



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ESPAÑOL) – 204: Julien, the shanghai kid

[00:09]

Hi, I'm Mija, and this podcast is about my family, those who are alive, those long gone, and those still dreaming. Here's what you need to know about Julien: He loves deeply. He's a big foodie, He loves to talk and he's also a bit of a philosopher, like Nong. Julien is my brother .So here goes, 10 minutes to tell his story.

[00:50]

Julien is the eldest son of Hien and Nong: two Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants who met in Paris. Julien was their very first baby. During her pregnancy, Hien was careful not to eat too cold, too hot, or too spicy, to make sure he didn't have a bad temper. She also read a lot, listened to classical music, and tried to stay positive, so that he would be intelligent and cheerful.

[01:10]

When he finally showed up, he was the chubbiest, cutest baby ever. They knew he would be a good boy, just like Nong.

[01:36]

Growing up, he was always in his own little world. When he wasn't at school or at karate class,

He spent all his extra time reading or drawing. He would build a blanket fort between the nightstand and his bed And read manga like Dragon Ball Z using a flashlight. When he wasn't reading, he'd draw his own manga. At school, his classmates often made fun of him because of his slanting eyes. But in his drawings, he was a superhero. Saving the world with his expert karate moves.

[02:11]

He was also the oldest brother in the family. And he took that responsibility VERY seriously.

He helped our baby brothers take their first steps. Helped our other siblings with their homework. And he helped me find my first job. And, when Julien earned his first paycheck as a teenager, he rented a car and took everyone on vacation! Hien and Nong watched their good boy grow up knowing that one day he'd find the happiness he so deserved.

[02:40]

And when Julia earned his first paycheck as a teenager, she rented a car and took everyone on vacation. Can a no watch then good boy grow up knowing that one day he'd find the happiness he so deserved? Julia was a particularly hardworking young man. She really wanted to succeed, to have a good situation and to honor his parents and the sacrifices he often they dreamed of becoming a millionaire.

[03:12]

Julian was a particularly hard-working young man. He really wanted to succeed, to have a good situation and to honor his parents and their sacrifices. He often daydreamed of becoming a millionaire. Every morning as Hien served us breakfast, he would tell her all the things he'd buy for her when he was a millionaire:

A brand new car!

A big house by the sea!

A chanel dress

A fancy boat

A giant tv!

[03:49]

Hien would hand him his bowl of captain crunch and say laughing, "I'm sure you'll be an important person and wear nice suits and I will iron your shirts.

[04:13]

And all that hard work paid off: He was accepted into one of the best business schools in France. On the first day of school, he was very excited. He got up early, put on the shirt Laura bought him for the occasion. He got on the bus and for the entire 30 minute ride, He smiled.

[04:51]

When he arrived in front of the school, he looked at the facade and thought: This is it, this is the beginning of my new life! He walked down the corridors and into the classroom. When he came in, a young man turned around and said, "Oh, we have a Chinese in the classroom!".

[05:29]

He smiled, halfheartedly. He was the only Asian. Among his friends there was:

Loïc the Breton,

Theo the chiti (from the north of france)

Pierre the toulousain

And Julien, the chinese kid.

3 years later he graduated. But that nickname stuck in the back of his mind.

[06:10]

With his diploma, Julien was quickly hired in a large company. He still lived with Hien and in the evenings, she ironed his shirts, thinking: "My son is an important man, now he has to be elegant." She was very proud. Julian was making good money. He had friends, went out on weekends. He went to museums and restaurants. And gave gifts to his family. Life was good in Paris.

[06:19]

Then one day, at work, a client asked him, "Where are you from?" It wasn't the first time he'd been asked. And certainly not the last. Usually, Julien would answer with a smile: "From Paris, and you?" Every time he was asked, he wondered if he should answer: "From Paris. From France. From China? A correct answer would be: "I'm Chinese and Vietnamese, but I was born in Paris," but he didn't want to tell his life story to a stranger. He could have said: "I am Chinese" but, although Laura cooked Chinese food and he had taken Chinese classes, he had never been to China. And he was also Vietnamese. He couldn't say that.

[06:56]

So that day, he didn't say anything. He just took his stuff and left. He came home and, over the next few days, thought about what he should do. "Everybody tells me I'm Chinese, but I want to know what that means." He withdrew his life savings. And bought the first plane ticket to China. Direction: Shanghai!

[07:34]

As Julien prepared for his journey, everyone had their opinion: Nong said: HMM! Very good, a man should know his roots. But don't forget, you are french too. Hien was quiet when she heard the news. She didn't know what to say, she was going to miss her son, but she was proud of

him. The night before he left, she gave him her jade bracelet, the one she'd brought over in her little backpack all those years ago.

[07:40]

As for me: I was happy for him. With his karma, I was sure everything would be okay.

[07:57]

When the day comes, Julien takes the RER to Roissy by himself. He wants to be alone with his thoughts. He carries a suitcase, and a red backpack. When he passes the security checks, he takes off the buddha medallion but put it back as soon as possible. He grabs a coffee and waits for his plane. As he waits, he watches the people at Charles de Gaulle airport, and thinks of Hien and Nong who passed through there more than 30 years ago.

[08:36]

For them, leaving Asia for France had not been a choice. They followed their parents to survive. They worked hard so that he could have the privilege to make his own choices. And now he was going on his own journey. He opens up a brand new manga to read on the plane, and starts a playlist of chinese music recommended by Nong. And he smiled the whole way there.

[08:50]

Just kidding it's an 11 hour flight.

He mostly slept. When he woke up, he was in China.

[09:04]

Julien has been living in Shanghai for 8 years now. He became a career coach. He helps his clients today, like he helped his little brothers and sisters yesterday. He lives in a beautiful apartment in the center of Shanghai and is fluent in Mandarin, English, French and Spanish

He married a Chinese woman and is the happiest man in the world.

[09:57]

Every year, he returns to Paris to celebrate Christmas and the Lunar New Year with us. They often say to him, laughing, "You're more Chinese than we are now." After a few years, I asked him if he planned to come back to France one day. He said, "No. France is my past. China is my future." He also said: Growing up in Paris was great, but in Shanghai, I really feel like myself.

[10:55]

This episode was produced by Studio Ochenta. Our Executive Producer is Lory Martinez. Our Associate Producer is Melanie Hong. Story by Melanie Hong. Sound design by Lory Martinez. Artist: Tiffanie Delune. Theme: Gabriel Dalmasso Follow us on twitter and instagram

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