*Transcript*

**S1 - Episode 09: The Biell Sisters**

[The Biell Sisters Episode Clip}

***Molly:*** *We would rock ourselves to sleep saying I want Momma, we’d be like [singsong] “I want Mommy!” and it was just like this chant, every night. [laughter]*

***Cat:*** *I remember that too*

***Carrie:*** *[laughter] I remember that!*

***Molly:*** *It must have sounded really annoying, I mean Grandpa is downstairs...*

***Moe:*** *All three of you?*

***Carrie:*** *All of us [laughter] Just so annoying for our grandparents*

***Moe Provencher:*** *Hi Everyone ~ I’m Moe Provencher, and this is Grief/ Relief. Every first and third Tuesday of the month you'll hear me in conversation with some of my favorite people as we explore the impact grief has had in our lives, and how it transforms us in unexpected ways. I want to know... How do different people react to loss? Change can be both painful, beautiful, funny, chaotic, and devastating. This is Grief/ Relief, and we're gonna feel it together...*

**Moe Provencher*:*** Thanks for joining us for episode nine of Grief/Relief! This is the second of a two-part series…the last episode featured a conversation with Janie McDermott, a Deaf woman who went blind in her early thirties. Take a listen to that one if you haven't already, because this week I talk to her three adult daughters, the Biell sisters, about their experience of that trauma. Molly's the oldest, and twins Cat and Carrie are 4 years younger. It's hard to untangle specific aspects of that particular grief experience, of having a parent go blind when they were small children. Because there were so many other factors at play - both of their parents are Deaf, and they went through a tough divorce when the kids were still really young. The girls were raised by their grandparents for a while, and then were also separated for a significant amount of time when the twins and their mom moved from southern California up to Seattle. Going through these types of challenges together has absolutely informed the intense bond they share today. It's so obvious when you spend any time around the Biell sisters that they treasure each other.

And I want to add that the stories they share here are personal…they were sensitive about not wanting to speak universally about the experiences of Children of Deaf-Blind Adults. Remember this is just a small piece of the story about how this family has dealt with overlapping losses.

We sat around my kitchen table in Seattle and drank what I like to call my Grief/Relief cocktail - gin, bitters, lemon, some soda water, and a splash of orange juice. We started off talking about what they remembered about when their mom was first diagnosed, and had to leave for a year to learn independent living skills at the Helen Keller National Center. The twins have amazingly similar voices and speech patterns, so to make it easier to tell who is talking, you'll hear Carrie on the left, and Cat on the right.

**Moe:** It’s hard to pick a trauma..

[Group Laughter]

**Molly**: It was a lot..

**Carrie:** I didn’t realize that it was all like the same exact time..

**Molly:** Oh yeah.. Oh yeah! It was at once..

**Cat:** It’s interesting to hear the story as an adult. Like.. I feel like there is a lot that I don’t even know about.

**Molly:** I’m sure.. I mean.. Mom remembers.. She was telling the story of when she got the traffic ticket and she was saying because of my eyes and apparently I threw a fit and said, “No! You’re not going blind”, but I don’t remember that at all. I just remember Gram talking to me like, “she is going to lose all of her sight, and you’re going to live here, and we’re going to help her, and I’m going to need you to help with your sisters.”

**Moe:** Yeah..

**Molly:** It wasn’t long after that when Mom left for Helen Keller School for a year..

**Cat:** I was trying to remember.. I was just talking about her leaving for Helen Keller school, and how old we were for that, and I didn’t realize it was a year.

**Molly:** It was a year. It was a year.

**Moe:** She was gone for a year?

**Carrie:** Yeah

**Moe:** Wow!

**Carrie:** I thought we were a little older..

**Moe:** Where is that school?

**Carrie:** In New York

**Moe:** Oh! So, she was like 3000 miles away for a year..

**Molly:** Yeah.. So that was the year I think I was about 8 to 9 years old when she left.. When she came back for Christmas I remember being just kind of like.. I felt really shy around her.

**Carrie:** I did too

**Cat:** Yeah.. Because we have a memory of it too. I think we were about like 5.

**Molly:** Yeah, you would have been.

**Carrie:** Oh ok.. It’s funny when I remember I always think we were older because I have such a clear memory of her being gone.

