



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ENGLISH) – 207: Duc and the family tree

[00: 06]

Hi, I'm Mija. Mija means my daughter in Spanish, and this podcast is about my family, those alive, those long gone and those still dreaming. Now, here's what you need to know about the altar of the ancestors. It's at the entrance of our apartment and on it you'll find photos of our grandparents and great grandparents. Whenever we have questions or doubts, we pray here and ask for the guidance. They're silent, but present. So here goes, 10 minutes to tell their stories.

[00:46]

Being so far from our homeland means that my family has a special connection with the past. Nong and Hien love telling us stories from back home.

[00:57]

It is their way of keeping us connected with China and our roots there. Julien and I would listen carefully as Hien told us tales of their triumphs and their karma.

[01:11]

In my family, we believe they're always there to help us make it through hard times. Like this: When Nong's car is hit by a truck driver asleep at the wheel. Our ancestor arrives at the scene. She makes sure his head is elevated until the paramedics arrive. Nong survives the deadly crash. And according to him, he survived because of this ancestor, my great, great great grandmother, was a healer and watches over the family's health.

[01:58]

When Hien arrives at the airport in front of the child, she watches the people pass by as she holds her mother's hand nervously. Someone grabs her other hand. Rui's spirit is there marveling at the Parisians alongside her. She smiles silently. Our ancestors are always there watching over us, but there is one in particular that I'd like to talk about, the good karma was so powerful that mom and dad swear it's why we were able to succeed in France. Here we go.

[02:27]

A young man is hammering a piece of steel. He wants his broke in the summer heat while humming a song. This is Duc, my great grandfather, on Hien's side. Duc was the son of a seamstress and an ironsmith. When he was born, his parents were shocked to see how strong he was:

- At two years old, he could carry three whole chickens.
- At age five, he could pick up furniture to help his mother clean the house.
- And by age 10, he could carry 10 bales of hay on his back without breaking a sweat.

[03:27]

When he grew up, the village saw him as a big man with an even bigger heart, and that's not all. Duc used his strength to help others. Whenever he saw someone in need, he would come to the rescue: an old lady pulling a heavy cart. Duc would rush to help her up a steep hill. A child being bullied, Duc would protect them and make sure they were safe. A widow unable to feed her family, Duc would share some rice with her.

[04:04]

When you had a problem, you knew you could count on Duc. The village called him the strong kind one. Anyway, Duc was strong and kind and helped everyone, but his family had their worries. His mother had a drinking problem and his father gambled. They often struggled to make ends meet, but Duc was a good son and would often take on odd jobs to help them.

[04:55]

When his brother went off to join the military, Duc stayed behind and for many years he took care of his parents, eventually taking over the family business from his father.

[05:11]

He took care of his parents for many years. And by the time they left this earth, he was becoming an old bachelor. He longed to have a family of his own, but he feared it was too late.

[05:18]

But that all changed when one day, he heard an explosion in the distance. A gas tank had toppled over in town and there was a great fire. Duke knew he had to help. He ran as quickly as he could and joined the growing crowd behind of firefighters putting out the flames.

[05:51]

He knew he could use his strength to move heavy objects, so he went into house after house. In total, he brought a total of 40 people to safety. But the one that was hardest to get into was a jewelry shop. The glass shop windows had shattered and going in was especially dangerous. No firefighters dared to enter. The building was too fragile and could fall at any moment. But Duc could hear a young woman screaming inside the upstairs window. He had to save her.

[06:23]

He braced himself and jumped through the window, ran up the crumbling stairs and found a woman hiding behind a toppled dresser. He told her to grab his hand. She didn't want to leave.

[06:38]

Her parents had already been crushed by the toppled roof. She was afraid, but Duke looked in her eyes and told her everything was going to be OK. She took his hand and together they jumped from the second story window to safety. She broke her arm, but otherwise she was okay. Duc stayed by her bedside until she woke up.

[07:08]

When she did, she held his hand. And from that day on, she never let it go. That's how Duc met Grandma Uyen's mother. They planted a jade flower tree in their front yard the day Uyen was born. She liked to say that all the generations and the years cannot take away all of the good he did for his family and for his neighbors.

[07:56]

Growing up, our parents would tell us stories of our elders, our bedtime stories were filled with adventures of family members back home. Sometimes we had trouble believing them. Some of the stories were very old and we couldn't really verify them, but we didn't want to. We loved feeling the connection between the past and the present with our family's history and culture here in Paris.

[08:49]

I would like to end my 10 minutes with this, I always doubted this kind of stories. It felt like my parents were making up past lives, but that all changed on a very special day: The day of my wedding. I had cold feet. I was so nervous, I felt sick. As I sat at the window watching the guests arrive, I wondered if I was ready.

[09:19]

And then I saw a jade flower floating through the air by the window. It floated in the air before landing in my lap. I held it for a moment and put it in my hair. I opened the door. And walks towards the altar.

[09:42]

The next episode will be our season final. Thank you so much for listening.

This episode was produced by Studio Ochenta. Our Executive Producer is Lory Martinez. Our Associate Producer is Melanie Hong. Sound design by Lory Martinez. Artist: Tiffanie Delune. Theme: Gabriel Dalmasso Follow us on twitter and instagram @mijapodcast, m-i-j-a podcast. If you liked the show, you should tell a friend about it and leave us a few stars on apple podcasts in the meantime. See you next time!

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