

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Every week, I go to have a 2-hour facial. Every week, I exercise for at least 30 minutes, 3 times in 7 days. Every week, I eat sparingly, except for a handful of my favourite dishes, such as kau yuk (), Peking duck (), cha siu chow fan (), cha siu bao (), and, of course, vanilla ice cream. And, once per month, I go to have my hair highlighted by Sebastian, my stylist. So you understand, I do live a healthy life. But, still, the signs of aging are showing and I cannot understand the reason for this. I talked to some of my bridge friends about the situation and they suggested that I go to talk to a Chinese herbalist. Well, about \$HK50,000 later, there they were again: The signs of ageing. Life can be very difficult when you go to a party and people are able to see the signs of chicken's feet on one's face, especially at the corners of one's eyes. Of course, I thought of Botox treatments, but I have been told that, after having the treatment, if one laughs too much, one's face could crack or, worse still, the flesh on one's cheeks could sag to one's neck. Anyway, with Botox, each treatment only lasts for about 6 months and, after that time, one is forced to go for a second treatment so that, after a few years, the treatments become required, bi-annual cosmetic procedure. So, if I am travelling on a cruise ship, away from Hongkong for a year or so, my secret would be out in the open: I would be known as a Botox girl. What is the use of that? But I found what I think is the solution to this horrible problem and I am passing it on to you. This is how I discovered the solution.

As usual, feeling very down in the mouth, I cornered Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, and asked for his opinion. Now, The Frog, as his nickname suggests, looks very much like the amphibians of the Order of Anura, but he is too far gone to consider treatments for his sagging flesh, especially his pendulous jowls. 'Look, Betty, age is impartial: It attacks everybody. Get used to it!' he said to me. He, then, went back to watching his favourite television programme of half-naked, nubile wenches, swimming in the sea and, then, sunbathing on the sand. I grabbed the hand-held, television control from his pudgy little hand and said: 'Look at me! I am your wife.' Then, I was furious because he looked up at me as if to state: 'Yes, unfortunately, I know that.' 'We are going to New Zealand!' I yelled out in my most-demanding voice. 'I shall arrange the airline tickets, tomorrow. Pack your bags for a 10-hour journey on Air New Zealand. I shall not take "No" for an answer.' The Frog looked forlorn – because he was missing a very suggestive part of his favourite television programme, complete with nubile wenches in passionate embraces. He said: 'Why do you want to go to New Zealand? It is a country of about 50 million sheep with only 4 million people in a land mass of about 268 square kilometers. Of all the countries in the world, for what reason would you want to visit New Zealand? You can't even obtain a good Chinese meal there! It is a country of handymen and handywomen, many of whom cannot even write their own names.' I, then, sweetly explained that my Chinese herbalist told me that, if all else failed, New Zealand was the only country in the world where one could back the clock of ageing. 'Back the clock?' The Frog laughed, hysterically. 'What do you mean?' 'You can reverse the signs of ageing by travelling to New Zealand, eating the fresh New Zealand shell fish, drinking the sparkling waters of Antipodes, and basking in the Southern Sun.' Suddenly, The Frog was frenetic, saying that it was all rubbish. 'Your Chinese herbalist is mad!' he blurted out. 'There is no magic water that can reverse the ageing process. You silly ninny!'

It was, at this point, that I had The Frog right where I wanted him. ‘The word, “Antipodes”, for your information, means, literally, those who live on the opposite side of the earth. The people, who live in New Zealand, have among the longest life spans on this earth, living, on average, up to the age of 83 years. The reason that the people of New Zealand are so few, relative to the land mass of the country, is because they do not like to copulate very much, thus, the birth rate is only about 14 births per 1,000 people, with the mortality rate, being about one half of the birth rate. Hence, the population of the country has taken about 50 years to double from 2 million. These statistics should encourage you to come with me to New Zealand because you are certain not to be worn out by too much horizontal exercises. Understand what I mean?’ The Frog just looked at me in amazement and asked: ‘How do you know all of these statistics? What is your source of this material?’ ‘It is well known to any traveller to New Zealand,’ I answered coyly. ‘Even the pilots of Air New Zealand announce, just before landing at Auckland Airport: “Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We shall be landing at Auckland Airport in about 40 minutes’ time. We hope that you have enjoyed your journey with us on Air New Zealand, our national carrier. The time in Auckland is, now, 9:15 a.m., which is about 13 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Please, therefore, reset your watches back by exactly 30 years and 13 hours. Thank you for travelling on Air New Zealand. We hope that your holiday will be rewarding”.’

All I can tell you, My Dear Grandchild, is that, in the 2 weeks that we spent in Auckland, I got a terrible windburn on my face and I am awaiting the healing process to see how many years I have recovered. I shall tell you about my rejuvenation in another letter. But one thing that I can share with you: If you go to New Zealand with your husband, make certain to feed him lot of shell fish. They, really, do the job: Understand?

Love you.

Chief Lady

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