**Cat:** So do I.. Yeah..

**Carrie:** Like.. It was very.. I think probably because we were five, and that’s just a very..

**Cat:** It’s a very traumatic time to have your mother away.

**Moe:** Yeah

**Carrie:** Yeah.. I do remember her being gone. I just remember missing her all of the time. It felt like an eternity.

**Molly:** We would rock ourselves to sleep saying I want Momma, we’d be like [singsong] “I want Mommy!” and it was just like this chant, every night. [laughter]

**Cat:** I remember that too

**Carrie:** [laughter] I remember that!

**Molly:** It must have sounded really annoying, I mean Grandpa is downstairs...

**Moe:** All three of you?

**Carrie:** All of us [laughter] Just so annoying for our grandparents..

[Group Laughter]

**Molly:** He would get so mad. He would be like, “If you girls don’t pipe it down I’m gonna come up there and raise some cane.” [Laughter]

**Moe:** What is making you laugh about that right now?

**Carrie:** Because it was just like an orchestra.. They’re like, “we’re doing our fucking best here, and all these girls want is their mom, and there is nothing we can do about this.” I think they were raising us, and our grandparents had already raised like five children. So it’s just like…

**Molly:** Well, Grandpa just wanted to watch his tv at night - for the love of God.

**Carrie:** He’s like, “I already did this shit and I gotta do it again?” He was always watching MASH and drinking his dirty martinis. You know?

[Group Laughter]

**Molly:** Yeah, he just wanted us to be quiet because he had already done this, and Gram.. Well, she loved being a parent. She loved having us there.

**Carrie**: Yeah.. I do remember not understanding why our mom was there, and I do remember her coming back for Christmas and being like scared or shy of her…

**Molly:** Yeah.. She was a little alien at first, and then it was like mom again, and then she left.

**Moe:** So, then she came back that May or something?

**Molly:** It was in the summer. That was the summer Gram and Grandpa they asked her, “what do you want to see before you lose your sight. Like.. What do you really want to do?” and she’s like, “I really want to go to DC. I wanna go to the nation's capital.” So Gram was like writing all these letters to the White House, and she got in. They went to the White House.

**Carrie:** They met the Reagans..

**Molly:** They met the Reagans!

**Moe:** Wow! [Laughter]

**Carrie**: They were invited. Our Grandma looked like Nancy Reagan..

**Molly**: She was channeling that..

**Moe:** My Grandma would spit at the thought of Reagan.. [Laughter]

**Carrie:** Ohhhh

**Molly**: So would our other Grandma.. Nana was not a fan..

**Cat:** but, they were invited to the White House from the letters that my grandmother wrote..

**Moe:** That’s pretty nice..

**Molly:** Yeah… Mr. T was there.. [ Group Laughter] He sweated on mom.

**Carrie:** I forgot about that. There were a lot of celebrities there right?

**Moe:** Wow!

**Molly:** Dorothy.. It wasn’t Dorothy Hamill.. I think it was Dorothy Hamill was there.

**Moe**: Oooh

**Carrie:** Wasn’t there a tennis match or something?

**Molly:** There was a tennis match. She was playing tennis with one of the guys from Love Boat. I think it was doctor.

**Carrie:** Dorothy Hamill.. Not Dorothy Hamill.. Dorothy Hamill is the ice-skater..

**Molly:** She is, but..

**Carrie:** She was playing tennis?

**Molly:** I think so. [Laughter]

**Carrie:** We’re gonna have to Google this.. [Laughter]

**Cat:** I have no idea what you guys are talking about.

[Group Laughter]

**Molly:** We’re gonna have to figure this out, but Mr. T was definitely there. [Group Laughter] There is a photo album.. There is a photo album of this time..

**Moe:** This is how we’re going to start the episode, by the way. [Laughter]

**Cat:** Mr. T was there!

**Molly:** Mr. T was a hundred percent there.. [Group Laughter]

**Moe:** It was Dorothy Hamill playing tennis.. [Laughter]

**Molly:** He was.. And he sweated on Mom. [Group Laughter] Because he would always wear the cutoff T-Shirts. You know, and like gold chains are gonna make you sweat.. Like.. That’s a lot of gold. [Laughter]

**Cat:** That’s a lot of weight..

**Molly**: Yeah.. That’s gonna make you sweat.. [Laughter] You know, they went and saw the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.. Like all the stuff.. And there is all these pictures of this trip with Gram and Grandpa.

