

So yeah, it happened. I hate it, but it happened. I feel absolutely terrible right now. It's not that the words of encouragement you sent me wouldn't have helped; it's that the time difference is unforgiving. And to an extent, so is my mother. Or at least, she won't verbalize when she does forgive you. My mom is the sort of mom that wants to plow through her mistakes and just get to the other side, but we could never do that here because there's no going back with something like this. Or maybe there was, but if I default to capitulation every time we run into problems nothing is going to change. And this needs to change.

Because I'm not going to change my mind about moving out. But we've had this conversation before, and it went about as well as the going to Mount Makiling conversation did. Before, though, I would back down again because I really didn't think I could go through with it. It was just a nice idea. A fantasy. And it sucks being essentially punished for that, but you know, it was what it was, which was a bad situation we both accepted as normal.

And.... well, here's my reasoning for accepting it as normal. Fear, not inherited fear but my own fear. And not even about me. I don't know what she's going to do now. With her life. She gave up so much of it to be my parent before I had the accident, so much that my time at that first university was hard on her. She told me as much. And then I got injured and what little of a life she had scraped together had to be given up again. She always calls me her life, and factually speaking, that's accurate.

I've always had this nagging suspicion that my mom was one of those women who was raised to internalize this belief that all they can aspire to is having successful

children whose households they can someday manage. I can't fully explain why I think that. But the context helps.

My grandparents couldn't give my mom and her siblings a stellar education; they've just had to make it work. But ideally, that generation would give more to the next. So... successful children. And managing a household is an act of love and service in this culture. It could also include telling a maid what needs to be cleaned if your kids can afford to have one. Then there's the grandchildren element of it, and well, I... I... I don't think about that. I know adoption is a thing, but it's not a thing I might be approved for, for the same that biological children might not be a thing, so you know, there's that.

And then there's the thing that isn't a suspicion but is probably fact. I know my mom can't get the image of me in the hospital out of her head. Either after the accident or when I had really bad pneumonia as a kid. And I'm sure she blames herself for that one. How could she not? It's just what people do sometimes. They blame themselves for things that aren't their fault because it means they have a sense of control.

I get it. I understand where she's coming from. I just feel like she shoved all this fear and anxiety onto me instead of working through it herself, you know? Maybe you don't know. I don't know myself half the time. But the way I see it: no kid wants to disappoint their parents, and there's a part of us that genuinely fears those unspoken repercussions, if we were to, not that we fully know why we're afraid of that.

I feel like I somewhat know why. Because when my mom gets frustrated she says things like, 'I'm sick of this life' or 'I could... um...' (*Lip smack*) Yeah, and I know she doesn't mean it. It's the sort of thing that just doesn't translate well into English or in

her tongue more abstractly. But I shouldn't be making excuses for her. She's an adult. She's supposed to be better than that.

She's supposed to be better in a lot of ways. I'm not mad about that. I'm just very disappointed. I'm disappointed that I have to be the one to break these shackles. That's what's keeping me from living my life. Not my injury. Not the wider world. But her reaction to all of it.

I'm not saying it's easy. I'm just saying it's what has to be done.

That's what I told her. This is what has to be done. I didn't go into a litany of my many complaints or anything like that. I just said, I need to do what I'm going to do. And that I wish she could accept that rather than trapping me in her fears.

We were talking in this very room. In hushed voices which just sounds so much angrier when she does it. And she kind of threw it in my face that I was just like her father. I was charging into things without thinking what the cost was going to be and hiding behind old fairytales to do it.

I know she said 'cost,' but I think she meant damage. She was trying to say it in English so potential linguistic slip. And I also think she's stood at the rumble of all that destruction he directly or indirectly caused. I hate that for her. But I can't let that affect me.

It was something... Well, okay, let's say for the sake of your worry that it wasn't something Maria Makiling said to me but the content of so many legends surrounding her. Visitors to her mountain were welcome to eat of her fields and from other plants, but they could only have what they needed. They couldn't take any off of the mountain with them. And if they tried, they would be punished for that. Not overly maliciously.

Sometimes they were just left wandering on the mountain until they surrendered their spoiled goods.

And so... And so, I'm going to live by that. My family may have of me what they genuinely need: like my love and respect, but I'm not going to light myself on fire to keep them warm. If that means that they... Or my mom has to be lost for a while, they will find their way in time. When they stop this fruitless pursuit and correct their path. No pun intended

And that's not cruel, right? It's just... practical and necessary.

(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. And hey, just a head's up, the end of this story is very, very close.