

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*We have so much and I am certain that we do not appreciate all that we are lucky enough to have. We have money, sufficient to buy just about whatever we want (when our spouses are not watching us, that is); we have a plentiful supply of food and our only constraint is that, if we eat too much, we get too fat (and that our spouses will, definitely, not appreciate); we have quality housing to keep us cool in the hot summer months and, during the short winter months, we have reverse-cycle, air-conditioning units to keep us warm; we have reasonably good schools to send our children for their education so that, when they mature, they are well able to select the profession or trade in which they want to specialise; we have a government which, most of the time, does a reasonable job, keeping the roads in good order, the sewage system, operating correctly, the police force, enforcing the law, and there is some semblance of accountability; and, we have fairly good, free medical facilities which is available to all. I am not suggesting that the above is all for which we should be appreciative, but it is a good start on the road of gratitude. There are countries in the world, however, where men, women and children are dying for the lack of glass of water or a bowl of rice. I watch television and am moved by the plight of the many people of Somalia where, on a daily basis, mothers are burying their infant children because they have been unable to feed them or find fresh potable water for them. Hundreds of other children are made orphans, their parents, having died due to their inability to obtain sustenance on the month's trek from their former homes to a place of safety where, they had been led to believe, they could find some food and fresh drinking water. How lucky we are and how unlucky are these natives of Somalia. A sheer accident of birth has separated us from them.*

*While these poor unfortunates die in their thousands for the lack of food and clean drinking water, in Europe and North America, there are mountains of food of all sorts – fresh vegetables, rice, wheat, fruit, beef, pork, chickens, eggs, and so on and so on. In Canada, at the end of the summer season, carrots and all sorts of root vegetables may be purchased for pennies, not dollars. Pork, at certain times of the year in Toronto, may be purchased at huge discounts to the prices, demanded earlier in the year. Chickens, ducks, and other domesticated table birds are so plentiful that farmers prefer to sell their birds, late in the season at any reasonable price, because the cost of feeding the birds, during the long and arduous winter months when temperatures can drop to below minus 30 degrees Celsius, is prohibitive. In California, as another example of the plentiful amounts of food that are there for the taking, the land is awash with all kinds of fruits: The apples, fall from the trees when they are ripe and many are just left to rot on the ground; vegetables, not harvested, are given to the chickens to eat; eggs, by the ton, are sold all over the world, so plentiful are they; wild rabbits abound and are shot for sport instead of for food and their carcasses are left to decay where they are killed. Californians live in the land of plenty and, for many Somalis, they cannot even imagine such a place, called California. I could go on and on, telling you of the 'lakes' of milk of the European Union, of the butter and cheese 'mountains' of the United Kingdom, of the thousands of tons of rice and other grains that are stored in silos in Thailand, in China, in the Philippines and in many other countries of Asia. Yet, in Somalia, people are starving for the lack of a bowl of rice or a glass of clean drinking water.*

*What is wrong with this world in which we live? Cannot those who have plenty share some of their gifts with those who suffer a paucity of life-giving food and water? Has our race graduated from being man-the-hunter to the level of being unable to understand that, as the most-intelligent of all animal life on this planet, there is a duty of each and every one of us not just to stuff food into our stomachs, but to help those who are in need of assistance. Somalia is only one area of the world in which the people need help. There*

*are many other places in this world of ours where the native peoples are in dire need of assistance. Starvation is unnecessary on the planet earth with its human population of about 8 billion people, as far as I can see. Yet, people are starving on a daily basis. History will record how man, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, suffered chronic, degenerative myopia.*

*It appears to me, also, that man prefers to kill his own kind in preference to loving his fellow Homo sapiens. He spends trillions of dollars, pounds, shekels, euros, or whatever is the current medium of exchange, on inventing and perfecting machines of war, enabling him to kill more efficiently and in larger and larger numbers. But he neglects to comprehend, except when confronted with his own safety or well-being or the well-being of the people that he deigns to say that he loves, that he has a duty to serve in the interests of every living being on earth.*

*Some years ago, I wrote this little poem, My Dear Grandchild, tell me what you think of it. It is called:*

**The Robin And The Rabbit**

She lay silent and still on her back,  
Legs outstretched, as though she had expired.  
The curious rabbit, passing by, wondered  
Why a little robin would stay so fixed,  
With legs in such a strange direction,  
Almost as though she had given up all hope,  
As though, from this life, she had retired.

‘Oh, no! No, no, no!’ The little robin exclaimed.  
‘I’m not giving up so easily. Definitely not!  
‘I’ve been told that the sky will fall down,  
‘And so I’m lying here, waiting, in the hope  
‘That I can help to hold it up.’  
With that, the little robin braced herself,  
By using her wings as a type of prop.

‘That’s silly!’ the furry rabbit said.  
‘What earthly use are you? Such unmitigated gall!’  
‘I know I’m not so strong,’ the robin said, remorsefully,  
‘But we, all, must try to do our bit.’  
‘This is just not plausible!’ the rabbit said, rudely,  
‘Your efforts will be futile in the end, surely,  
‘That is, if the sky should really come to fall.’

The little robin turned her head, pensively,  
And, looking straight into the eyes of the Leporidae,  
Maintaining her determined, fighting stance, of course,  
Asked: ‘What is the alternative, then?’  
‘We can’t just let the sky cave in  
‘And let that be the end to that,  
‘We must all try to do our bit. Now, what do you say?’

The rabbit felt ashamed at having mocked, so harshly,  
His little friend whose spindly legs still pointed to the sky.  
‘I think you may be right,’ he said at last.  
‘We all must help in times of need.’  
The robin smiled: ‘Why don’t you join me, then,  
‘Because six legs are always better than two?’  
And so the rabbit decided he, too, would try.

The crocus, pushing through the snow,  
Was refreshed to meet the warming sun.  
‘It’s such a lovely day!’ the flower thought,  
‘It’s good to be alive, to breath the air,  
‘To note God’s work as the seasons change,  
‘There’s so much love in me these days!’

And, then, she smelt the air and said: *'This is really fun!'*

She puzzled at the lifeless forms  
Of the robin and the rabbit, lying in a row.  
*'Poor little fools!'* the crocus said to a passing fly.  
*'They thought their puny efforts would help  
To keep the sky from falling down,  
'And now they're both dead, and gone, and forgotten,  
'And their bones are casting funny shadows in the snow.'*

The fly was not a very clever chap,  
But wondered why the flower, so meanly expressed  
Such sentiments about two lives, now gone,  
Two lives that had died for others, never seen.  
*'You may be right,'* he said, without stopping long.  
*'But they died for something which they thought  
'Was really worth their while. I feel very impressed.'*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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