**Moe:** And where were you all?

**Molly**: We were not on this trip.

**Cat:** I think we were at our Nana’s..

**Molly**: I think we were on a two week vacation with them.

**Carrie:** I think aunt Molly came and watched us too.

[*Transition music by: Moon Palace - Shapeshifter*]

**Moe Provencher:** One of the main things that kept coming up in our conversation was the unique ways that the Biells were dealt the stress of caretaking for their parents. A lot of kids experience this, in a variety of ways, in their relationships with parents. But some especially unusual and inappropriate situations they were put in - that was all too common in the 1980s - was as interpreters.

**Molly:** Some hospitals they just don’t even think about it.. Yeah.. I remember because I lived with my dad for years and my grandmother, and I would have to go to his doctor appointments. I was the interpreter which was totally inappropriate and I know you guys had to do that for mom.

**Cat:** Yeah we did that quite a bit

**Molly:** I remember going to Mom’s gynecology appointment when I was 16 and it was just not something I wanted to experience.

[Group Laughter]

**Cat**: We all remember that story.. [Laughter]

**Molly:** We all remember that. We had a lot of laughs about that one. It was really awkward. There should be an interpreter there, you know..

**Moe:** Was that more difficult because she was blind at that point? I would imagine it’s easier to find one, because tactile signing is really different, correct?

**Carrie:** Yeah..I do think it’s harder to find a Deaf-Blind interpreter. Sometimes it can be harder and some interpreters don’t necessarily want to do that. It is definitely more demanding, but I think in general even find a sign language interpreter at the last minute can be difficult. A lot of the bigger facilities here have contracts where they can find people quickly, but yeah sometimes Deaf-Blind interpreting is..

**Molly:** And I think also to add is.. When our grandmothers were making these appointments for our parents and they were like, “oh we don’t need an interpreter. We’ll just bring one of the kids. “ You know?

**Carrie:** Oh God! That’s true.. I don’t think they ever asked for one..

[Group Laughter]

**Molly:** Yeah I don’t think they requested it. They were like, “we’ll bring one of the kids.”

**Carrie:** They were like, “Oh Carrie will go to that appointment.. Molly will go to that appointment.” Because we did a lot of interpreting for things that were probably inappropriate, and I’m just like.. It’s sad for our mom too. She’s getting all of her information filtered through her 12 year old daughter who is like uncomfortable. [Laughter] You know? It’s kind of a disservice to everyone.

**Molly:** It really was and I think.. You know.. Going back to that gynecology appointment.. [Laughter]

**Moe:** Yeah.. Tell me that story.. Maybe you need to share it. [Laughter]

**Molly:** Well.. It may take a little while.. [Laughter] but like I think just doing that opens the door for my mom to be like, “well, you were there. You heard all about my itching. [Group Laughter] and now I’m just gonna tell you about it.” So now it’s just like a waterfall of information comes out.

**Moe:** She’s an open book..

**Cat:** She has no filter

**Molly:** No filter.. It’s like, “Mom.. I don’t want to hear..”

**Cat:** about your sex life.. [Group Laughter]

**Carrie:** She does love to talk about that..

**Molly:** She loves to tell us about it..

**Cat:** Over brunch… [Laughter]

**Moe:** Can you just look away though? I’m a little envious of your relationship...

**Molly:** You can, but..

**Cat:** You can’t look away.. [Group laughter] There are sound effects..

**Molly:** There are sound effects.. There are faces. You know, things that can’t be unseen.. [Group Laughter]

**Moe:** You can’t look away.. [Laughter] I’ve seen a couple of choice signs.. I think, “I understand exactly what you are saying.” [Laughter]

**Molly:** You get it.. You don’t even need to know sign. You just get it.

**Moe:** [Laughter] That’s funny..

**Molly:** It is funny. You gotta laugh about it. I mean.. We do a lot of laughing. Laughter is the best. “Laughter through tears in my favorite emotion.” That’s from Dolly Parton.

**Moe:** How did you all learn how to tactile sign then? Like in your memory of being a little kid and her explaining the cane?

**Molly:** I remember actually because I was able to go to the airport to pick her up when she came back, and I remember she was teaching me tactile. Because I was the one because I was older I did most of the signing. She said that the two of you had a harder time with sign language because you guys were twins and little and you guys would be silly about it, but it took a little while.

