

# The **JACK YAN** persuader



*Asians are not a homogeneous bunch, despite what the Census tells you*

**A**FTER RETURNING from a romantic holiday in Champagne (see *Lucire's* next issue), I became a champagne snob. The local plonk was not good enough, after drinking six glasses a day and only then beginning to feel slightly squiffy.

But it is summer Down Under, and that means a lot more socializing in the air. Hence, in November, I ventured to several dos around Wellington, hosted by two of our clients. Penny Barnett of Designer Clothing Gallery hosted an event for CatWalk Trust, and Catriona Williams, the founder of the charity, drove down to be guest of honour. (Penny served French bubbly, just not from Marne.) Irene Michael from Im, the Australasian lingerie retailer, flew over from Australia to host a VIP evening.

What ties them together was their Greek heritage, something that I respect more than readers can imagine. Not long after arriving in New Zealand, my parents rented our place from a Romanian-Greek family in Wellington, and everyone on our side of the street—neighbours, other tenants—was Greek. Across the road, everyone seemed to be Māori, except an Indian family ran the dairy.

I saw similarities between the Chinese and Greek cultures, notably how customs from the old country need to be exaggerated in our new home, even if they had been abandoned since we left. I saw first-hand the pomp and ceremony of a Greek wedding: Nia Vardalos and her *Big Fat Greek Wedding* showed me nothing new. And when I visit Sweden, Panos, the Greek-born designer behind the Panos Emporio label, tells me I am the most Greek man he knows in the country.

In fact, some of Panos's English-language

labels were "Greekkified" by yours truly when the original English translation lacked the passion that only a southern European would understand.

But I am neither Greek nor European, even if I feel at home on the Continent, speaking French and attempting Swedish. I get by in Germany. After 30 years, I naturally feel at home in New Zealand. On this trip, I spent six hours in Hong Kong, my home town, and noticed that I don't even sound the same as the locals. (If you compare the way I talk to actors in 1970s' and 1980s' films, I am spot on. Language has evolved in Hong Kong, and I was not part of the change.)

So where the heck do I belong? It is the dilemma of the immigrant—not quite fitting into one's birthplace, and everywhere we try to plant our roots is technically foreign soil.

It doesn't help that my adopted home, right here in New Zealand, has released statistics based on the Census about how 'Asians' are the fastest-growing group in New Zealand. When I filled in the Census, I did not recall any box saying 'Asian'. And what the heck does Asian mean? Kazakhs are Asian, despite what Borat tells us; Pakistanis are Asian, Japanese are Asian. Asians make up more than 50 per cent of the planet's population, so the government needs to be a lot more specific. The nightly news on the telly interviewed Pansy Wong MP, the Chinese politician, but seemed to have bypassed Ashraf Choudhary MP. Why? He is 'Asian', after all.

I do not subscribe to the view that there is any homogeneous group called 'Asian'. If we in Aotearoa are quite happy to talk about Greeks, French and Swedes, and even the English, Irish, Scots and Welsh get separated, then it is a mistake to presume 3.7 billion people can be so neatly categorized.

Or, if the government wishes to put us 'Asians' all in one bunch, then the treatment should extend to every single race. Then, we might celebrate our differences ourselves, rather than be divided by false constructs that serve political agenda.

# The **JENNIFER LAWSON** jet-setter

*The life and thoughts of Countess, as she travels the globe*

**I** JUST GOT BACK from a massive weekend of hard-time clubbing at Fizz (*the* society place to be in NYC) with friends. I must say I am proud of the slight grogginess I feel this morning, evidence that I had a thoroughly good time. The alcohol intake was minimal, and I didn't find the One, but I did have a wonderful time, simply because I didn't care. I didn't care if my eyes didn't lock magnetically with some mysterious good-looking stranger who would take me sailing in his yacht in the south of France, I just wanted to have fun my own way. And you know the loveliest thing is that once I forgot about the worrying

and the stressing of 'I hope I get noticed tonight,' I did get noticed. Confidence is so sexy.

What I discovered was that no one can validate your self-worth, only you can. Once you claim your own confidence, your own beauty, that's when people notice you, respect you and gather around you: wanting to bask in your own beautiful light.

### Love's pursuit

Confession: I love to flirt. Find me a worthy target (e.g. an eligible, handsome gentleman) and I will flirt up a storm.

If we connect, it becomes my full-time campaign to win him over and make him my next flirt conquest. I remember chasing after a certain European gent once. I fell

for him the moment the party hostess introduced him to me by his title.

Enchanted by this aristocratic male, I was determined to make him mine. I staked out Claridge's in hopes of catching sight of his silver Bentley pulling up.

So that I could casually stroll by him in my sexy Valentino gown—the rose chiffon one. If skilfully engineered, it was sure to promptly cause him to leap from his car and declare his undying love for me.

Our wedding was all but planned ... in my head. But, alas, my scheme never came to pass. Due to one oversight: his possessive, leggy, and manipulative ex-girlfriend Lena who happened to fly in from St Tropez "to drop by" London that afternoon.

Just as I had sighted his car and was ready to launch my charm attack, Gucci-heeled, Lena stepped out, saw me and quickly ordered the driver to drive on. I didn't even get a glimpse of him. Causing me to rethink my whole strategy.

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