



Hi!
Society

By **MONET LU**

Love, Intrigue and Unity: It's all in the family

THIS week, I take a break from writing about celebrities, our leading FilAm personalities and beauty tips by focusing on a more personal subject. This time I want to share wonderful things that I've rediscovered by renewing ties with family around me. This is a tribute to them and to where I came from. Everyone who belongs to a family knows that any drama within a clan can be very complicated. Sometimes, hindi magkasundo ang mga mag-anak but when everything is said and done, they're the ones who are there to support you--whether you're down on your knees or experiencing a triumphant moment.

Hindi talaga maiiwasan ang tampuhan. Within my own family, we naturally have issues with each other. We have arguments and differences of opinion. There are times we don't speak for weeks.

But a recent health scare on one family member really served as an eye-opener for everyone. It's interesting how a crisis can bring people closer together.

Earlier this week, the Lus had a family reunion at the park where we reminisced about our childhood growing up in Marikina, Philippines.

My sisters based in Hawaii and Canada came all the way to spend quality time with the family. It felt really nice.

We recalled our early days in Marikina in a household of 13 members, headed by a strict Chinese father.

Everything was going great for us until that fateful day when our grocery store--the family's sole livelihood--and our house burned to the ground.

I can still remember feeling so helpless as I watched the raging flames devour the family property. It was heart-breaking.

My parents had to start from scratch while taking care of 11 children, me being the 7th.

As a teenager, *natuto akong magbanat ng buto.* I quit high school to pursue dressmaking and fashion design.

I was 17 years old when I started sewing prom dresses, bridal gowns and Santacruzian costumes for my classmates.

Through dressmaking, I discovered my passion for hairstyling and beauty.

I would practice different hairstyles on *tinderas sa palengke* as well as my sisters, sometimes charging three pesos but most of the time, my service was free. I learned the craft by doing as much as I could.

Being a precocious 17-year-old, I had moments when I behaved badly. This is why I was kicked out of the family home.

It was another life lesson learned. I became independent and resilient. I learned how to work hard to prove to myself and my parents that I can be successful on my own.

At 24, I was able to put up three salons. When the opportunity came to relocate to Los Angeles, I took it because I wanted to challenge myself.

After years of challenges, hardships, pain, and hard work, I have now reached the present.

All through it all, the biggest factor that drove me to always work hard was my loved ones; my family.

Warts and all, our family accepts us for who we are. I've realized that what I have considered tragedies in my life in the past have also become the catalyst for great changes.

Just like what my mom used to say, "*Kung saan ka nadapa, dun ka rin babangon.*"

God bless our families. May our love for each other keep us close always.

The author is a Marikina-born, award-winning celebrity beauty stylist with his own chain of salons across Southern California and Las Vegas, Nevada. Ultimately, Monet is known as an all-around artist who produces sold-out fashion and awards shows, as well as unforgettable marketing campaigns. Monet is also the founder of the revolutionary all-natural beauty products available at www.skinbymonet.com. He supports many humanitarian efforts to include projects in his native Marikina, The Bantay Bata Foundation, and many more. To contact Monet, please visit www.monetsalon.com for more information.



Quality time with the Lus



The Lu family sticks together

The perfect gifts for the perfect mom

Fashionable and Affordable Gifts for Mother's Day from JCPenney

PLANO, Texas -- Mother's Day is the day to show Mom how much you care. Whether whipping up pancakes and serving breakfast in bed, or giving a stylish statement piece that is an instant wardrobe updater, JCPenney offers various gifts to make Mom feel special and loved. Shop at JCPenney this Mother's Day to find the perfect gift!

- She will treasure a Mixit safari beaded statement necklace (\$24) that says you would have traveled to Africa and back for her.

- Tell her it's okay to pamper herself with a soak in the tub by giving her luxurious body scrub and scented bath bubbles. Sephora body scrub (\$12), Sephora bath & shower bubbles (\$16).

- Give her the gift of global style with a stylish kimono sleeve belted jacket by Worthington (\$60).

- Your mother might need a new makeup lesson so give her the tools to succeed -- a Sephora deluxe anti-bacterial brush set, which includes seven brushes that repel and destroys bacteria in a silver chic trifold brush case (\$60).

- Has salsa dancing become mom's new pastime? Either way keep her fashionable with an a.n.a ruffled top in bright colors (\$26).

- Give her Sephora Harmony lip gloss (\$12) that will make your mom's lips shimmer this spring and look natural this spring, this spring and look natural. Contains six versatile colors and a brush.

- Your mom used to make circle skirts in Home Ec high school home economics. Let her know the trend is back and how to update it with a Worthington Tropical Circle Skirt (\$36).

- It is all about the details with your mom. Give her some fashionable a.n.a tops that have intricate Soutache straps or a tank with lurex detailing in an array of colors (\$22).

- Dazzle her on this deserving occasion with delicate Heart, Angel, Cross and Teardrop Pendants and Rings -- classic sterling silver accessories with a tasteful hint of 14K gold (\$49.99 - \$99.99).

- Spend quality time with mom preparing traditional family recipes with the cooks five-Piece Ceramic Mixing Bowl Set (\$29.99) and the cooks five-Piece Silicone Bakeware Set (\$39.99). And -- and what better way to preserve your culinary creations than the adorable hand-painted cooks Ceramic Pig Cookie Jar (\$49.99) complete with conve-

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