**Cat:** Yeah we didn’t want to sign..

**Molly:** Since I was older and I was the one that signed she taught me how to do tactile. We were in the back of the stationwagon. So, I was kind of getting my practice on with her and then she would teach us how to guide her - How to inform her when a step was there, and that is when you guys started signing because it was like you kind of had to.

**Carrie:** I remember she tried to push us to learn more. She would try to sit us down and teach us sign language, because I think that’s true we did kind of get by through Molly, and just using home signs..

**Molly:** It was mostly.. Well, the other thing is she read lips, and so I think she was still relying on that.

**Carrie**: Yes! Yeah ok.

**Molly:** Because she was still doing that with Gram and Grandpa even though all this was going on. She would still sit there with Gram and Grandpa and there would be like the yellow notepad, and all that stuff. So, that’s when you guys started signing more.

**Carrie:** Oh God!

**Cat:** Because our grandparents didn’t really.. Our Gram/ grandmother learned sign but she wasn’t really fluent.

**Carrie:** It was mostly fingerspelling

**Cat:** It was mainly fingerspelling and then our grandpa never learned it.

**Molly:** He couldn’t

**Moe:** Wow!

**Cat:** and Also, some of our aunts and uncles could sign a little bit..

**Molly:** but, when Mom was a kid like all of the specialists were like, “oh sign language no. A deaf person needs to read lips so they can be a part of the mainstream hearing world.”

**Moe:** It was a different time

**Molly**: It was a different time so it wasn’t encouraged for our aunts and uncles to sign so when Mom was diagnosed with being blind everyone was kind of like, “oh shit! We have to learn.”

**Carrie:** You have to learn

**Moe:** You have to learn!

**Molly:** and it’s really hard when you are older and you don’t live in a house with you need to sign with. All the aunts and uncles still kind of have a little bit, but if you don’t use it everyday you’re gonna lose it. I have a hard time signing with Mom, but after awhile it kind of comes back to you.

**Cat:** Yeah.. The first half hour -now that she has moved away, and she comes back it’s kind of like, “Oh! Gotta remember.” Just like any language it takes a little while to get back into it.

**Molly:** You get a little rusty.

**Moe:** Was that something that you feel was difficult or part of the trauma like having to learn a different language? Maybe more so for you if you had been signing this was for more of your life.

**Carrie:** I feel like my signing really took off when she started dating our soon to be stepfather and I would see.. There was just more signing in the house, and he would do tactile signing with her, and then all of his kids (our step-siblings) all signed really well. I think it was a motivating factor for me because I felt like I noticed a huge jump in my interest in learning how to sign, because we were just more around it. It was more of a Deaf household when they were communicating with each other, because in our house with our grandparents there was still a lot of talking so it was easy to sometimes fall back on that. But yeah.. When she started losing her eyesight we had to sign more and do tactile. Yeah.. I think when they started dating I remember being more interested and motivated to sign.

**Cat:** That’s a good point. I remember that too.

**Moe:** So.. I’m just wondering how any of you would define the word ‘Grief’? If you think of that as like a grief event in your life?

**Cat:** I think it took.. I mean.. I think it took a little while. It’s almost like at the time not totally understanding it... At the time I don’t know if I remember feeling a lot of grief around it.

**Carrie:** It took me awhile until I started going to therapy as an adult to actually realize that we were grieving, and there was a huge loss and change. So, I think of grief as grieving the loss of something. There was a big change too, and knowing that it was never going to be the same again. So, I just remember being an adult and going to therapy, and my therapist said, “you were kind of angry that she left.” You know.. In my mind I would never say I was because she had to do what she had to do, but I do think we were hurt. I do think seeing her going through depression had an impact on us.

**Cat:** In a lot of ways it was like we were feeling our mom’s grief more than our own.

**Molly:** Yeah..absolutely.

**Carrie:** Yes.. for sure.

*[Transition music by: Moon Palace - Slow Down]*

**Moe Provencher:** We talked a bit about how having a Deaf-Blind mom shaped their views on caretaking, on suffering, and gratitude. And we talked about the role laughter has played in their lives…and I have to say, during the hours I spent editing this episode, I just kept laughing and laughing as I listened back. It was a good lesson to watch these women process painful things, in real-time, with such light-heartedness.

