



## All Relative: Defining Diego

Episode Eight: Becoming Aa Tiko'

A Production of Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment

**MUSIC:** repetitive gentle plucking of acoustic guitars with sounds that are filled with innocent wonder begins.

**Diego:** Previously, on All Relative: Defining Diego...

**Ten-year-old Diego:** My name's Diego but I'm from the Tzutujil tribe so they would call me Aa Tiko'.

**Dolores:** I give Diego away because I'm a woman and I can't really teach men's work to the boys.

**Laurie:** What are your expectations?

**Sixteen-year-old Diego:** I don't know, I feel like honestly, he's a changed dude.

**Laurie:** From what to what?

**Sixteen-year-old Diego:** From some hardass dude who fought in the war and stuff to just someone who is trying to survive the everyday life of the economy there...

**Rachel Nolan:** The way that international adoptions boomed at their height in Guatemala is not something that I think anyone who has intimate knowledge of it would care to repeat. Given the high levels of fraud and coercion of birth mothers.

**Dan: I always knew that, you know, when we adopted you, it was a temporary thing. And then we were going to send you out into the world and you were going to be your own person.**

**MUSIC: repetitive gentle plucking of an acoustic guitar with tones that are filled with innocent wonder ends.**

**MUSIC: Dreamy and hypnotic melody of strings fades in.**

**Diego:** I studied abroad in Rome for a year in college.

One of the things I loved about my life there were these epic runs I would take through the city.

I started in Piazza del Popolo — a large round plaza with an Egyptian obelisk in the middle. Then I sprinted down a side street past the Spanish steps. I ended at the Coliseum, the most iconic amphitheater of all time. It made everything seem small in comparison. My feet pounded against cobblestones...older than anything I've ever known.

In Italy, I didn't have to deal with this forever question of whether I was Guatemalan or American. There, I just was. No one knew where I was from. I felt free.

It wasn't as simple as an escape. *Because* people in Italy couldn't figure out who I was, I had space — for the first time — to really decide for myself.

It was in Rome that I appreciated what it means to be Mayan. To be part of something ancient.

Today, in Minnesota, I'm still figuring out who Xicay is — who I am.

I want to work with kids with special needs — be the kind of teacher a sick, sad 12-year-old me could've looked up to. I'm working weekends at Punch Pizza, where I started as a dishwasher when I was 16. I work out. I play hockey. And I run across the Mississippi River to Minneapolis and back home to Saint Paul.

Running is like my therapy...as my feet pound the pavement, I sometimes get emotional. I reflect on what keeps me going. Why I'm here, living this life.

**MUSIC: Dreamy and hypnotic melody of strings fades out.**

**Laurie: When we first started doing this, you said adoption wasn't your issue — that you just as soon put it behind you. What do you think about that now?**

**Diego: Like, I could easily just hang it up and never deal with it again. But this is part of me. And this is a cool thing that is part of me. It's not something I want to run from anymore.**

**THEME MUSIC:** An uplifting and inspiring electronic beat begins with a strong guitar underneath begins softly

**Diego:** I mean, you've given me so much from this. The connection with my birth family. That was a goal — that I would know where I'm from and know my people. And you've given that to me. And that's been an incredible gift.

**Diego:** I'm Diego Xicay Luke...

**Laurie:** I'm Laurie Stern...

**Diego:** And from Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment, this is All Relative: Defining Diego, Episode 8: Becoming Aa Tiko'.

**THEME MUSIC:** Swells with intensity and fades.

## ACT ONE

**Car door slamming.**

**Diego:** I had never been to Isabel's house before. We always met wherever we're staying. This time was a little different. She actually asked us over. She actually asked us over, invited us over to her house.

**Laurie:** Yeah, and we needed Dolores' help to find the place.

She directed our driver Oswaldo as we made our way across town.

**Dolores:** Sí, no sé si se puede...

**Dan:** Oh my god.

**Diego:** I think we could walk if that's easier...

**Diego:** I remember it was up this steep hill, on a cobblestone road, which was barely big enough for a van. And our driver Oswaldo — the GOAT driver of Guatemala — was able to, like, maneuver through these really tight spots. We ended up stopping at this T in the road. You and Dolores went down a narrow alley. And I hung back and waited for Dan.

**Diego:** Okay, you ready Dan?

**Diego:** Inside Isabel's home was one small room — a dirt floor, no electricity, one water pump. There was a simple wooden bed frame stacked against each wall.

Everyone was there. My sister Josefa and her little boy. My brother Juan and his little girl — also named Isabel.

