

So, in the absence of anything else to do, I have continued to think more and more about myself. And see, I normally call myself an anxious person, but I also think of myself as a fearful person. For the longest time, I didn't think there was much of a difference. Like anxiety and fear just seemed to be... Well, it was a sisters not twins sort of situation. They might not be identical, but they clearly come from the same family, and the resemblance is so apparent that at some point, they're interchangeable in conversation. But that's not right. And even twins are their own person.

I'm an anxious person. I feel uneasy in my own skin. I don't want things to come undone, but I'm not afraid of anything specific or not specific. I'm not running from my problems in any way. I might think there's a lot of them, and I'm able to sit with them. On the other hand, my mother is a fearful person. She runs from her problems, figuratively or otherwise.

Like right now, it is literal and remains such. I don't know when she's coming back. I kept thinking it was going to be right away but far from it, it turns out. She's not even in the province right now; she went back to Manila. And she says she's coming back here eventually as opposed to catching a flight to the US. But the fact that 'flying back to the US right now' even came up in conversation makes me think that's how things are going to end up. Then again, she knows I need her help to go home. Or that's what she's going to tell herself.

And no, this is not me leading into a claim of miraculous healing or anything like that, though I recognize how this conversation has gone. For once, though, I just feel like I can tackle this myself if an issue does come up. It's more a confidence thing than anything else. It's me feeling comfortable in my skin for the first time since... ever. It's

me deciding that I'm not going to apologize for the fact of my existence and taking what is rightfully mine or owed to me. And that's a weird feeling, sure, but I--I can run with it.

As for Mom, I'm not so sure, and this isn't to criticize her as a parent. Or that's not explicitly what I mean. It's just that Mom's problem is different than mine. Mom is more fearful than she is anxious. And that is a lot harder to deal with. Because when you're afraid, the impulse is to run or to disengage in some way. Surrendering is an option, and that's what she usually does. She just calls it being agreeable or accommodating or something like that. Yeah, I'm saying that making peace and surrendering are sometimes the same thing. Controversial, I know. It's about fairness more than anything. And in the absence of that, yeah, making peace and surrendering are the same thing.

But maybe, my saying that makes you think that she overcorrected and stacked the deck in my favor to the detriment of literally everybody else? Like what happened with that college admissions scandal. It was scummy, sure, but you could half-understand the logic of some of the parents. The ones who thought their kid would genuinely suffer if not given every possible advantage their money could buy rather than just doing it for the prestige. It wasn't right to do, either way, but you can see how they got to where they did, logic-wise. They love their kid, they have skewed standards for what makes a good life is or what it takes to get there, and they have the means to act on their skewed perspectives, more so than other parents would. In those cases, the tale is more about inequality, the way it promotes itself, and the emotional commitments that fuel it rather than the rich wanting to look better than anyone else even when they really aren't.

Like seriously, were you following some of those cases? It's probably mean to say that those students had absolutely nothing going for them besides their parents' money, but all the same, that thought came up multiple times while I was watching the coverage. Not everyone was like that, granted. There were some who had their own interests and talents that just weren't allowed to pursue them. But all of them, all of those kids, had a story, and some were more palatable than others.

And I lost the plot, sorry. What I mean is, that's not the sort of thing Mom did. I doubt she would have gone that far for me even if we did have the money. She's kind of... *(Sigh)* Well, she's on the opposite end of things. She was surprisingly supportive of me pulling out of my first university instead of fighting the administration to hold my place like most parents would have done, money or not. And that might have made them give pause, you know? Maybe it wouldn't have made a difference, and I still would have been pressured to leave, but the administration would have had to think about it if my parents actually cared. But to Mom, it made sense for me to transfer. It was just 'easier that way', is how she put it. And I don't mean physically easier on me. It was 'not demanding that they change everything just for me.' It was a 'reasonable and considerate action' to everyone else.

And I'm sure that makes my mom ableist in some way. I'm sure that's what most people would call it. But I don't see it that way. I see a woman who left home when she was younger than I am now. She left her entire country to work abroad and has hardly been back since. And all the while, she had very few people in her corner, no support network, no advocate in navigating an unfamiliar environment. She was all alone, and that probably changed her in some ways.

I'm sure that taught her not to fight, for any reason. After all, very few fights can be won by yourself, and no one was there to back her up. I'm sure she thought I was in the same circumstance. My university was also far from home. Not as far but at some point, it's far enough, no need to add more miles. I mean, I want to think she saw everything she lived through as my potential future and made a terrible decision because she thought in doing so I would avoid pain. She thought to swerve when plowing through was the best thing for me. And if that metaphor is insensitive to me as a victim of a hit and run, I apologize to myself. Half-heartedly.

But it's easy to know the right thing to do in hindsight. It's easy to know what your parents should have done. But it's not easy to risk your kid's wellbeing nor is it easy to admit that you made mistakes, any number of mistakes, when it came to raising them. I have a theory that this is why mom-shaming is such a common thing online. It's a way for the shamer to get validation at the expense of the shamed because the need to believe that you did everything perfectly is so visceral.

My accident was an accident I did not cause. And I think that's why my mom could accept it so easily, so saintly like the people at church said. It was because it wasn't really about me. It wasn't a sacrifice to her... It--It didn't mean that much. Or it didn't mean that specific thing. It wasn't about her choices. This is. This disregard for what she thought was right ], what I showed when I decided to go, that proved that I didn't trust her like she thought I did, but that's only the beginning, and soon, we'll have to deal with the rest of it, right? *(Sigh)* I'm not looking forward to that. No kid enjoys breaking their mother's heart. I--I just don't see a way around it right now.

*(Pause. Music fades in)*

The Mountain's Heart is a production of Hugot Podcasting. And this end song comes from the Sounds like an Earful music supply. See you in two weeks.