**Cat:** When I am feeling down or feeling scared I do think of my mother sometimes. It’s given me a lot of courage in life and just like also there are times when I’m like, “well, I’m not going to feel too sorry for myself.” I feel a lot of gratitude and appreciation for having vision. Everything in my life revolves.. Like.. I’m a graphic designer. We’re musicians. I can’t even imagine.. My whole life is my vision and my ears so it’s something I try to really be grateful for.

**Moe:** Yeah.. I know..

**Carrie:** I think it just shaped me as an adult - just with empathy. I think it did force us to grow up a little sooner because we were kind of asked to do more ask kids and there were some roles that shifted when we would interpret and I would drive my mom around a lot. There was some caretaking, and it was positive in a way because we grew up really fast and we kind of had to.. I was a little bit of a hustler and good at getting by at a young age, but I do think too there is something as an adult that is like, “oh! I’m too much of a caretaker and I know where that comes from.” [Laughter] So, it’s like positive and negative sometimes, but I do think we all grew up with a great sense of empathy towards others.

**Cat:** I think a lot of patience too. We all have a lot of patience.

**Carrie**: Patience.. Yeah..

**Molly:** You know, that shapes you - The caretaking absolutely.. I think like any relationship I get in.. There was like one time I was walking down the steps at a restaurant with Tony and I grabbed his hand and put it on the rail.. [Laughter]

**Cat:** I’ve done that before with people.

**Molly:** He’s like, “what are you doing?” I’m like, “I’m.. Nevermind” [Laughter]

You know. Some things are like.. “I’m gonna handle this.”, but also the thing I got from my mom... I think the thing that always strikes me about her is her sense of humor - Her ability to laugh. One of my favorite thing to do with her when she still had her sight we would do like ugly faces across the table. [Group Laughter] I would do this face where I was just like.. Lips going to the opposite sides of the face and she would just laugh. That’s one of my favorite thing to do with my mom is laugh, and that’s one of the big things about us is when we are dealing with my mom, and it’s like hard to get something through or we’re frustrated we’ll crack a joke. It just gives you a sense of humor, and you look at her and everything she has done and she’s a huge inspiration. No matter what you are going through what she has had to go through and figure out and do for herself.. You always feel like whatever you are dealing with is not that bad, which can be kind of detrimental because it’s like what I’m feeling or experiencing is bad and I should feel this, but you think of someone who has really been through Hell and back and that’s Mom.

**Moe:** Yeah… I’m curious if you tend to minimize your own pain.

**Molly:** I think we all do..

**Moe:** That’s one of the things I learned with grief. Like there is a quote about how suffering.. You can imagine that it mimics properties of gas. Like if you pump a certain amount of gas into an empty chamber it will fill it evenly even if it’s a large amount of gas or small amount. I’m not a scientist. Anyone listening who is like, “well, what kind of gas? What kind of chamber?” It’s a metaphor and it’s about how…

**Carrie:** Molly is full of gas.. I had to say it..

[Group Laughter]

**Molly:** I was was gonna go there… Full of hot air.. Always full of hot air. [Laughter]

**Moe:** If you were to fart a large fart right now it would probably fill the kitchen scientifically the same as a small cat fart. [Laughter]

**Molly:** One hundred percent [Group Laughter] It would fill the space..

**Moe:** And.. The point of that is that you’re suffering no matter if it seems less than, let’s say being Deaf-Blind, and navigating the world. It’s still fills the room as much as that small fart would..

[Group Laughter]

**Carrie:** That’s beautiful, Moe.

**Moe:** Is it? I’m very sensitive. [Laughter]

**Molly:** I’m glad you said it in farts because that’s the best way to communicate with me.

**Carrie:** Yeah.. That’s our language.

**Molly:** Speakin my language.

**Carrie:** I do think that’s something we had to learn later. I mean.. I think I used to always do that too like, “oh! Nothing compares to what she went through.” You know, and I would minimize my own grief, but that’s something that now I allow myself to feel it, because I am like.. “No”. I do think that quote is so helpful because it is so relative to your own life experiences, and I think it’s unfair to not allow yourself to.. She does like to remind you though. She’s like, “you have nothing to cry about soo.” [Laughter]

**Molly:** Then you just feel small.. [Laughter] It’s just like, “you’re right.. I am nothing. My pain just does not matter.”

