

# Memoirs of My Mother

by Vicki Tan

My mother asked me what the earliest memory I had of her was. I said I remembered her walking me down the stairs. I was holding her hand and taking one step at a time. Years later, it would be me helping her.

My mother had given birth to me at the age of thirty-five. I was her birthday, wedding anniversary and Christmas present, and “the baby [she] so longingly wanted”. She commented that I “only came out on [her] tenth anniversary”. I was also supposed to be born a few days earlier but I would not come out of her womb. As a result, she had to wait for me and receive an injection to expel me. The night before I was born, she was in the hospital and she was placed on a bed in the operating theatre. By right, she was supposed to be put in the ward and then be transferred over to the operating bed in the morning. However, the nurses had wanted to have one less job. So the entire night, she was feeling uncomfortable as she could not turn her body on such a narrow bed...

The most recent time I saw my mother was when she flew down from Singapore to Australia in early December to celebrate my birthday. (Twenty years ago, she was heavily pregnant with me. When we talked about the old photos that were taken, she said she was at her prettiest moment because she was glowing with happiness.) On the first day of her arrival in the airport and an almost three-hour drive to the town I was in, we went to a restaurant of my choice to have lunch. After which, she paid the bill and I held onto her as we walked down the staircase.

A few days after her departure from Australia, I was going to get my learner’s license so that I could start taking official practical driving lessons on the road. I text messaged my mother to inform her that I would be taking my theory test and that I would be using the family credit card to pay. Her reply was, “Sure, my love.”

Before I started my current college degree course in New South Wales, I was in boarding school in Western Australia. We had been advised to get my possessions labeled, so my mother used a marker pen to write my name on all my things. She did an amazing task.

When I took over, I realized that I did not do a very good job, as the ink had gone through my clothes to the other side. I told my mother about this, and she said she had labeled my things “with love”.

Prior to studying abroad, I was educated in Singapore, and every morning, my mother would wake up earlier to drive me to school. Some people insisted that she could make me take the bus, but she told them that she preferred to drive me as she enjoyed spending those moments in the car with me.

Years ago, when we were traveling overseas, especially in places that were more dangerous for children, my mother kept a closer eye on me and advised me to be more careful. I remembered exactly what she said: “I would lose my mind if I lose you.”

Once when we were in the lift, my mother settled a dispute that had occurred between two other mothers. One had shut the elevator doors even though there were people rushing to it because she was in a “hurry”, and the other told her off for being rude. The two women argued over that matter until the first woman evacuated the lift with her children. Raising her voice, the second woman told her to come “earlier” next time. My mother responded by telling the second woman to calm down. When the second woman disembarked the lift with her children, she told my mother to have a nice day. Children learn from their parents so it is important that adults set good examples for their kids.

When I was much younger, I loved drinking from the milk bottle. (I found that the milk was more mouth-watering when I drank it from a bottle than a cup.) I was able to mix the water with the milk powder myself, but it always tasted better when my mother did it. One night, I was hungry for milk, and I asked my mother to make it for me. However, she said no. (She later claimed that I had just drunk milk or I was drinking too much milk.) So I threw a tantrum. I told her, “I don’t love you anymore!” Her reply was, if I recall correctly, “That’s okay. Even if you don’t love me, I will always love you.” That sentence touched my heart and I dissolved into uncontrollable tears.

A few days before Christmas as of this year, I flew



back home to Singapore from Brisbane. Apart from spending more time with my family, I also decided to tidy up my room. As I was looking through my stack of cards that people had written to me, I found one that was given to me by my mother on my thirteenth birthday. I quote from the front cover: “Even before they told me, “It’s a girl,” I already loved you...” It was one of the best cards I ever received and I have not forgotten it.

A mother’s love is something that cannot be replaced. My mother has done a lot for me, and I cannot imagine a step-parent doing the same thing. My mother said she hoped I would also enjoy motherhood, as it is very fulfilling, more fulfilling than having a career that earns you a lot of money.

I hope my story will make a difference by letting you know how important parental love and guidance are. They are essential elements in life that cannot be substituted with other things.

## Biography of Vicki

Vicki is a Filmmaking student who is pursuing a writing career. She aspires to become a novelist and a screenwriter. Her favourite genres include thriller, horror, crime, drama, fiction and literature, autobiography and biography. Apart from producing feature films, she would also like to make documentaries. She hopes her stories and films would make a difference.

## Biography of Vicki’s Mother, Vivienne

Vivienne has successfully balanced a career in the shopping centre industry and a happy family with her surgeon husband, Walter. They have two daughters, Vanessa and Vicki. Vivienne is currently the President of Far East Retail Consultancy, a wholly owned company of Far East Organization, a real estate company with interests in Singapore, Hong Kong and China.