



STUDIO OCHENTA ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

MIJA (ESPAÑOL) – 06: TITI

[00:04]

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 Titi. He's an adventurer. He loves deeply and forgives always, and he loves to tell stories. Titi is my grandfather. If this is your first episode with Mija go ahead and listen to Episodes 1 to 5 before jumping into this one. So here goes. 10 minutes to tell his story.

[00:50]

Imagine a strapping young gentleman, in the heart of the Amazon rainforest. He's carrying a backpack with the essentials: water, provisions, pen, paper, and a hunting knife. He moves through the forest unafraid. He's already faced off the greatest of beasts, the bull. So a little rain in the world's largest jungle is a walk in the park. Or so he thinks. He has to have his wits about him.

[01:25]

Any false movement could lead to certain death. There could be a poisonous frog, an Angry Gorilla, Giant fire ants.

[01:34]

And he's all alone.

[01:39]

This is Titi. One day he gave up his life as a matador to start a family in the capital of Colombia: Bogota. But with no experience, the newspaper gave him the hardest job of all: covering the national territories; which include part of the Amazon rainforest. His main task: telling the stories of the indigenous tribes living there. And on this particular trip, he got lost.

[02:15]

He had been hours since he could make out where he was, but he ends up finding a river and follows it to a village that's not on any map. A place where the light glistens through the forest canopy, where the birds are of enormous size, where no one ages. The food is plentiful. The music is enchanting. And the trees look like they're made of gold.

[02:48]

Everything is perfect.

[02:51]

He spent several days drinking and dancing and feeling alive. It's like he's under a spell.

[03:01]

He'd forgotten how long he'd been gone and how far he was from his wife and children. Until he trips on a branch and something falls out of his bag. His notebook.

[03:14]

Filled with observations of the places and people he'd seen and a picture of his family that he carried with him always. Suddenly.

[03:23]

He remembered.

[03:38]

All of a sudden, he missed his family so much that he ran out of the hut they'd made for him, grabbed his things and never looked back.

[03:47]

If he had he thinks, he might not have been able to leave. And so he left this golden place. And though he returned many times on reporting trips, he never found it again. When he got back, he decided not to write about it for the newspaper. It was too unbelievable. Instead, he kept it for himself and for la familia of course. Whenever he told Mano and I this story, the details changed ever so slightly to keep our interest. Sometimes the trees were pink, or the people were old instead of young.

[04:29]

Or he stayed for months or years instead of days. But Mano and I heard it so many times that we'd correct him. And he'd laugh his big laugh.

[04:5]

You see my mom and I are his gringo grandchildren. Little Americans born to his daughter in Nueva York. We'd barely even seen a forest, just trains and maybe a park or two.

[05:04]

So these stories in The Jungle were exotic and foreign to us. But they were also our stories. The stories of our people, our homeland. Of Colombia. And he wanted us to know them.

[05:27]

Titi grew up an orphan taking care of his younger sister. He did odd jobs to get by. Until one morning when he was almost 16 he walked past the plaza Simon Bolivar. For those of you who don't know, the Plaza Simon Bolivar is a huge space in the center of Bogota.

[05:45]

Known for being the center of Colombia's independence but also for its many many pigeons. And there he saw a matador in full regalia and a bull, charging at him.

[06:05]

Titi became obsessed, stayed after the show and asked to become the man's protege.

[06:10]

Years later, he'd be wearing the same uniform at the breakfast table where he sees the love of his life. Yita.

[06:19]

He participates in his last bull fight the day she announces that she's going to have a baby. They have three children: Tatika, who you already know, Melita, her sister, and Memo, his only son. They lived in a big house filled with music. Titi would go on his reporting trips and then come back to his kids. There was love in that house. When the girls were old enough to date, he turned a blind eye when they came home after hours. He bought their excuses and let them have their fun.

[06:55]

And then one by one they all grew up. Left the house, all except for Tatika. The last little bird. She was growing restless and so Titi told Yita, "What can we do for her?" And Yita found the answer. Soon enough, Tatika decided to leave for America to find happiness in Nueva York and with a heavy heart, Titi watched her go. Drank his coffee in silence the morning she left, knowing that if he spoke, he'd break into tears.

[07:43]

Years later, when she fell in love with Rocky. Titi and Yita, got all dressed up and went over to the American embassy in Colombia. They wanted to see their daughter get married. They

practice their English on the bus on the way there. "Hello, how are you? I'm good. Fine, and you? Please let us go see our daughter get married."

[07:56]

But despite their efforts, they were denied visas. A year or so passed and Tatika was going to give birth to me, Mija.

[08:08]

And so they returned again, well-dressed practicing their English on the bus. "Hello, how are you? Please let us go to America to see our daughter give birth." But despite their efforts, they were denied again.

[08:24]

They went home dejected and during their nightly phone call with Tatika, said they couldn't come this time either. After a while, they stopped trying. And so it went that Titi and Yita never got to come to America.

[08:39]

So instead we went to them. Sometimes in the summer and sometimes for Christmas. But only if Tatika could afford it.

[08:55]

Distance is a funny thing when you're the child of immigrants. You don't think about it as much as you think you would.

[09:01]

How thousands of miles separate you from your grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins. How there are people you've never even met who look like you and share your blood.

[09:11]

Because we barely ever saw them, they were immortalized in our minds like the people in Titi's stories. In our dreams, we imagine them for who they are with and without us. They are young beautiful and alive. Ana making her sancocho and saying her prayer. Fino smiling at the big family he created. Titi, the matador full of love.

[09:41]

The night before he left this world. I dreamt of Titi.

I dreamt that he was telling me a story. He said: When you wake up you'll hear the end.

[09:57]

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. 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.

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