**Everyone greeting each other.**

**Isabel and Juan: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**[Laughter.]**

**Laurie: How are you? ¿Cómo estás?**

**Juan: Bien.**

**Family: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Dolores: He's doing well. He's okay.**

**Laurie:** Yeah, we were in Isabel's house and she was acting like a proud grandma, she was all smiling and friendly. But there was a tinge of nervous energy in the air. We still didn't know if Cristobal would show up.

**Diego:** I sat down on a bed. And I was kind of disappointed that Cristobal wasn't there, but Isabel left all of a sudden and when she returned, she was like, "He's on his way."

I remember Dan was standing in the doorway. And I just heard Dan say, "You must be Cristobal."

**Laurie: It's Cristobal. ¡Mucho gusto!**

**Diego: Hola.**

**[Laughter.]**

**Family: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Cristobal: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Diego:** Cristobal was smaller than me. And older than I thought he'd be. His back was bent, and his jeans hung on him. His brown fleece jacket was zipped all the way up. He had bushy eyebrows under a faded San Francisco Giants baseball cap.

He looked...beat up.

**Diego: Cristobal.**

**Diego: [Speaking in Tzutujil.] Hola.**

**Cristobal: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Dolores: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Diego:** I had practiced how to say: I am your son. Aa Tiko' — in Tzutujil.

I wanted to give him a hug, but I stopped myself.

And instead, I put out my hand.

**MUSIC: An emotional acoustic guitar version of the theme song begins.**

**Diego:** So there we were, shaking hands, and the last piece of my puzzle slipped into place.

He looked around and seemed delighted, but a little confused.

**Dolore and Cristobal: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]...Diego.**

**Diego:** I think all of us in that moment kind of realized the gravity of the situation. Just how special...and how this had been 23 years in the making.

Then Isabel got a stool for him. He sat down. And...we talked.

**MUSIC: An emotional acoustic guitar version of the theme song ends.**

**Diego:** He told me his father's name and his mother's name. That he was born April 18th, 1969. And this small room we were in belonged to his mother. My sister Josefa is named for her.

**Diego: And can...I just want to know about him growing up. What was his childhood like?**

**Dolores: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Cristobal: [Speaking in Spanish and Tzutujil.]**

**Dolores: And what he say when he grew up. And his father teached him how to use the hoe, and cleaning people's land, like, people growing corn and vegetable. He will clean the weeds on people's land. And he collects wood and then he went to go pick coffee cherry when it's the season for coffee, to get rid of something. And that's his job – picking coffee in San Pedro.**

**Diego:** Cristobal told me that he worked as a day laborer, doing whatever seasonal work was available. One day, he and his father were working in Tecpan, a city on the way to the capital. Soldiers on a military truck grabbed him and threw him in. Military service was mandatory in the '80s.

**Dolores: And they forced him to be with the military.**

**Diego: If he doesn't mind talking about some of his experiences in the military.**

**Because we want – we think it's important for people to know that uh...like, his story is very important. Let him...**

**Cristobal: [Speaking in Tzutujil.]**

**Dolores: I asked him why they sent him up in the mountains. It's like, to look for the guerilla people. And if they find the guerilla person, and they will tell them to kill**

**them. But he doesn't want to kill the people. Sometime he just hiding because it be hard for him killing their own people.**

**MUSIC: Sparse acoustic guitar filled with innocent wonder begins and ends.**

**Diego:** Cristobal told me the whole story. He said he was on guard duty. He was forced to stay awake, on his feet for days at a time. The soldiers never had enough to eat. They had to eat leaves and grass and wild beans just to survive.

One day, he was supposed to go out on patrol near the Mexican border...but he managed to escape. He said a lot of people were killed that day.

It was a horrible time, those years...1983 to 1989.

Then he said he came back to Santiago Atitlán...and everything that's happened since then was his fault.

**Diego:** I told him it was okay.

He's still my father and I still love him as my father.

**MUSIC: A bright wonderous synth from theme song begins.**

**Dolores:** Like what he say, thanks to my son Diego. And they always tell me before he comes but I never hear. But thanks now, I saw this car passing by in front of me. I didn't know it was my son came to visit. But I'm very happy. I love him and I'm happy to meet my son and all of the family that here too. I'm happy to meet them. I'm very happy. This is my Diego.

**MUSIC: A bright wonderous synth from theme song ends.**

**Laurie:** This meeting of families in Isabel's house. Everyone was aware how precious it was. It was really hard to say goodbye, especially to Isabel. But I had to try.

