



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ENGLISH) – 301: EL BEIT

[0:06]

Hi, I'm Mija, or Binty, in Arabic.

This is episode 1 of Season 3 of our podcast

But it's not about a person.

[0:14]

It's about a place.

In Arabic, the word for home is Beit.

Over the course of this season I will share Beity with you.

[0:27]

The story of an Egyptian immigrant family,

And our journey

From Alexandria to London, to New York City.

[0:36]

So here goes, 10 minutes on Beity.

[0:50]

We're on a **relatively** quiet street in Alexandria,

On the 3rd floor of a building with green shutters on it's windows.

We can hear music growing louder and louder.

[1:07]

In the balcony we see the shadows of men and women laughing and dancing.

This is El Beit.

[1:19]

In the distance, we hear a phone ringing somewhere inside El Beit.

It is a call from a young daughter of immigrants now living in Amreeka, that's me.

[1:34]

Here in El Beit,

Where the family has reunited to break our Ramadan fast,

It's hard to hear, as usual.

[1:45]

This daughter doesn't give up though.

She needs to hear their voices....

[1:52]

Before we begin

Let me take you around the house for a moment:

Here in El Beit,

[1:57]

Those alive, those long gone and those still dreaming
Are reunited.

In the corner we see a young man wearing a keffiyeh djing the soiree.

[2:10]

His eyes are closed as he bobs his head to the music.

That's my uncle, Sherif,

one of the coolest tech and music nerds you'll ever meet.

[2:30]

Beside him, is a man with a great white beard,

The wrinkles around his eyes show just how hard he's worked all his life.

He's also a music lover, always tapping his hand on his knee to some beat or another

[2:47]

That's Baba Abdou, my dad.

He is commenting on the merits of this new music, mahraganat,

which sprouted from the Revolution,

[2:58]

But he prefers the classics,

Suddenly, he grabs the Oud, the oldest string instrument in history

and starts to play a tune

[3:07]

To remind the young Sherif
of “real music”.

[3:28]

Across the grand living room decorated with Arabic calligraphy and papyrus art
We see a beautiful woman wearing a turquoise veil
That matches her turquoise eyes.

[3:45]

That’s Mona, my mom.
She is talking to her father about hieroglyphics,
See, she’s been working on translations using the Rosetta Stone.

[3:55]

They’re speaking so loud that if you didn’t understand what they were saying
you’d think they were arguing.
But that’s just how Egyptians talk.

[4:04]

Always passionate.
Silence slips in only when Mona decides to take a break to munch on the basbousa prepared by
another woman,

[4:27]

The older lady standing by the window, wearing a beautifully embroidered veil,

Typical of her native Alexandria.

She too has light eyes, hazel ones, that preside over the grand table

[4:40]

Set up for the meal this evening,

That's Gidda Dawlat, my grandmother.

Mona walks over to her.

[4:51]

And Gidda smiles happily, offering dates to snack on.

After she hands the food to her daughter in law,

Gidda stares out the window at the Mediteranean Sea,

[5:02]

Thinking of the world her family

has seen so very far away from here.

She sighs, and reorganizes the plates as

[5:12]

Sherif switches up the music once more.

All the while, the phone continues to ring...

[5:28]

El Beit is so animated at this point that they can't seem to hear it...

Just then, the door opens and a young man arrives

wearing fitted jeans under a dark blue galabiya that matches his kufi.

[5:44]

He breaks into dance immediately,

Even before he says hello to the family.

For this, he is scolded and hugged at once by all the women.

That's my brother, Omar.

[6:04]

He's the life of the party.

Funny, charming and a very good dancer.

As he settles in, the music starts to fade.

[6:17]

The phone has stopped ringing for just a moment.

As the family gathers in the living room to hear

Giddo Marzouk, my grandfather

[6:34]

Like out of a black and white Egyptian movie,

he wears a three piece suit, with a clean mustache and wool hat.

Always on the brink of telling a good story.

[6:44]

He begins....

*AHEM****

[6:50]

Heba was a hard-working and talented woman.

She knew how to maintain the boat business,

But... she wanted more from life.

[6:58]

She dreamed of having a café in Cairo as famous as Café Riche.

When she was 33, she had saved enough to own her very own café!

And Heba was so happy she told everyone on the street.

[7:16]

Big mistake.

Because when she told her best friend Maryam,

Her face burned with envy.

[7:26]

It burned so hot that if she greeted her friend with a kiss

She would surely have burned her cheek!

Maryam was so envious of her friend at the opening party that she didn't even congratulate her!

[7:43]

Her envy was so strong that she came close to casting HASAD on Heba

Except that great grandfather Mahmoud gave her a bracelet carrying a nazar stone with a blue eye on it.

[8:01]

Engraved on its back,

the Ayat al Kursi Quranic verse.

Together these elements would protect her from Hasad.

So she was saved.

[8:14]

He continues:

.....But her brother Akhil was not so lucky.

He was struck by the evil eye after boasting about the success of his car repair business to a competitor.

[8:29]

After a long day at work,

He suddenly fell ill,

and left this world.

[8:38]

As he always does, Marzouk concludes his hasad stories with this:

La hawla walla kuwata ila billah.

“There is no power except by the power of God.”

[8:53]

Hasad is malicious envy.

It means you want what others have and wish them all the evil in the world.

It is also an evil that others CAST on you for what you have or have achieved in life. [8]

[9:11]

It's SO dangerous.

And you must avoid it at all costs. I am reminded every single day.

The bracelet in the story carries a blue stone charm that can protect you from it:

[9:24]

You've probably seen it somewhere

It's dark blue and it's got a light blue eye on it.

Its wearer is protected from the evil eye, or what we call hasad.

[9:38]

To protect ourselves from *hasad* as my auntie Heba did,

we had to be aware of this envy,

whether it was our own,

or someone else's.

[9:46]

And always, always celebrate our achievements discretely and with humility

Or as new yorkers say: on the DL, the down low.

[10:03]

Just as Marzouk completes the tale,

The phone rings once more.

This time,

[10:11]

Someone finally hears it

Mona answers in arabic

Alo, meen? Hello, who is it?

[10:19]

Hi it's Binty.

Hi Binty my dear.

Don't cry.

Everything will be okay

[10:31]

Here in El Beit,

The phone is passed around

[10:34]

And the girl on the other end

Feels less alone.

Less far away.

[10:42]

Before hanging up

She says:

I think it will be.

I know what I need to do now.

Where to begin?

[10:51]

Ah yes,

I say as healing incense fills my room on the other end.

My name is Binty, the Arabic word for Mija, my daughter

[11:03]

And in this series, I'll tell you their stories.

Of those alive, those, long gone and those still dreaming.

FINAL DEL EPISODIO