

PROGENY COFFEE

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NYC “the big ~~apple~~ orange”

It's incredible how many things can be in the basement of a fashion design company: plastic bodies on top of each other, legs up, a gray arm, a skin-colored torso, a pile of heads separated from the rest, in an almost macabre scene, inside that stuffy basement; old mannequins. María did not feel afraid, or at least she did not think about that, nor fatigue, nor about the fact that the company practitioners did not do that. She was thinking about her goal: to stay working in New York, leave Colombia behind, and find a place in one of the world's fashion capitals. So, she was in the basement of ZERO María Cornejo, a well-known fashion design studio; objects whose time had passed, things discarded, and far away stuff made her remember Armenia, the farm, and her family coffee tradition. Family Memories in a basement. The constant phrases she got used to since she was a little girl: "This is very hard," referring to the economic situation, the price of coffee, the absence or excess of rain. Her origins, her roots, her Progeny, were entangled between the branches of the coffee trees of the family farms. Both her father and her mother came from peasants who, with hard work, had been able to expand their fields and lands. But almost since she can remember, "things are very hard." She sets aside a big box with odd-smelling fabric swatches, sweeps the floor, and continues to organize that basement that didn't seem so big until she started tidying it up.

Grandfather Hernán taught her to love the countryside, the clean and fresh air in the mornings, the moonlit nights for walking, the company of the dogs, and the sweet smell of the mill. He, Hernán Mejía Vélez, paisa, and coffee grower, was also the one who skillfully implanted the idea of leaving the farm. From studying in Bogotá, Medellín, abroad, wherever, but leaving behind the family business, the countryside, the sensation of the wet meadow under her bare feet. With almost superhuman efforts, her family was able to pay for her studies in the capital. For someone from a small city, going to study elsewhere, and more so to Bogotá, was something big. When she spoke to her grandfather, he insisted on not giving up, finishing her studies, and not marrying or starting a family until she finished her degree. He also told her to help with the financial burden if she could. The University of the Andes is not cheap, so she worked, adapted to the cold, earned her subjects, and on vacation, she went to Armenia, to the farm, her quiet place, with city eyes, without much interest in what was happening in the coffee plantations. Until one day, she had to return from emergency because her grandfather had left them. He died on the farm. María was already in the last semesters of her degree. She fired grandfather Hernán and saddened, returned to Bogotá to a complex reality: she had to decide what subject to do her undergraduate work. She lay down on the bed in her room, cold as the rooms that remain alone for a few days and decided to call her mother to say that she had arrived safely. She thanked her for the call and added that Grandpa had so much to offer that everyone was unhappy. María missed him. "Darling, they told us that he won an award from the agricultural institute for the research he had been doing on oranges, did you know?"

Grandpa had dedicated his last years to oranges. The Coffee Growers Committee recommended to reduce his coffee crops and plant citrus. Hernán, methodical and diligent, investigated, rehearsed, started, failed, started again, took other paths, and, finally, developed a unique variety. This juicier, bigger, and seedless orange was, upon his death, recognized by agricultural entities as one of the best varieties. After a few days of thinking about what to do for her undergraduate work, María saw a package of large, colorful and round oranges in a supermarket, and she thought of Grandpa. Those, she believed at the time, could be the "Pernambuco" oranges, as the name of Hernán variety, and they were there in the supermarket, next to the Valencia oranges, as if they were the same thing as if someone had not developed them to be juicier, bigger. In bulk. The undergraduate work would be about that, she decided from grandfather's oranges. She spent three months on the farm investigating everything she could. She invented a brand, packaging, a marketing strategy. When she had everything ready, she presented her work at the University of the Andes, one of the best in the country. A few days later, she received the final qualification: grandfather's oranges won the highest rating.

She gave her family the job, proud. There was a way to bring the oranges to the final consumer without so many intermediaries. To communicate to the client that these oranges were not the same as those of other packages from other farms. María would go to seek luck elsewhere. She got an internship at a fashion design firm in New York. She thought she would not continue implementing her undergraduate work ideas. Her place was in New York, designing for the most prestigious firms. She would go far. In Colombia, the family did not do what the job said; they thought it would be impossible, that the only way was to sell to the wholesaler at the price that he said, that the paper holds everything, but that the reality was different. Anyway. They kept saying, "things are very hard".