**Laurie:** I have one more thing...it's what I was trying to tell you back in 1999, when Diego was a little tiny baby. And I was trying to thank you, but I had no idea then because he's just a little baby. And he was the best thing in my whole life. And you gave him to me.

[Sounds of Isabel comforting Laurie, Laurie crying.]

**Dolores:** This is a gift to you, Laurie.

**Laurie:** Thank you, Isabel.

[Sounds of crying.]

**Isabel:** [Speaking in Tzutujil.]

**Laurie:** I can't believe you're comforting me. [Laughs and cries.]

**Dolores:** You have a gift and I have a gift. This son for us. Just be happy. As long as we live. Be happy you have a son.

**Laurie:** He's such a good boy.

**Mia:** Do you want to have the last word, Diego?

**Diego:** Uh, matiosh. Matiosh. Thank you, everyone.

**Isabel:** [Tzutujil.]

**Laurie:** Diego, I don't know if you caught that, but Isabel wasn't waiting for Dolores' translation.

**Diego:** Yeah, she was just talking to you in Tzutujil.

**Laurie:** Yeah, and then later, you thanked everyone in Tzutujil.

Remember later that night, we sat around at the hotel and tried to go everything that happened. So we could remember it.

**Diego:** Just...it was one of those things where I don't think when I was ready, he was ready and when he was ready, I was ready. It's always been like, he's trying to run away, maybe. And, and then, like, he — he comes in, and one of the first things he says when we sit down is, like, *I'm sorry, I didn't see you last time*. And so it really made me realize that he's been thinking about me for a long time, maybe more than just these seven years.

**Dan:** I remember was the, uh, 2005 trip. We were here at the Bambú and Isabel had this old snapshot photo of, um, Cristobal in his military uniform and he had a gun and she showed it to us and, you know, we were like, *Oh, that's Diego's birth father*. And we were like, *Diego, come here, look, this is your birth father*. And you know, you looked at it and it seemed like, you know, you stared at the photo for a long time. And then you were like, *Oh cool*. And then you ran off and you went to play, but it was sorta like that moment, I could see the wheels turning. You're trying to process who this guy was and what this meant. And, um, and so then comparing that to now 20 years later, it's, um, so much more.

**Laurie:** The whole day has been surreal. When he walked in, my first impression was, *He's so frail, he's so small*. And you know, over the years, we've imagined that he was strong and maybe mean and violent. And you just kind of wanted to put your arms around him and say...

**Diego:** It's okay.

**Laurie:** Exactly.

**Diego:** When he walked in and I shook his hand, I really just wanted to hug him right there to let him know, *You're safe. Like I'm, I'm your son, you're my father*.

**Laurie:** I, I feel like, like, not just...Cristobal and Isabel, but especially Cristobal and Isabel, but everybody was like a fully formed family member like, I especially felt that with Isabel. She had told you what you should do as a young man, responsible not

**just to her and your Tzutujil people, but to me and Dan, as she was telling you what for. I just remember, like, making eye contact with her. And she was like, trying to, I guess I can't remember what she was telling me cause I don't understand Tzutujil.**

**Diego: Can I tell you what I was observing? Just because I think this might be what you're trying to make the point was...she was talking to you and you were just nodding. And, like, you were just looking into each other's eyes. And your eyes were watering and her eyes were a little watery.**

**In this moment, I saw two, I saw both parents who really, really cared about me. And it didn't matter what language you spoke, where you're from, what the color of your skin was. All that mattered in that moment was we were all in that room for me.**

**And just, like, it was a language that didn't need to be spoken. It was just that language of being a mother. You know, just that maternal instinct towards me.**

**MUSIC: Synth and guitar theme cords fade in with finality and a sense of optimism.**

**Diego: And she was saying stuff to you, and you were saying stuff to her. None of you had any idea what the hell each other was saying. All you knew was that it was about me and that you both loved me. And you both love me. Like currently. That's what this is all about. That's what I noticed.**

**Laurie: You're right. Thank you. I needed help. [Laughs.]**

**Diego: That's what I'm here for.**

**Laurie: Yeah, no, that's that. That's what was going on.**

**MUSIC: Synth and guitar theme cords fade out.**

**Diego:** Stay with us.

## ACT TWO

**Diego:** I'm grateful that I know both my birth parents. I know not every adoptee has had that opportunity and not everyone even wants it.

But on our trip back last March, I met someone else who's putting the pieces of *her* puzzle together.