**Moe:** You tell her that fart metaphor..

**Molly:** I’ll try. [Group Laughter]

**Moe:** Hey! What’s the sign for fart anyway? Carrie’s teaching me. [Loud laughter]

**Carrie:** We all had a different version.. [Laughter]

**Moe:** What is happening? [Laughter]

**Cat:** That’s like a shit-fart right there… [Laughter]

**Molly:** It’s like a poopy fart.

**Moe:** Ok.. I’m going to remember this. You and Cat did the same one.

**Carrie:** You are gonna have to explain this because this is all audio. [Laughter]

You have your hand in a fist, and your dominant hand is releasing off of the fist. Like it’s releasing some gas.

**Moe:** I like Molly’s poopy fart..

**Molly:** For some reason I had a finger in where the butthole would be and then… So it was kind of like a poopy fart. Like it would be a shart. Is what mine is.. So you’re welcome..

[Group Laughter]

**Carrie:** The audience is gonna be like, “God, she talks about poop a lot on her podcast.”

**Moe:** I mean.. The whole episode is going to be about farts..

**Carrie:** Well, because you had another episode that talked about poop.

**Cat:** Well, pooping is a part of grief too..

**Molly:** Yeah.. It’s a relief..

**Moe:** It’s the release part.. [laughter]

[Transition music: Moon Palace - Hunt and Gather]

**Moe Provencher:** In addition to the gratitude they feel for having their hearing, and for being sighted, the Biells know they're lucky to have each other, and that was a gift for me to witness that sibling bond in action. I've been wondering if, at the end of each episode, I should try and sum up the lessons I personally learn from each of these interviews, to share with all you listeners. But I decided for now to let the conversation speak for itself, to let each of you glean what you will. Though I will say that I what resonated strongly for me during this one in particular is that love is a bond that can hold you together when a loss leaves you in pieces.

We wrapped up talking about some of the more frustrating pitfalls - as well as the funnier advantages - of having a Deaf-Blind mom. And if you haven't noticed by now, the Biells know how to have fun

**Carrie:** You know, I think I joked to you about how she hates beets..

**Moe:** Oh Yeah! I wanted to talk to her about that and I forgot.. [Laughter]

**Carrie**: I’m bringing this in..

**Moe:** Yeah! Bring it in.. Thank you for reminding me. Ok everyone, this is a good story. [Laughter]

**Carrie:** She hates beets, and almost anytime I take her to a salad bar.. [Group Laughter] and there is a fucking beet option… I always put it on her plate.

[Group Laughter]

**Carrie:** Because.. She’s in on the joke, and it’s really funny to me. I have to usually explain all the food options and sometimes she’ll just say, “don’t worry, you know what I like. Just dish up for me.” So I’ll go do that, but I love that. Then I wait for her to eat the beet. I think we did that at Thanksgiving one year too because somebody made a beet salad, and of course I had to put it on her plate. It’s just so funny to watch her circling around it, and you’re just like waiting for her.. It’s always the same reaction.. [Laughter] She’ll put it in her mouth and just like slam her fist on the table and scream… [Group Laughter] She’s like, “who did this?” But she’s in on the joke and she laughs.. It’s just stuff like that.. It’s pretty funny to do that to her.

**Cat:** I do that too, but I’ll be like, “taste this.” I made her try Kimchi for the first time. I was out to brunch with her and I was like, “I doubt she’s ever had kimchi before.” So I was like, “here try this.” She was like, “[Squeal sound]” She did not like it. She did not understand it. She was confused by it. [Laughter]

**Molly:** I like doing that with booze. When we go out to drink she likes Lemon Drops and the really sugary drinks, and I like an

Old Fashioned or a Manhattan. So I’ll be like, “try mine”, and her face just curls up. It’s just funny. [Group Laughter]

**Cat:** I do remember one time I snuck out, and my mom knows that a couple times we snuck out.

**Moe:** Couple.. Janie, just a couple times.. [Laughter]

**Carrie:** We snuck out all of the time!

**Cat:** I’d go out the front door and slam it. I’d be like, “Byeeee!”

[Group Laughter]

**Carrie:** People would be like, “how did you sneak out of your house?” I’m like, “I walked out the front door and said goodbye.”