In New York, María cleaned the basement, ran errands, volunteered to work overtime, and at the end of her internship, they told her that they wanted her on the team permanently, to stop by such a law office to help her manage her work permits, what a welcome. It was worth it.

FASHION: LOVE

But wait, nobody makes it to New York City, even if it's an internship, it's that easy. No? And it is that city is essential in this story. As a narrator, I cannot put my readers out of the blue in the basement of a fashion design firm; they already did that in that Terminator scene in which Arnold Schwarzenegger falls in a ball in the middle of a fairway, and who am I to repeat it? This part of the story takes us back to Bogotá and an anxious María because she presented her fashion design collection at Bogotá Fashion Week. She and a group of students from the University of the Andes wait, with their best outfits, to decide who will be the best young designer at the fair. Everything had started a few months before; the career director was surprised with the students' teamwork result. He was so encouraged that he called old friends, pulled strings here and there, got space for their students in the new talents parade of the most critical fashion fair in Bogotá. That is why they were there. "The award goes to ..." they heard with a twinkle in their eyes and their stomach-churning. They won. The teacher's face of pride and anxiety disappeared to give way to the joy of being talented, of a great effort recognized. Her path would be fashion, decided the young woman from Armenia who was beginning to triumph in

the country's capital. That award was a confirmation. So, she made the luggage to attend a Cool Hunting and Trend Design course at the European Institute of Design in Barcelona. When she told her father about the opportunity to study in Europe, like her grandfather when she left for Bogotá, he challenged her not to return to Colombia until having an internship in a company or a scholarship. María, since she was a child, has been good at challenges and knows that everything is possible to achieve with perseverance and work. She accepted and crossed the Atlantic.

Now the rope is tangled; from Barcelona to New York, there is a lot of Atlantic Ocean. A determined María came to the city of the Sagrada Família or Güell Park looking for the opportunity to achieve what she set out to do. She asked each professor, the older students, the managers if they had other jobs apart from the Institute and about internships in those jobs. At first, unsuccessfully, then as her performance in the specialization attracted attention, the opportunity she was waiting for appeared: an internship in New York in a significant firm in the world of *haute couture*. And yes, there came another challenge. This time of herself with herself: she was going to get them to offer her the indefinite-term job, not as an intern, but as an employee, and again, with talent, effort, giving more —like when they looked for a volunteer to help to tidy up the basement — she did it.

But the big apple does not appear here in vain; NYC is essential because after living there and meeting friends, María met her husband John, of French descent. Finally, the narrator can recover the skein to return to Armenia, with an anxious María, waiting for her boyfriend's reaction when he saw the aunts wanting to dance a Pastor López "*porro*" with the frenchman; a narrow and strange familiarity that Colombians develop at meeting someone. In his visit to this town in Quindío, John took photographs of the colorful balconies, the carved wood patterns ceilings, people smile, farm silos, and the morning dew coffee plantation; he told her that he had no idea the coffee tasted so good. For Americans, it is simply caffeine. It is the energy of the engine that moves the gear of that giant economy. Especially in New York, where it is common to see people in a hurry with their 6USD coffee in a glass marked with COSTA or STARBUCKS. A bitter black coffee, burnt, without a pleasing aroma, but with the customer's name and a happy face written on the cardboard of the glass. But on that trip, John had tasted a coffee like the one from grandfather Hernán's farm or her father's. It had seemed like something else, another drink, a different delicacy, and María felt that something of what she had wanted to move away during those years, returned to her life suddenly. The pride of her agricultural heritage, of her coffee blood. It was also the first time she thought about bringing Colombian coffee to the United States.

Progeny

The idea of coffee remained in their minds. María and John returned to their jobs in the city of Central Park, and they finished the pounds of coffee brought from Colombia. She was thinking about how to help small coffee growers to sell reasonably; that the "rich of the town" were not the only ones who sold their product well. María wanted to help them reach the final consumer and thus earn more. She had in mind the thesis of grandfather Hernán's orange. But fashion week was coming, fusing one-day work schedules with next day; were inhuman rhythms those of the city that never sleeps, as the Sinatra song says. And she, like the city, didn't sleep either, but soon she would need to: they were going

to be parents. Bella was on her way, and she couldn't, nor did she want to, keep up with the rhythm of her life. She heard phrases from her bosses or more experienced colleagues that made her think about what she wanted for her life. "My son graduated from college, and I didn't find out about anything; I could never be, "I feel like I don't know my daughter". Phrases that were not encouraging at all for her, close to being a mother.

