



## STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

### MIJA (ESPAÑOL) – 201: MIJA, THE PARISIENNE

[0:09]

Ten minutes is very little time. But when I was eight years old ten minutes was the time it took my older brother and me to walk to school. On the way to school. We would tell each other all the things we thought we were going to do there, and on the way back, we'd talk about all the stuff we actually did.

[0:27]

Maybe that's how I get a taste for storytelling. Why I became Mija. Although this first episode is about me. Others will talk about members of my family: those alive, those long gone and those still dreaming.

[0:44]

Here's what you need to know about me. I'm a big foodie. I'd love to talk. I love to help others, and I love to embellish things to tell a good story. I'm Mija. So here we go. Ten minutes to tell my story.

[1:00] .

Paris in the 80s, the city of Lights, the city or the Eiffel Tower, home to Yves Saint Laurent, Chanel and the famous baguette. But Paris there was also home to a working class, and immigrant population, like my parents. My mother, Hein, is half Chinese from Shanghai and half Vietnamese. She emigrated to Paris, France, in 1975. My father Nong is Chinese from Canton. He also immigrated to Paris, France, in 1976. During the day, Hein worked as a saleswoman in a souvenir shop in the lovely Beaubourg neighborhood in the center of Paris.

[1:43]

Here's how they met: Hello, miss. I'm looking for a gift for my mother. Do you have an idea for a 50-year-old lady? Humm, if she's anything like my mother, the shinier, the more colorful it is, the better. They smile at each other. And just like that, they fell in love.

[2:16]

Imagine moving thousands of miles from home, to a city of millions, where you disappear into the crowds where your French isn't the best it could be and where work is hard to come by. Life as an immigrant isn't easy. So naturally, the person that makes you feel most at home is someone from home. These two immigrants found each other in Paris. They fell in love and had a son, Julien, and then a daughter. Me, Mija.

[2:53]

A few years later, they separated. Julien and I stayed with Hien, who remarried a Frenchman. Nong found love again too. But he always stayed close to us. Growing up, my parents used to tell stories about family members, you know, like that of, my great aunt, Lu Yi Ming.

[3:03]

Lu Yi Ming was an ordinary woman. She didn't own much, but always gave to others Lu Yi Ming when she could. One day, while walking by a river near her home, Lu Yi Ming saw a young boy fishing. He was so thin that it was obvious that he had nothing to eat. At the end of the day, the boy had caught nothing, so Lu Yi Ming gave him a bowl of rice. Every day after that, she would give him a bowl of rice to make sure he had something to eat. The young boy took the bowl, embarrassed and promised to pay it back one day.

[3:52]

Years passed and Lu Yi Ming lost sight of him.

[3:56]

She then immigrated to France and had to start over with nothing. It was hard. But one day, during a long and disappointing job search, the recruiter who met her at the door looked familiar. The boy had become a man and now worked in an office in the middle of Paris. They recognized each other at once. That's how she got the job that allowed her to stay in France and provide for her family.

[4:26]

She had reaped the results of her past good deeds. In our culture, that is called karma.

[4:35]

Karma is what happens when we do good deeds. If we are generous, then good things will come back to us tenfold. Nothing is impossible if you have good karma.

[4:48]

And of course, the opposite is also true. With karma, if we do bad deeds, they come back to bite us. Every night before bed, Hein would tell us variations of Lu Yi Ming's story to show us the power of karma.

[5:04]

She strongly believed that no matter what happened, we shouldn't be afraid, and we shouldn't complain because everything is the result of our karma.

[5:14]

OK, maybe you don't believe in karma, at first neither did I. But let's think about it for a second. If that were true and all your good deeds and your bad deeds were recorded in a notebook, wouldn't you want to be able to reap the rewards of your good deeds? I would.

[5:36]

Anyway, my story takes place between two cultures, French culture and Asian culture. Growing up in Paris was great.

[5:46]

We lived in a working-class neighborhood; it wasn't exactly the chic Paris you see in magazines.

But for me, it was paradise. Next door, there was a Moroccan grocery store where I bought sweets after school. At the end of the street, there was a French bakery to buy baguettes for Sunday sandwiches, and across the street, a metro station that meant adventure. The Metro could take us anywhere from the Eiffel Tower to Disneyland-Paris or the Jardin des Plantes.

[6:14]

Everyone I grew up with came from or had parents who came from somewhere else. My best friend was Algerian, my other girlfriends were Chinese and Cambodian in my class there were also Senegalese, Moroccan and Polish girls. All French.

[6:31]

As for my Chinese and Vietnam culture, that came from my parents. We couldn't afford to travel and fly home to China, but it was everywhere at home. By the front door at the altar of our ancestors, where every Sunday, Hein would by some fruit to place underneath the photos of our grandparents. In the kitchen, Hien cooks dishes that reminded her of home and at the holidays during Chinese New Year.

[7:03]

When we go to the Dragon Parade in the 13 district and ate Bahn mi on the side of the room. But as I grew older, I began to reject my Asian culture. I didn't realize yet that it was an important part of my identity. The Asians I saw on TV in France were either street vendors with

ridiculous accents or Chinese mafia. I couldn't see myself in them. Instead, I wanted to look more like the singers whose posters I used to collect.

[7:41]

American or British pop stars from the 90s or 2000s. But I didn't look like them at all. So, because I couldn't choose what I looked like. I choose to link to my other culture, French culture. It was only later on that I understood that this mix of France and Asia is actually a richness that allows us to see the world in many ways at once.

[8:19]

But there's one thing I regret, and I want to end my 10 minutes with this.

[8:24]

Somewhere in a landfill, lies the remains of a dining room table, a big, beautiful wooden table, big enough to sit eight people in its heyday.

[8:36]

It was our dining room table in Paris. At this table, my whole Franco Asian and universe was mixed together. It was there that we shared Hien's traditional dishes: Chao for when I was sick. Banh cuon

for when we received guests and spring rolls for snacks on a hot summer day. But as much as I loved Asian food, I didn't like it when Hien showed off our culture when I had friends over. I didn't want to feel different, so I often asked her to speak to me only in French whenever they came over.

[9:12]

One day on my way home from school, after a particularly hard day when I had been called Chinese one too many times. half out of shame, half out of needing to be like the others. I told Hien to stop talking to me in Chinese altogether. So, from that day on, she stopped. And so, did Nong. For a few years, they would speak to me in broken French and to each other in our mother tongue. I only realized how special it had been to have that source of language and love until much, much, much later.

[9:50]

I am the daughter of immigrants, and every day I write to Hien to see how she is : Hello, Mum. How are you? We talk together in the evenings and I tell her about my day. When I write to her, I imagine her on the other side of the phone in her house. I know that after our conversation she will get up and as she does every night, she will pray in front of the Buddha statues for everything to go well for the family and especially for her children.

[10:23]

She's been doing the same thing since before I can remember. After dinner, once the kids were in bed, Hien would stay up, kneel before the altar of the ancestors and the Buddhists and thank them for our good health. Nong for his part, even though he would never admit it to me, would pray every night too: "Qin ai de baobao Dou hui hao qi lai de

[10:49]

My dear daughter, everything will be all right for you.

[11:01]

And their prayers were answered. After all, I am here aren't I?

[11:26]

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 @mijapodcast, m-i-j-a podcast. For full transcripts of the show, you can check out our website ochentastudio.com. Until Next time!

**FINAL DEL EPISODIO**