

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

*I was approached, recently, by a man, dressed in the traditional yellow robes of a Buddhist monk. He asked me for money and, in exchange, he offered me a piece of tin, painted in yellow and gold. I looked, by accident, at his shoes and saw that they were not, exactly, the shoes that a Buddhist monk would wear. Looking at his shaved head, I saw that there were none of the telltale marks of a monk, who had had joss sticks stuck into his bare head, leaving scar tissue in a regular pattern, which is the sign of a true Buddhist monk, having advanced to a certain high level. I surmised from this intelligence that this 'monk' was a fraud. Congratulating myself on my mental dexterity, I determined to give to this false monk not even a negative response, but, instead, waved him away as though he were a leper. That evening, I told Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, of my deductions with regard to the false monk, suggesting to The Frog that I should write detective novels in the manner of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who penned *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in 1892. 'After all,' I told The Frog, 'who else would be able to know, in a matter of just a few minutes, that the yellow-robed man, who approached me for money, was a false monk. The Frog looked at me and said: 'Everybody in town knows of these crooks! Many of them have been jailed for their illegal actions.' Some people, I determined at this point in the conversation, do not know how to give credit when it is due. So, I left the subject and The Frog ... and quickly and furtively secreted the hand-held, television control device on my person so that The Frog would not be able to watch his favourite television station, that evening. However, I was undeterred and decided to prepare myself for a life of letters. I decided that, in addition to writing detective stories, to be entitled: 'The Adventures of Betty Tung,' I would, also, write my Magnum Opus: 'The Sounds of the Froggyvilles.'*

My first task – because writing comes easy to a person of my intellect – was to try to ascertain what would happen if a false monk met a genuine one on the street. Would there be a violent altercation? Would the false monk quickly scurry away in fear of the genuine monk, dowsing him with petrol and, then, setting the false monk on fire in order to cleanse his soul? What would, most likely, happen? After a great deal of thought, it occurred to me that nothing would happen when the real monk met the false monk. This is because the false monk would claim that the real monk was the false monk – which would be in keeping with the chutzpah of the false monk. I decided that the dialogue between the false monk and the genuine monk would go like this:

False Monk: You are a false monk.

Genuine Monk: No. You are the false monk.

False Monk: I know that you are a false monk because you walk too fast.

Genuine Monk: I know that you are a false monk because you are not wearing correct Monky sandals.

False Monk: There are no correct Monky sandals. Monks do not wear sandals, but cloth slippers, like these. (Pointing to his Chinese-made slippers)

Genuine Monk: If your slippers had been made in a monastery, where is the signature of the abbot?

False Monk: He was too busy to sign the slippers because I had to leave for Hongkong in order to obtain alms for my fellow monks.

Genuine Monk: Monks do not beg for alms. Alms are donated by the faithful.

False Monk: I am not begging. I am giving prayers in exchange for alms.

Genuine Monk: You are not a god. You cannot give prayers away. You cannot exchange your prayers for alms.

False Monk: Now, you have fallen into my trap: You are, really, a false monk because only a false monk would understand the way of commerce. I am the genuine monk because I did not know about commerce and just was inspired to seek alms, using the only medium of exchange that I understood – prayers.

Genuine Monk: On the contrary, My Dear False Monk, it is you who have fallen into my trap, you evil false monk, because I was born a female and determined to devote my life to save mankind. Therefore, I am the only genuine monk, here. While you try to sell pieces of tin in exchange for earthly possessions, calling your pieces of tin, prayers, I pray for your soul. We, genuine monks, hate the sins of sinners, but love the sinners, all of the time. You will be judged and punished for your evil ways while I shall be blessed for having nothing and wanting nothing but trying to save man from his covetous ways. And, make no mistake: I shall pray for you, too.

Clever. Don't you think? This is as good as, or even better than, the logic of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I shall send you more of my material as I finish it. Any ideas about a publisher?

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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