Then, and after thinking about it for a while, they decided to change course. John, who had always worked in technology startups, decided to look for work on the West Coast, specifically, in the hub of this type of company: Silicon Valley. One day, while the new dad was taking the gases out of a newly fed Bella, he saw the notification on his phone: he got the job he wanted. He put his baby girl in the crib, and slowly, without making any noise, he went to María and told her the news he had just received. Was she still sure she was leaving her career behind? They had to advise when they could be in San Francisco. A week later, they unpacked their bags at the apartment John's company helped them find. Bella was crying, tired of a very long trip for her two months, but her parents, although just as tired, were happy of that new beginning for all. In one of those suitcases was what they had been able to advance from the coffee project. So far, only papers with diagrams, drawings, and many questions: How is coffee imported? On parchment or toasted? How much coffee will be enough to start? What name to use?

One of those days, when they sat down to talk about the project, María told John something that she had been thinking about for days but did not know how her husband would take it: the name they had chosen seemed boring and unoriginal. Her husband nodded; he also knew that they could do better, that they had to start there. It had been several months since they had arrived on the West Coast; María took care of Bella, and John worked at a local startup. After looking at the job listings, María quickly discovered that this was not the city to work in fashion, so she decided to take it as an opportunity to develop her idea with coffee. In addition, in a series of setbacks with the banks and bad luck with international prices, her father had just lost his family's farm. After his brothers had sold their lands, what remained was already devalued and without coffee, when in other times they had been the region's pride. Because as we said before, the two families of María are farmers of caste. Anyway, the banks are only interested in being paid, and his father could not do it. María was motivated like never; she had to do something to help, even so far away. John, though busy, had a background in marketing because he was the son of one of France's most renowned publicists and because he was a designer and quite diligent. María told him that "*Café Grano*" was a boring name, dull, so he asked her, to activate his creativity, why he liked the topic of coffee so much. She explained that the farm seemed like a magical place; she felt connected with the land, with past generations, and knew that Bella would also feel the same. Then John, who had been looking in a botany book in those days, had the spark he needed. **PROGENY.** The new coffee generation, the connection between Hernán and Bella, all who were and all who will come. At that moment, they both knew they had found the name. They were happy.

The brand was missing. Hours and hours of conversations with their parents, with their uncles, with well-known coffee growers, many images from her childhood, from other days, from other trips, accompanied them as they put their ideas on paper. The coffee culture, as color, music, joy, and not from the point of view of "coffee", but from all that it implies: a visit to the coffee cultural landscape

through a colorful packaging that replicates the balconies carved in wood and painted in colors, the coffee grower always in the packaging, the coffee grower as the protagonist of everything, as the recipient of ancestral wisdom. And yes, also the ordinary obligations of her new life, making food, taking Bella to the park in the jogging stroller, going to church, everything in the life of a new mother, now with a business in mind. After some initial trials, the concept, the idea, and the result were a white package with the brand in black letters and a space to put a sticker with the coffee grower's photo and the bright colors of Quindío and its culture. A simple packaging, but differentiated from the others, which had the shade of recycled paper, black, or dark red wine. The focus would be the coffee culture, the coffee grower, that would differentiate them.

First steps

In San Francisco, Bella took her first steps. A beautiful afternoon at home, the girl who had been holding on to the walls and objects to move around and had decided no longer crawling, she let go, shaky, insecure, but smiling, and took a few steps to go into daddy's arms. They applauded. Progeny, on the other hand, wasn't going so fast. The conversations that María had with the producers were exhausting and ended in the same commonplaces "It is better to sell to the cooperative, this is how it goes to the fixed", "That way you cannot export", "The Federation does not let you do what you want". She did not understand, as she did not understand her family with the grandfather's orange project, why it was so difficult to convince people to do something new. "Things are very hard", they said since she could remember, but nobody did anything to change.

