

*Mama & Laoba's*  
*Love Letters*

**Sydney ~ Singapore**

**17 May - 21 June 2003**

Halo Mama!

Happy Birthday! So how come I decide to compile laoba and your e-mails leh? Well, firstly have to save money, can't afford extravagant presents, hee hee, but more importantly I always believe if possible, presents should be personal and preferably home-made. As for this idea, I have been thinking of doing it for a while, and finally seeing it's your birthday, I seized upon the opportunity to get off my butt to do something about it, also I should get it done before the computer crash and I lose all these e-mails, or something to that effect. Choi choi choi!

But seriously, I've personally always enjoyed reading old diaries, journals or yes, even e-mails and cards, because often they jolt my memory of some meaningful events that have taken place in the past, which I may have completely forgotten about. Some of these old memories may be happy or funny, some may be more sombre and serious, but no matter the mood, they often present with some sort of inspiration or wisdom for the present. And with me, I often find that they make me smile. Also sometimes when we look back at events in hindsight, we often gain a different perspective from that which we had in the past. So what we didn't understand then may make total sense now.

Also in writing, I find that we lend a voice to a part of us that may not always be there in day-to-day living. For example, in his writing, I have come to know of a more light-hearted, jovial and even comical side to laoba, who growing up, I've always thought to be stern and serious. It's like "oh my goodness, my father is a real person like me, can also be a bit xiao sometimes!" It's like I get to know both of you better through your writing. Writing also often lets us convey feelings, which we may be too shy to express in "real life".

I especially like this series of e-mails between you and laoba, because it is such a genuine and intimate portrayal of the relationship, love, respect and understanding that the two of you share for each other. While most of its contents are just about the little ordinary things that you do from day to day, it is exactly these minute details that so succinctly captures this moment in your lives. And hey, on a grander scale, you may not think so, but if a historian was to find these e-mails say 100 years from now, they would also learn much about what's happening in the world at large during this period of time... for example when you or laoba mention about SARS or "terrorist" activities at Sydney airport, not to mention tons of information on people's way of life in the year 2003 – this is a whole treasure trove in so many different ways if you'd ask me.

And of course, once again, as your daughter, it just blows my mind how absolutely diligent both of you are in writing to each other! Almost every day! Just like two fresh teenagers in love for the first time. Geez even William and I can't be bothered to write to each other that much when we are apart. To think that my parents are even more romantic than us... we've got much to learn. That's why I called them your *Love Letters* because that's exactly what they are!

So you see, for all these reasons and more, I thought compiling these e-mails is absolutely necessary. I hope you enjoy reading them again with laoba, as much as I have enjoyed piecing them together. Love, Tiff.

On a lighter note...

Some things I've learnt from reading *Mama & Laoba's Love Letters*:

- Laoba is more creative with Subject titles, mama hits the "Reply" button.
- A cat takes several days to register that his owner is on holidays... that's when the depression sinks in.
- A man on holidays (without his wife) can shop more than a woman!
- Toto and 4-D are inseparable from our lives.
- You can't microwave a "lor mai kai"... not the way that laoba does it anyway.
- When mum's away, laoba goes to bed hungry (no one to prepare his supper).
- Laoba is not impressed with the first American Idol winner.
- Wollongong can also be spelt Woolloongoong (mama) or Woolongon (laoba).
- Mama uses blackmail (no more prawns!) to get her way with computer games.
- Mama is under the illusion that I bully William... where got?!?
- Sometimes not paying for dinner can make you miss on striking the lottery!
- Mama never tires at trying to get laoba to eat healthily while she's away.
- Herb garlic/pepper does wonders for grilled chicken or salmon.
- According to mama, "how lian" Hokkien blood runs through me.
- At the end of the day, laoba watches vcds to relax.
- At the end of the day, mama watches videos to relax (only cause she can't get her hands on vcds here).
- My parents have got a REALLY special Thai clock in their bedroom.
- Laoba tries to protect mama by warning her "do not go out by yourself as it is not Singapore".
- I must go to the Japanese buffet at Parkview Hotel during my next trip home... the raw fish is so fresh that even laoba doesn't get a stomache!
- Absence can prompt one to move forward technologically – laoba finally figures out how to send e-card to mama.
- Laoba believes in giving people second chances.
- Boys are not interested in e-mailing their mothers... very sad.
- Mama believes that when the kids cook, she becomes "the guinea pig"!
- Although according to laoba, Seannie is "mama's (your) son", nonetheless this son did not forget his father's birthday. (So I'm still wondering... what do a father and son talk about when they are alone, with no woman there to disrupt the silence?)
- Sean plays football as part of his work.
- When mama's away, laoba drives around aimlessly.
- Only "family members" photos make it to the wall.
- If ever there's spare baggage space, fill it with navel oranges for laoba.
- The other side of the kitchen toilet wall does not belong to the neighbour!

And last but not least... A reward for coming home from a long holiday is yet another holiday!

Can't remember what I am referring to? Simply read on...