**Diego: Can you introduce yourself with, like, your name, um, where we are and kind of what you do, what your role is?**

**Kahleah: Sure, so my name is Kahleah Guibault...I am the Guatemalan director of El Amor de Patricia...and um...**

**Diego:** That's Kahleah. I met her on our last day in Guatemala in 2022. She was great. We have a few things in common. For one thing, we're about the same height. And she's adopted.

We both lived with our foster families the first five months of our lives. And, like me, she struggled to learn Spanish. But unlike me, she's fluent now. Which is good, because she lives in Guatemala and runs a children's home about an hour west of Guatemala City.

**Kahleah: ¿Qué estás jugando?**

**Kid: Pelota.**

**Kahleah: Pelota.**

**Diego: It kind of feels like a, I don't want this to come off the wrong way, but like a summer camp. Like, it's just...people are enjoying themselves and it's, it's very, it's just a good atmosphere. I get good vibes here.**

**Kahleah: Yeah, you know, we do our best. We know it's not the ideal situation, but for some of our kids who have been through some really difficult times, um, you know, it's, it's a needed safe home for them. Which is a whole other whole other...**

**Diego:** This place is called El Amor de Patricia.

Kids who are abandoned or whose families can't take care of them — they live here.

Some of them will be adopted — but by Guatemalans, not foreigners like before.

**Kahleah: Many times, babies come one day old, two day old, and they're with us until the moment they're adopted, which typically if they're abandoned at birth, this takes about a year to a year and a half.**

**Diego: How do you know one baby's more likely to get adopted than another? Like what makes that true?**

**Kahleah: If they're abandoned at birth, typically we know it's pretty quick. If they are moved...**

**Diego:** It was cool to see another adoptee helping other kids get adopted — and to hear more of how Kahleah got back to Guatemala — from Canada, where she grew up.

When Kahleah was a baby, her adoptive mom sent a letter to her birth mother. It came back unanswered and unopened. So Kahleah doesn't know her birth family and so far, she's okay with that.

**Laurie:** But Kahleah's mom has been bringing her back to Guatemala since she was 12. And the more time she spent in Guatemala, the more connected she felt. And she moved here for good a few years ago.

**Kahleah: I think it really also has filled a bit of, of that kind of void, I would say, um, being surrounded by Guatemalans. Being able to be here as a Guatemalan, um, being part of the daily, all the traditions, speaking the language now.**

**MUSIC: Tender, hopefully acoustic guitar arpeggio begins and ends.**

**Laurie:** Kahleah's also had to become fluent in Guatemala's evolving adoption culture. And it's slow going. Like she said, it takes at least a year for even the most straightforward adoptions to get approved.

**Diego:** Yeah, I mean it's because Guatemala wants to be thorough in making sure there's no biological family to take the babies. So far the government is only placing about 100 a year in new homes.

**Laurie:** Yeah, the Consejo Nacional de Adopciones told us it will take time to build a culture of domestic adoption. And meanwhile, it's also trying to help families take care of their kids. The goal is for kids to spend fewer years in institutions.

**Diego:** The number of kids in children's homes is coming down. From more than 5,000 during the adoption boom to around 3,500 now.

**Laurie:** There was a horrible fire in 2017 at an orphanage. 41 teenage girls died. And after that, there was even more pressure to reform the way kids are cared for.

**Diego:** Kahleah still has big questions about adoption. Like me, she's glad she was adopted. I mean, if I wasn't adopted, I'd probably be dead. But the big questions...we still have them.

**Laurie:** And we have to keep asking them because we hear that international adoption could open up again — especially for older kids or kids with special needs.

**Diego:** Yeah. Other countries already have programs like that. But healthy babies — that's over.

**MUSIC: Emotional, reflective piano fades in.**

**Diego:** When people ask us, *Was international adoption a good thing or a bad thing?* How do you answer that?

**Laurie:** I think that's an impossible question. It's not like it's one or the other. I mean, it's both — it depends. It was really bad and it was really good.

When we adopt you, we were giving you a new life, but we are also giving you a lifelong program to solve.

**Diego:** Yeah, I'm grateful for everything you've done and all that. It wasn't really, you know, black and white. Part of me feels like this isn't my home. I think that's kind of what comes out of this problem.

[Sighs.] I think this is something I will be working on. Continuing to work on. Maybe I'll figure it out. Maybe I won't.

**Laurie:** I think you will.

But Diego — how do you judge something like international adoption? By the most beautiful things that came out of it, or the really ugly things?