She had to use all her contacts and her family to find someone in Neira, Caldas, who looked promising. From the first moment they spoke with the coffee grower, they felt that it could be the perfect match for Progeny. They already had coffee in the United States because their plan was like María's, only they had the same problem but reversed. He needed contacts in the United States, clients. In addition, as he was a large coffee grower, he could carry out the plans they had to train and give technical assistance to coffee growers; it would guarantee the correct origin of the coffees and, of course, the quality. He was the ally they were looking for, and that made them very happy. A couple of weeks later, they had five 50kg bags of Colombian coffee in the garage of their home in San Francisco. They already had brand, packaging, now unroasted coffee beans.

No roasting? Yes, coffee cannot be roasted in Colombia because it would not be fresh when it reaches the end customer. This prominent situation was a problem for a new company that operated from home. So yes, María had five bags of coffee in the garage, and she didn't know how she was going to roast them, but an idea appeared: she would go to church. To pray, of course. Since she arrived, she became involved with the Christian church in her neighborhood; she met the pastor and part of her community. When you don't know anyone in a new place and have faith, like María, the church is a good starting point. Also, to find a solution to a problem like the one she had at that time. She had heard that the pastor's son was, in addition to a talented singer who assisted with the services, an excellent coffee barista. She decided to get closer and tell him her story, origin, idea, and present situation; the worst that could happen was to continue the same, with the coffee piled up. He, smiling, heard her and told her that he had a small toaster right there in the house. That he loved the idea, he was passionate

about everything to do with coffee, and that, of course, roast it whenever she wanted. María, happy, went to grab Bella by the hand to guide the little steps that she was already taking more confidently and came home to tell John everything. The next day, she was smelling the sweet smell of Progeny's fresh roasted first coffee.

Pick a niche (and don't let go)

She got up early, although not as early as in the days when they went to parks where there was no electrical connection. He took the teapot, the *chemex* jugs, the filters, the large thermos. She took one look at everything again before putting it in a large plastic box, covering it, and placing it in the trunk of the car on top of a folding table and next to the baby stroller. That day she wore the colorful skinny pants that she had designed inspired by the Progeny colors. John had just left the house, and she and Bella were ready to go out too. She secured her in the baby chair and mentally went over everything again. The extension! She had forgotten the extension. She got out, and with two long, graceful steps, she approached a plastic drawer organizer where she had the cable. She took it and returned to the car, calmed her little girl, started the engine, opened the garage door, and headed out to the park. She was early, as almost always. She pulled out the stroller, unfolded it, and secured Bella. A pair of women greeted her, who already had their babies in strollers and were ready to jog. One of them, new to the group, admired her skinny pants. "They have the colors of the balconies of the Colombian coffee region, I am from there, and I have a Colombian coffee company project. When we finish training, I am going to offer you all". María would respond, sometimes more inspired by the speech, sometimes less, but always with the "bait" of sweatpants, she had the opportunity to tell them about Progeny.

The day's training ended about an hour later. They traveled a circuit in the park dragging strollers, most of them were women, but there were also some men. When they finished, they talked for a while. Almost all the group members were couples of people who went to San Francisco to work, and almost none had papers or permits to do so, so, like her, they wanted to socialize and take care of the house and the children. María then brought the car over, opened the truck to lower everything, connected the extension - when there was a place to connect - and proceeded to do "the ritual": grind the roasted beans and begin to display the delicious smell of freshly ground coffee in the environment. Afterwards, boil the water, prepare the *chemex* with the filters and the necessary coffee, finally, carefully pour, and in a spiral, a splash of water over the ground powder to finish releasing the aroma of the freshly brewed Colombian coffee several meters around in California parks. In the end, when all the water contained in the upper cone passed through the filter and fell into the lower conical container converted into a drink carrying the ancestral wisdom of the land of María, the ritual ended. She offered everyone coffee. "No milk? No sugar?". "No, Colombian coffee does not need milk or sugar, try it, it comes from a farm in Neira, Caldas, it has these notes, or these others", in short, the result was almost always the same: everyone was surprised that there was a coffee that does not need to be sweetened or lowered with milk. A coffee that tastes and smells good is smooth but with deep notes. In the end, she sold a bag or two, picked everything up, put Bella back in the car seat, and drove home. Thus, almost every time she met with the group, she brought the coffee, sometimes prepared from home, others with her ritual from that summer, cold filtered or cold brew, she invented the ways to publicize her draft.

