks. You have noted, I am sure, that the leaders of China all use a certain colour of shoe polish to colour their hair. They, all, look as though the hair on their head had never seen a colour, other than the official, black hue, recommended by the President or Premier or whoever. I have often wondered, however, who manufactures the shoe dye for those people's hair and how much it costs per tin or bottle. Still, that is another matter. Getting back to my looks and the chicken's foot, invading the corner of my left eye, it seems to me that many of the Hongkong socialites must suffer to a greater or lesser extent than I do, but they seem to hide it so well. When I go to a ball, I note how these socialites have perfect make-up, so perfect, in fact, that it is difficult to know that it is make-up: It looks so real, just as though it were their true faces. How they manage this feat, I do not know, but they do it very well and I admire them for that. I think that they must spend many hours at the beauty parlour, prior to a ball, getting things put in place, highlighting and polishing their hair, having applied to their fingernails and toenails all of the necessary polish, and, most important of all, covering up any suggestion of chicken's feet on their lovely faces. For a Hongkong socialite, who is just divorced or is about to change lovers to share her bed, one can imagine how important looks are because, if the socialite intends to remain as a socialite and be invited to balls and charity affairs, she must have tons and tons of dollars in order to pay for her beauty treatments and to purchase the latest fashion accessories from name-brand boutiques.

This brings me to the reason for writing this letter to you, today: What is the real value of these socialites to Hongkong? I suggest that their only contribution is the amount of money that they spend in trying to look younger ... while old man, Age, tears away at the fabric of these ladies' faces and chops away at the muscle tone on their bodies, especially on the upper torso (understand?). There is no way to stop the onslaught of age and, if a lady wants to remember how she looked in years gone by, she can just look at photographs of those days of yore. Many of these socialites, however, have a great deal of knowledge and experience of an eclectic order. Some of them have been trained as doctors, solicitors and accountants, you know, but they have determined that making babies for lovers and husbands is easier than practicing their professions. What a waste of talent! This is such a waste of good womanpower, don't you agree? The Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen (), appoints people to certain positions for reasons known only to him. Not that he has to explain his actions, of course, but it would be nice to know the reason that he appoints a certain man or woman to a certain post, while ladies, such as I, do not get a look-in. I am not suggesting, also, that

I would want to be in a position of power in any Council of the Chief Executive, but I suggest to you that I am more qualified than some of the people that he has appointed of late. Also, I note that some of the males, sitting on certain advisory bodies of the Chief Executive, are there because (a) they have fat bank accounts (b) their fathers have fat bank accounts (c) they have control of certain Hongkong companies (d) they have known the Chief Executive, personally, in the past and they have helped him in some way or another, and/or (e) they are religious people of, perhaps, a similar (or exact) persuasion of the Chief Executive. The point about this aspect of the appointees of the Chief Executive, the chosen ones, if you prefer, is that they should be sitting on these advisory bodies only because of their known intellectual abilities, their experience in a certain field, and their willingness to volunteer their time and effort to assisting Hongkong when called upon so to do. Chicken's feet aside, can they perform and look the part for which they have been selected and are willing to do their bit for us, all? I question this. Really I do. In the United States of America, recommended appointees for certain high offices are vetted by the Senate and the bona fides of prospective appointees are studied, scrupulously. In Hongkong, there is no such consideration. To challenge the appointment of a person to a certain high position is fairly useless because it is well known that all appointments have been approved by Beijing. This is, of course, correct because, after all, Beijing is the seat of Government for Hongkong, isn't it? The Chief Executive may propose, but it is Beijing that, ultimately, will dispose of a situation, one way or another. I understand that the Chief Executive is a devout Catholic and so one may repose trust and faith in that religion and, it follows, in all those who profess to be adherents of the Catholic faith. 'God helps them who help themselves', it was written more than 2,569 years ago.

And, with those words of wisdom, I shall telephone Dr Wong Kam Seng in order to fix an appointment to deal with my chicken's foot lines at the corner of my left eye.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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