



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ESPAÑOL) – 04: MANO

[00:05] - Mija

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.

[00:20] - Mija

Now here's what you need to know about Mano. He's the quiet type. He loves deeply and forgives, sometimes. And he always finds happiness in the smallest things. Mano is my brother. So here goes. Ten minutes to tell his story.

[00:37] - Mija

P.S. In case this is your first episode with Mija. Go ahead and check out episodes 1 to 3 to better understand this story.

[00:48] - Mija

Mano is the youngest son of Tatika and Rocky. Two Colombian immigrants who found each other in New York City. Growing up my Mano and I would do everything together. We'd play tag, race between street lights, watch cartoons and listen to music.

[01:10] - Mija

It's the 90s and Rocky drives us to school every morning. Imagine us all in the car on the way there. The two of us in the backseat singing along to P. Diddy while Rocky drives smiling in silence.

[01:26] - Mija

He drops us off. Mano pulls his backpack over his shoulder. His hair is gelled back and he's wearing this oversized Yankees shirt blue jeans and a gold chain with a cross on it glistening in the sun. A young Latino in Nueva York.

[01:47] - Mija

But life as a young Latino in New York wasn't always simple. Sometimes, Mano got bullied, called a spic or a beaner. Sometimes they'd call him illegal. And more than once, he was profiled and stopped by the police for no reason. Mano didn't let any of that get to him though, because he had other plans. Like Tatika, Mano has a thing for music.

[02:15] - Mija

As a kid. He too was exposed to Tatika's radio and those Spanish love songs were always in his head. So he learned to play them. Practicing every single night on his own. And it paid off. Mano auditioned for the top music school in New York City and actually got in. Our little home on ochenta street was always filled with music. Tatika and I would get a private concert for my show every night. The truth is, as children raised by a single Latina mother in New York City, Mano and I knew it wasn't easy for her. We'd see Tatika calling la familia every night for support.

[03:09] - Mija

We wanted to show her we supported her too, so we were well behaved.

[03:15] - Mija

We got straight A's and came home by curfew. No drugs. No nonsense.

[03:24] - Mija

And Mano made it a point to help Tatika in any way he could. Like Rocky, he was a bit of a pollo choto. He went everywhere with her: to the grocery store, to the laundromat, to the post office, and so on. And though music was fun, he wanted to have the best chance to help Tatika. Thankfully, the cacumen didn't just give him a talent for music. It also made him strong, so strong that he could run from Queens to Manhattan every day to go to school. So strong that he could carry all the family groceries in one hand.

[04:01] - Mija

So strong that from a very young age he understood that he could use that strength to help others. Once when Manu was about 12 years old. He was walking along the pier in Long Island City on a hot summer day.

[04:19] - Mija

A little girl was leaning over the edge of the railing and fell into the Hudson River. She couldn't swim. As the crowd gathered along the water, Mano jumped in, found her and brought her to shore.

[04:34] - Mija

At that moment, he knew what he wanted to do with his life. But we'll get to that in a minute.

[04:45] - Mija

We grew up between two cities: Queens and Bogota. Those summers in Bogota were special. Mano and I would practice our Spanish and teach English words to our grandmother Yita. We'd blend those two languages together at every interaction. In the park, the local kids asked: what's America like?

[05:10] - Mija

So Mano would get all excited and tell them about the trains in Jackson Heights, the music in the streets and the people from different cultures that made Queens the best place on earth.

[05:16] - Mija

But Mano's Spanish wasn't perfect. In fact, in Bogota, La Familia lovingly called him "gringo" because of his accent. It was hard for him to blend the two worlds, but he was still bilingual in a very particular American Latino way.

[05:34] - Mija

Once he took a local bus with Tatika on the way home from the supermarket. She spoke to him in Spanish and he replied in English. Over the course of the half hour bus ride, people noticed them talking like that and smiled. When they got off the bus driver said:

[05:49] - Mija

That's incredible. Bless you, have a nice day.

[05:57] - Mija

Many years later, Mano, the strong kindhearted hero of the family, got accepted to a private university to study political science and social justice.

[06:08] - Mija

But every summer he packs up and heads back down to Queens to work and earn money for school. Like Rocky, he likes to do handy work. Finds a job in construction, tiling floors and setting up kitchens for the wealthy people of Manhattan.

[06:24] - Mija

This one summer, he works extra hard because he's got a goal in mind. You see Mano's saving up enough to buy a car at the end of the summer. Except he's a good son. So he's buying it for Tatika, who's been taking the bus for way too long. So he's running and working and then

buying, a car. A used car that needs a bit of work. He spends a few days cleaning it up and making sure everything works the way it should. But there's just one hitch.

[06:54] - Mija

Sometimes the car doesn't start.

[06:58] - Mija

And it's two days before he's supposed to go back to school and he still hasn't figured out what's wrong. It just keeps stopping. So Rocky and Mano get down to it: spend from sunset to sunrise trying to get it to work. And then Mano gets into the car, turns the key, and starts the engine.

[07:19] - Mija

And his eyes light up. He's smiling ear to ear, with tears in his eyes. It works.

[07:27] - Mija

And he gives Tatika the car and gets back to running and working. But this time back at school.

[07:44] - Mija

Now for Tatika and Rocky, the adventure of living in New York was about starting over and surviving, trying to live the American dream. Mano is still young and he's still dreaming. But he found his calling.

[08:01] - Mija

After he graduated. He joined the armed services to serve the country that had welcomed his parents.

[08:10] - Mija

When the time comes to go. Rocky drives him to the airport. Tatika and I are in the backseat. He throws his bag over his shoulders, head shaved, in uniform. His tag glistening in the sun as he hugs us all goodbye. He asks for a blessing from Tatika and gets on the plane. He's scared, nervous and excited all at once.

[08:53] - Mija

When I ask him why he decided to do it. He said. This country gave them everything. So I'm going to give it everything.

[09:08] - Mija

This episode was produced by Studio Ochenta. Our executive producer is Lory Martinez, our associate producers are Laura Ubaté and Rebecca Seidel. Our theme music is Gabriel Dalmasso. Our art is by Tiffany Delune.

[09:21] - Mija

Follow us on Twitter and Instagram @mijapodcast. That's m-i-j-a podcast. If you like the show, tell a friend about it and maybe leave a comment on Apple podcast while you're at it. Until next time sending you much love and good ol' American Recuerdos.

[09:44] - [Tanisha](#)

Hi I'm Tanisha and I like to drink wine. Hi I'm a podcast listener and I also like to drink wine. Hi podcast listener. Hi Tanisha. So you like wine. Yeah, but like all I know about it is that I like it red. Really now? Well have I got the podcast for you: [Wine school dropout](#), a podcast demystifies the wine world in eight short and sweet episodes hosted by yours truly. You'll learn how to talk wine, what makes old wine taste good and what makes champagne bubbly. Coming soon.

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