María was not the only one who had identified that market niche. Almost all members of the jogging group were the people who made the purchase decision in their homes. They were interested in sports, healthy living; they were a gold mine for marketing. She knew that from the beginning, but it became more evident because they began to receive invitations from stores, including a special discount. Approached them in the park to give them free samples of some exclusive products for the group. Then, and with daring, every time she found out about an event in her niche, she went and proposed to the organizers to offer the coffee and, in the United States, as anywhere in the world, nobody says no to a station of coffee. This event was also how she became known more and more to her customers, who, deep down, would also be the way to reach technology companies. But that happens later, calm down.

Neighborhood stores

The next step was to look to sell in stores and supermarkets. It was getting tiresome to go here and there and not deal more than five or six bags a week. Or maybe it was not so heavy, but it seemed not to be the way to have the impact she wanted on Colombian coffee growers. She needed help to sell. The coffee from the first order had not run out until that moment, and several months had already passed. What to do? She asked her dad, who was visiting San Francisco at the time. He, a businessman and a daring spirit, proposed something to her: "Let's fill the car with all the coffee you have and walk away, we go, and we don't come back until we have delivered everything." Crazy, but she liked her dad's crazy things and decided to see how that would turn out. "Have you been to the supermarkets yet?" He asked. She answered no. "Let's go then". They went and got out, and luckily, they found the manager. They began to explain the whole story with such enthusiasm that, in a couple of neighborhood stores, where people from the niche they viewed as their final customers shopped, they coded her product. That same night, as the father promised, they came home with an empty car. That gave them a powerful boost. On weekends, they would go with a small stand, like the one in the park, to demonstrate, expose the ritual to the market's customers, and thus sell. They liked the coffee, the idea that it tasted so good on its own, the smell so delicious, being able to drink it without milk or sugar, but it still wasn't selling as much as they wanted. So, she decided to enroll in a course at Stanford University called "Boost Your Startup" to find the answers that she did not yet have.

It was already 6:30 pm, and the girl did not arrive. John was at work. It didn't look good. Finally, a message to WhatsApp from Debbie, the babysitter: she wasn't going to be able to get there; his mom was sick or something. And María, ready for more than an hour, made up her mind: she would take Bella to Stanford. She quickly packed everything she might need in the diaper bag, put the shoes on the sleepy girl, and put her in the car on the way to college. Days ago, she enrolled in the "Boost your startup" course, something like how to boost your entrepreneurship, and she was unwilling to miss the first session, in fact, none. So, she walked into the classroom with the half-asleep girl and sat in the back of one of those traditional college classrooms, like grandstands. She placed her daughter next to her and handed her several blank sheets and some markers. Naturally, she felt everyone's eyes on her; she was late and with a girl in the room. She returned a smiling look, a look that said, "I'm glad to be here, Bella too." The professor quickly resumed and ended her little scene.

On the last day of the course, when they decided to present Progeny with the award for best entrepreneurship, her daughter accompanied her. She chose not to call the babysitter in any of the sessions, Bella had been excellent, and she preferred that her daughter was there. They were at Stanford, in the mecca of technological entrepreneurship. A girl from Armenia with a business idea that sought to bring coffee to the United States, helping the Colombian coffee grower and generating fair trade, was chosen as the winner. It was not a minor thing. She was proud and calm. Proud of what she had achieved and peaceful because she was finally clear about her next step, because she could, with the model that they had helped her build in the course, have the scope that she had planned. In addition, in the process, she had met Daniela, someone who, like her, was in San Francisco accompanying her husband and who could not work in the United States but who, in Chile, was a prominent economist. With their help, she had built a business plan and was ready to conquer Silicon Valley with coffee.

People you may know

Does Carla's husband, the tall Argentine, work at Google? Or is it the husband of Aurore, the red-haired Frenchwoman, who is in an excellent position on Facebook? They wondered every day, looking for a way to enter one of those giants. She had concluded that to impact the coffee grower they were looking for, they needed to grow. And growing up in San Francisco is almost by definition selling to tech companies. They were foreigners recently in California, and their contact network did not go beyond the church and the other mothers in the group. But at least they had the group. So, they set up "the operation" to find, within those contacts, the right people, the husbands or wives who could give them an account of the people in charge of purchases in the large technology companies.