**Moe:** You said goodbye. [Laughter]

**Cat:** We did have to be careful of our vibrations. We would have to tiptoe around. My mom’s senses are obviously like super heightened, like smells, and.. I just remember one time I smoked as cigarette, and I walked in the house and she was like two rooms away from me, and she’s like, “Ehhhh, you’re smoking!” [Group Laughter] Her other senses are just so heightened so there was a little bit of sneaking around.

**Carrie:** Yeah! Or if you tried to sneak in a friend.. Like, I would sneak in my high-school girlfriends and stuff, and she’d be like, “is Pari here?” She could smell their perfume or whatever. So that was something I’d be like, “could you not wear that next time?”

[Group Laughter]

**Moe:** That’s funny

**Carrie:** Terrible! But at the same time when we were in like screaming matches or signing when we were really pissed and signing all fast.. She could just throw my hands and walk away, and that’s the most frustrating thing, and she would do it all of the time. If I was trying to argue with her she would just throw my hands and walk away and slam the door, and I can’t yell through that door. The argument is over!

**Molly:** She got the last word!

**Carrie:** It was just like, “fuck you!” [Laughter] That’s a whole other episode

**Moe:** That’s a whole other episode, yeah.. Is there anything else?

**Molly:** I would say that I think one of the things, and I don’t know if we touched on this, but how having a Deaf-Blind mother especially our mother with her own individual strength and her sense of self, and her sense of humor - how it’s made us interact with each other as sisters because we have her humor - we have that strength that’s passed on - that sense of empathy, but it’s also… I think it’s shaped us into really responsible adults. You know, there are people when I tell them about my parents they go, “how are you not like on drugs? Like how are you not an alcoholic? I would be so fucked up.” [Laughter] It’s like, “oh! I enjoy my drink”, but there is just no way on earth that any of us are going to fuck up because that would put pressure on one of us to carry any kind of load that would happen you know, with mom. Not there has been a lot of that, but it’s such a huge responsibility for us, and it’s made us close. We are a unit. If something goes wrong we can rely on each other or just talk about it with one another.

At the end of the day we all know it’s a huge responsibility that we have and nobody is ever going to fuck up on that or not show up, and that’s a nice thing about us. I feel like we are always there for each other. I always feel very fortunate that she didn’t stop at me and that she had you guys because I can’t imagine if I was an only child because I might have just fucked off and been like…

**Moe:** You would be on drugs

[Group Laughter]

**Molly:** I would be on drugs.. A hundred percent [Laughter], but I’m always grateful for that. The thing that my aunts and uncles always say is that she is so lucky that she had three daughters..

**Carrie:** For sure.. It takes a village.

**Molly:** It takes a village.. Yeah, we always say that. Having her as a mother.. How would it be if she was sighted? Would we be as close?

**Moe:** It would be different for sure..

**Molly:** Would there be this Biellness?

**Carrie:** The trifecta

**Moe:** A Biell’s a Biell

**Cat:** A Biell’s a Biell.

**Carrie:** End on that..

**Moe:** Oh we are going to end on a fart joke. Just so you know I’m going to cycle that around.

[Group Laughter]

**Moe:** Well, thank you all for chatting with me.

*[Closing music by: Julia Massey - A Bit of a Hard Time]*

**Moe Provencher:** Many many thanks to Molly, Cat, and Carrie Biell for bringing a wall of laughter into my apartment, teaching me various signs for farts, and sharing their stories of loss and resilience. The next episode I am so excited about, it's with musician Yva Las Vegass whose album I recorded nearly 20 years ago when I was still a student, and we just reconnected for the first time 2 months ago

*[Yva Las Vegass episode clip]*

**Yva Las Vegass:** To me, I think in so many ways crack actually saved my life. Because all the things that I was experiencing from people were so traumatizing. You know..so debasing, that if I didn’t do the drugs I wouldn’t be able to deal, you know...

**Moe Provencher:** Find us online at griefreliefpodcast.com and follow us on Instagram @thegriefreliefpodcast to see photos of me with each guest making our best grief/relief faces. And if you can take a moment to rate and review us on iTunes, that really helps to spread the word. Music in this episode by Moon Palace, fronted by twins Cat and Carrie Biell. Theme music for the series is A Bit Of A Hard Time by Julia Massey and you can find her Patreon account in the show notes if you'd like to support her work. Thanks for listening!

<https://www.moonpalacemusic.com/>

<https://www.patreon.com/juliamassey>

<https://www.griefreliefpodcast.com/>