

Genuine question, even though I know it's not going to sound like it because...
(inhale) Well, context. But does anyone really understand their parents? I've heard people say that you don't really understand them until you've had kids of your own, but even then, do you really understand your parents? Becoming your parent yourself probably helps you understand the fears, concerns, and love that your parents had for you because those things are innate to the role. But ultimately, that's only part of the picture. Could you ever really understand the choices your parents have made? Could you ever really understand who they have become?

But I guess I'm asking that good old existential question about how much of the world around you makes you who you are, in oh so many words. Parents can't or really shouldn't recreate their entire childhood for their children. Keep the good part, definitely, but chuck out the bad. That's what you would hope they'd do.

I almost said "yeet" right there. Not sure if you would know what that means, but that word just feels cathartic when its leaving your mouth. Yeet the bad parts of your childhood out the window of your new home, you know? Just yeet them right out.

Okay weird word thing aside, that question feels relevant now. So... *(Sigh)* I need to explain the 'blessings' thing I mentioned in my last recording. I don't know what it's called exactly, but I hear my cousins say "Mano po" when they do it. Basically, you bow down towards specifically the hand of, like, your grandparent or older relative otherwise unspecified--sometimes parent when you've, well, pulled a stunt of some kind--and press your forehead against the back of their palm. I went in to do that with my mom before we left to be respectful, and of course, she's still mad. Disappointed-mad.
(Pause) That doesn't portmanteau easily, does it? Not like angry and hungry. Anyway,

Mom's mad that everything didn't go her way, but it was this sort of a recognition of her efforts not panning out. Like when you study for a test and still fail it. You earnestly did your best, but whoopsie doodles, you've got nothing to show for it.

When I first had my accident and was starting to recover but not perfectly recover, I think she felt that way. But it was easy to cope that, from my perspective, because clearly Mom wasn't mad at me. She was mad at the general universe including and especially the driver that hit me. It was so easy for her to shift the blame that honestly it didn't matter. And I think the other times when I found an ounce of courage to stand up for myself, it was like she could blame the culture or country she had raised me in. I just had been influenced by terrible forces. That was it. My default state was what she had wanted it to be.

But this whole thing with the trip was the first time that she couldn't blame something or someone else. And I don't know what made this different. Maybe because worse came out of my mouth at some point in the conversation. Or maybe it's hard for her to blame her mom and brother for anything. I don't know.

And because I don't know it was a long drive to get here. To the resort. Resort 2.0. Or it felt like it. It almost felt like we were marching to some sort of execution and in a sense we were. Because execution also means to carry out a plan of some kind, which we were doing.

Sure, we might have been somber because of the fight or the aforementioned weird mission we're on. But I can't really speak to their thoughts. As for me, I spent all of it in my head, which was both the problem and a dangerous game to play. That's why I was thinking about this and about my mother's childhood or what little I know about it.

In particular, I was thinking about the whole oldest child thing because I have attributed so much of her nonsense to the sense of control that she got from being Parent Number Three. But I was thinking about understanding her and whether or not I could really get it. Because I'm an only child. And then I started thinking about all the times Mom told other parents that growing up as one of four was a good number or even one of three would work. The thing about having multiple kids, she would say, is that it's almost like cats. Really, it's almost easier to just give them a buddy to amuse themselves with and go about your day.

And that is definitely concerning or questionable in any number of ways, but can we shelve that debate for now? Because despite how much of an advocate Mom seems to be for big families, she didn't have one. And sure, Dad's opinion would have mattered, but he's the middle of three with more positive associations about his childhood than Mom had.

I asked Mom about it once. In the context of this theology of the body module we had to do in my church youth group. And yeah, it's the Catholic version of abstinence education. Which wasn't great, but they didn't tell us that we would automatically die if we had sex. At least not in my program. Our youth leader, instead of getting caught up in offensive metaphors, tried to explain the theology behind the beliefs as to why both women and men--and yeah, miles to go on that one, but it's farther than some others are willing to walk--need to wait until marriage. Or should wait until marriage. There was some theological stuff too about how babies born out of wedlock aren't 'demon spawn' but God trying to make something beautiful out of our mistakes. And once again, shockingly, that's better than some other youth groups get.

Anyway, I don't know. I was a teenager, feeling petty and annoyed and a bunch of other things, so I dumbly asked Mom why I was an only child when she, Dad, and the church they both love so much view only having one child as a bit of an off-the-beaten path but not too far gone sort of lifestyle. Which could have led to a really hurtful conversation about infertility, but that's not what Mom said. She just said it hadn't worked out that way. She was happy with one kid, and she wasn't going to try for another one. Whether or not that's the truth, well, I'm inclined to believe that it is. The wheels were turning in her head while she spoke, but she wasn't exceedingly upset or hurt by the conversation. She wasn't completely resigned, but that's closer to where she was.

And I really believe Mom when she said that it was a choice to be one and done. I just don't know why she chose one and then done like that.

But now, in this dark-ish because I can't be bothered with the curtains ,hotel room which I thankfully have to myself, though it is way smaller than the other one, I wonder if Moma wasn't trying to do better by me than Lola did her. Because you can't be Parent Number Three with no one else to parent. Until Mom acts like a toddler throwing a tantrum, and then all bets are off.

But does she even know that's what she's doing? Is being one of many in such a poor family ultimately going to teach you that the old saying 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease' is actually some sort of life-definitely mantra? Or whatever the Tagalog version is. I don't know the equivalent idiom. If you're only heard when you scream, then are you ever going to stop screaming? Something, something, tree falls in the forest. You know, the tree felt the fall regardless. You know the tree has to deal with the aftermath.

And so do the trees around it who maybe are wondering why you're so concerned about sound.

And I lost the plot. Badly.

I don't know why I'm so desperate to understand her. It feels like a cliched script-flip because I was so upset that she's never understood me. I feel like I've been speaking a different language than my own mother. And I know what that's like because my Tagalog is so bad that it might as well be a new language. It sucks. Honestly and genuinely sucks. And if she's not going to learn my language, then learning hers is the next best thing.

Maybe it's the same thing it's always been, though. That I just feel so lost, and any anchor is going to look good right now. I'm lost, and it's... *(inhale)* Well, to be generous, it's the fault of the driver that hit me because I don't know what I am anymore.

No, I mean. *(Sigh)* This isn't... I'm not mad that I'm disabled. I-- I need a quick break. Sorry. I-- I don't remember when I last ate, and that's a problem in and of itself. So I'm going to go to my grandma's room because she brought snacks. As always.
(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.