In a modern home, a typical Silicon Valley family starts the day. The father, of Asian origin, watches the day's news on his cell phone screen and reviews the stocks. Two children almost the same age eat pancakes and are also distracted by watching YouTubers videos on their iPhones. The mother is the only one who does not have the phone at hand because she is busy holding the blender's lid to prevent what happened to her the first time; she used that powerful blender, and the kitchen walls ended full of oatmeal and blueberries. When the cycle ends, she grabs the pitcher and pours the shake to her husband in a large thermos. A smell of sweet coffee catches the man's attention as he receives the thermos almost without looking at his wife, looking over her shoulder from where that aroma comes. The new *chemex* that María recommended preparing the Colombian coffee that she likes so much. She is glad that her husband notices the delicious smell of that coffee that does not need milk or sugar. "Do you want to?", She says pointing to the glass jug. "It's a very nice preparation method, right?" He nods, putting the phone aside and walking over. "It's a new café, one of the women from Running's group showed me. She is from Colombia, and you know what they say about Colombian coffee". They both approach the jug, and the aroma rises and envelops them, conquers them. He takes the jar by the wooden handle and pours it into the two cups she had taken out earlier. They each bring their bowl and warm their hands while smelling the black liquid. They both wait, enjoying the aroma for a while longer, for the drink to cool down a bit before taking a short first sip. The flavor is deep and fruity, smooth, but rich in sensations. They drink their coffee, talking, calm, without looking at their cell

phones, looking into each other's eyes, until the clock on the wall shows that ten minutes have passed, and the children will be late for school.

There were several houses where Progeny had already entered. The aroma, the taste, the ritual. Therefore, when they searched among their contacts for people who could help them make an appointment with someone within the technology companies, they found help. But it was not easy. After nine months of insistent emails, to get the email address of someone in such a company that could give them the address of another in that company who, in turn, would communicate with the person in charge of purchases. Someone interested in hearing the story of a good taste coffee and with a social impact. Several times they were close, but almost all companies had already handed over the contract to a large company for some time or did not want to change suppliers. But María has always been sharp, and she wasn't going to give up easily. They kept insisting and, finally, they found a door slightly open. It was a unique opportunity to publicize Progeny no less than on Facebook.

She was going up in the elevator with nervousness that she had only felt in the days of fashion design or very critical personal situations. She had arrived early, anticipating any delay in entering the social network offices with the most users in the world. The single entry there was already an experience for her, but she knew that they had everything to win the contract. She came to a large, well-decorated room and waited for the managers. She took the opportunity to put everything in order, make a mini stand with the coffees she had brought and give everything the Progeny touch. When the Facebook representatives entered, they greeted each other smilingly and calmly. Everyone felt empathy between the social network and this company that had so insistently searched for that appointment. After explaining that in addition to selling coffee, they gave training for coffee growers, fair trade for producing a much better coffee, and a genuinely Colombian product, a high-quality product connected to its origin; after all that, they tasted the coffee. And even though all the above was very winning, what caught the attention of Facebook shoppers was the taste. They had never tasted such a different coffee, where they could feel the proper notes and subtleties. What cherries and red fruits, yes, it was. What an orange peel, and of course, that was the taste. They had earned a vital invitation: They would compete against the ten largest toasters in the United States. It was a big challenge, but they knew that it would be possible based on the expressions of their clients that day.

Facebook

Facebook selected Progeny as its coffee. During the phone call, they asked many questions that were certainties in Maria's head: Are they capable of handling a project of this size? It would be roughly one container every two months. Can they keep the quality? Do they have enough capital? So, full of faith, she replied: yes, we can. She also began to work because faith without work is not the same. The first thing she did was call her supplier in Colombia.

— A container every two months? Impossible!

The next day, she went to two banks with the contract sent to the mail to ask for the money to start operating. It was sure that, with that document, they were going to lend her easily. But both denied

her request. And so, rejections all that week. “You have no credit history in this country”, “you are not a citizen”, a lot of negatives. But in Maria's mind, everything was still yes; God was not going to abandon them. The imported fears also came from Colombia: "How do you think of getting into such a mess?", “You will not achieve margins”, "This is not how you do business with coffee". All phrases could have plunged her into despair and slowed her down, but that prompted her to prove to everyone that it was possible, for grandfather, grandmother, all her ancestry—one thing at a time.

—“Ready! María”— John told her, sending her a contact through the phone's messaging app. With these people, we can roast coffee. They are a co-roasting space and, although they told me it was a lot and it was not the usual, they can give us a week in December to toast. There is only one detail: we must pay an advance payment.

In Colombia, everything went smoothly. The coffee growers agreed and managed to reach the necessary production to fill that first dreamed container. They received help from the Federation, guaranteeing the origin and making it easier to arrive in the United States. But they had another minor problem; they had to pay everyone, the shipping company, the truck, anyway. They needed money. María was sure that she had gone to all the banks in San Francisco, and the answer was “NO”, sometimes with kindness, sometimes without it. They weren't going to lend her the money, and it didn't matter that there was a contract with one of the best-known technology companies in the world. But, still, María did not lose faith and, one day while she was driving home, heard on the radio of a foundation that could help her, so, when she arrived, she wasted no time and called to tell her case.

It was already December 24, a day before the last deadline she had to pay for everything: coffee, transportation, the co-roasting space, packaging. Only a day before, she left the offices of the Working Solutions foundation, dedicated to helping people of Hispanic origin to whom the banks did not lend money - exactly like her - with a check for the amount needed to pay everything. She hurried to the nearest bank and consigned the bill, asking for help to see the amount reflected in her account earlier than usual because she had a large coffee order to deliver. This time, the bank did help her, and she managed to make the payments; the coffee arrived, they roasted and packed it, two weeks working day and night, but they managed to deliver her first order to the Facebook offices successfully, she knew it from the beginning: Yes, they could.

Operation Google

Agent M. leaves headquarters looking like a woman just going for a jog. Skinny pants, sports shirt, tennis. Her mission: To get information about the target. Her weapons and gadgets: a warm smile. For months, María played the role of Agent M. She was going jogging near the Google offices and watching what supplier trucks came in; she befriended the doorman; spoke with several people she saw walking around. She asked all of them about coffee: Does coffee seem delicious to you? Is there always coffee? Personal opinions about the coffee supplier company. Directly or sometimes beating about the bush, she extracted a little bit of information from each person. On the other espionage front, she kept using her contacts to search for someone within Google who would allow her to show the product. But

her main interest was that the employees she spoke to would help her set up a perfect cup profile. Over time, their good reputation on Facebook enabled them to get a meeting with Google management. Agent M. had almost achieved her goal, plus she already had the ideal coffee for the search engine company.

The presentation was the first day they applied a strategy they had defined since their first success story: involve technology in everything. After all, they sold to companies that moved in that environment and spoke that language. The gadget that Agent M. had brought to Google that day was virtual reality glasses to immerse shoppers in the coffee supplying farms while they gave them to taste a steaming, stimulating cup of coffee. The experience with Facebook had shown them something: none of the competing roasters could create an authentic relationship with the origin of their coffees. They were all mixtures, perhaps exquisite, but Progeny brought genuine coffee growers, farms, coffee plantations, and mongrel puppies to the most important technology companies. They had a genuinely sustainable chain from origin to cup, and that was very differentiating. By the end of the presentation, they knew they had positively impacted the minds of Google executives. They also had to convince employees; besides, it was a while before they could compete for that contract. Therefore, while telling them that they would evaluate several roasters in a few months, and Progeny had an invitation, Agent M. asked permission to do tastings, classes, and blind tastings with the employees, free of charge. Executives loved the idea and agreed. She knew that these companies are always looking to keep their employees happy, and that activity seemed terrific.

On the contest day, to choose the roaster that would supply the coffee to Google, Progeny was already a well-known brand among employees. It was a blind tasting, where key staff would choose the cup, they liked the most. María had worked for months carrying their product, explaining that the photo of the person in each package of that coffee was the photo of the Colombian coffee grower. She used the virtual reality glasses to create not just a story but an experience. They did blind tastings to identify notes and flavors, rewarding those who could best identify flavor profiles. So, too, they perfected the cup to present that day, competing against eight giant roasters from the San Francisco Bay. With other brands representatives, María waited for the customers' reaction; people were already beginning to be affected by the caffeine consumed that day. In the end, a smiling María thanked and collected her samples in a plastic box; something said to her that this contract would be theirs. She felt it perhaps for the knowing looks of executives when someone made good comments about a specific cup. Maybe only confidence in her work. At home, she got Bella ready for sleep and greeted John from work with all the details. At night, she dreamed of the farm, of the days when she made "snow angels" among coffee beans, at the mill. She dreamed of a Quindian sunset, the song of a flock of mountain parrots, the cold of dawn, and the heavy woolen blanket. The email came a few days later: Facebook had chosen them.

Achieve it and keep it

That day the shipment of coffee from Mrs. Sandra, a coffee grower from Caramanta, Antioquia, would arrive at the Google warehouses. When she can, María checks that everything is okay. She entered, parked her car, and greeted Karl, a tall and smiling black man in charge of receiving everything

that arrives at those offices and arranging it in the warehouse. Karl greets her back by calling her name. The truck is already reversing to settle in the bay indicated by the man, gesturing with a folder with everything he has received that day. María takes the opportunity to ask him about his children: "All is well; the little is already better from the tonsil infection". "And Bella? He asks. "Very well and growing". The high-pitched reversing noise stops, and boys in delivery charge get out of the cab, greet Karl and María, and begin to unload with a wheelbarrow. Seeing that everything is in order, the founder of Progeny says goodbye to everyone and recommends taking care of their coffee. The warehouse manager jokes, saying calmly, that he always places it close to his office to pass by and smell that delicacy as many times as possible in the day. María then heads to the offices and greets the receptionist first, asking her if she liked the last bag of coffee. "Yes, it is delicious, ma'am, I always have a cup by my side," replies the receptionist. "I'm glad," says María, who wants to take advantage of the fact that she is there to speak with the purchasing executive. She gestures to the receptionist and asks if he's busy. She takes a quick look and says, no, come on. María enters; he is glad to see her and invites her to sit down. They talk for a while. He tells her that the latest delivery is perhaps the best coffee he has ever tasted. She happily tells him that this one arriving from a famous region of Colombia for having the best origin coffees will surpass it. After a few more minutes of chatting, María leaves the office and returns home. Try to make these types of visits frequently; to focus on the client, the quality, every detail, and have excellent relationships with everyone. From Karl to the top executive, everyone is crucial to Progeny.

With Google is a long-term contract. On the other hand, Facebook renewed the agreement with a contest among the best roasters. It is not easy. Getting there was difficult, but staying, even more. However, María, John, and the entire Progeny team have achieved it with competitive prices - they pay the coffee grower fairly and avoid intermediaries to have an excellent final price - knowing their customers, but mainly because Progeny offers an experience. They carry the coffee of a real farmer, with his name, origin, and a portrait on the packaging. The other roasters can't show that because they don't know who produced the coffee; there is no connection to the origin. That is why they are in force, and they are still the providers of Facebook.

But entrepreneurship is not easy at all. The news began to arrive. One more flu, María thought at first, but the months were getting complicated. Sky, her second daughter, had just been born; due to the responsibilities of those first months, she had been going out little. She realized that the flu came from China, an extremely contagious virus with complications beyond a "typical" flu. John told the news while he was entertaining Bella with a ball and changing Sky's diaper at the same time. The companies are going to send their employees to do home office. We are going to have to transform ourselves. Suddenly, their business had to change completely. They had to reach the final client, not the companies. Very complicated. And then what? Start, period. It was necessary to open social media accounts to advertise there. Send communications to companies to check if they would allow them to stay in contact with their employees, direct deliveries, all a new and complex logistics that they had to set up rapidly to survive. A pandemic, who would have thought? A pandemic and all upside-down. But again, with the same love, perseverance, and faith, they faced the crisis and managed to overcome it. Today, when companies gradually return to their offices, they have that market, the original and the one they created with the strategy of subscriptions and deliveries to the final client, a new market from the crisis. They implemented the acceleration of processes planned for later.

Nowadays, Progeny is a vast reality; it is the company they dreamed of that grandfather Hernán did not see, but which he shaped in part from so many years of love for his family and the countryside. From the Pernambuco orange to Don William's coffee from Pitalito. Progeny is the pride of coming from a land where it is a virtue to end the day with nails full of soil, and the sweet smell of coffee permeates everything.

Her progenie would be proud.