**Diego:** I'll have to keep thinking about adoption to figure out who I am, and who we are. Who we are as a family. What does it mean to be a family?

**MUSIC: Emotional, reflective piano fades out.**

**Laurie:** Stay with us.

## **AD BREAK**

## **ACT THREE**

**Diego:** You know, in some ways, this podcast has been like running a marathon...we've gotten to reflect on our whole lives. And as you know, we've also settled some things.

**Laurie:** Yeah, you met your birth father! And your connection with Isabel is more solid now that you're grown and healthy. You have your own relationship with them, outside of me. And Isabel seemed so proud to have you at her house!

**Diego:** I started using her last name, Xicay, as my first name, like professionally.

**Laurie:** Sometimes. I'd say your name is one of the things that's *not* settled.

**Diego:** Yeah I mean, I think part of that is because I actually got to meet Cristobal. And I got to learn *his* last name — Rejuc.

**Laurie:** Yeah, his last name was left off of all your paperwork.

**MUSIC: A thoughtful, peaceful flute fades in.**

**Diego:** I never knew, but I always wanted to know.

**Laurie:** Remember when you introduced yourself to Cristobal as Aa Tiko', when he first walked into Isabel's house?

And actually, since the trip, you've started using Aa Tiko'. Not Diego, not Xicay, but Aa Tiko'.

**Diego:** Yeah. Aa Tiko' means Diego in Tzutujil.

I learned that on one of our trips to Guatemala. When I was just a little kid.

**Ten-year-old Diego: My name is Diego but I'm from the Tzutujil tribe so they would call me Aa Tiko'...**

**Laurie: So who are you going to be in summer hockey?**

**Diego:** Um, I signed up as Aa Tiko' Rejuc Xicay. Part of it is, like, it's clearly indigenous — like the spelling, it just doesn't look English. And I think part of using that name is like, *What's this name? How do you say it?* It gets the conversation started because now I'm very proud to be a man of the lake.

**Diego:** And I feel like that's kind of the name I should have.

**Diego:** I want to, like, reclaim it.

**Diego:** That part of Guatemalan history, the war, all this stuff by using Rejuc and Xicay, I can continue carrying like that — that trauma through my name. And, you know, people might ask me, *Where you get this name from?* And I can explain to them, this is from my father. He fought in the Guatemalan civil war. It was from my mother. She kept her head down and also survived. My people have survived and endured for centuries and we still are. And I think that's one of the reasons I want this name back is because...this is my people.

**MUSIC:** A thoughtful, peaceful flute fades out.

**Laurie:** You said when we came back that you wanted to build Isabel a house.

**Diego:** Yeah.

**Laurie:** Do you think that's really going to happen?

**Diego:** I'd like it to happen. I mean, I'm not going to force it to happen, I hope it does

—  
**Laurie:** Oh, but you're going to have to decide if it's going to happen.

**Diego:** Well, I think it's, like you were saying, how, when this project is over, it's up to me to maintain this relationship.

**Diego:** I could go visit them without you guys, but that's also kind of scary to me, honestly, because you've always been there and I feel like you're as much of their family as I am. How do I balance having two families? And potentially a third, if I have my own family? How does that relationship exist with Juan and Josefa because I know Isabel and Cristobal won't be around forever either. So it's like, you know, when Dolores is gone, when all these connections I have are gone, how do I keep that relationship?

**Laurie:** I feel really connected to that place because of you. I mean, I got to know the world you come from and the people you come from. And I love them like they're my relatives too.

And I would love to go back with you — and if I'm ever in a position to help build Isabel a house, that's what I want to do.

**Diego:** Maybe that can be our next project.

**MUSIC: A beautiful, dreamy electric guitar that builds, begins.**

**Diego:** Even now, you know, knowing her 23 years later, it's like...it's still awkward. It's like I'm meeting her for the first time every time.

**Imagine that you're about to watch a movie. It's a two-hour long movie. You can only watch five minutes every, like, 20 minutes. So you get to watch the first five minutes of the movie. Then you get to watch from 20 to 25 minutes. Then you get to watch 40 to 45.**

**And that's how I felt like it was to Isabel. Like, she's only getting very small snippets. 23 years, we've met five, six times. She's...we've probably met for, like, less than a day total.**

**But she feels so overwhelmed and emotional when she sees me, like, it's evidence, she cares and thinks about me.**

**It made me look at love in a different way. 'Cause there's like, how could you love someone that much when you barely, barely know them? And I think that's something like...that's just, like, motherly love.**

**Like, I don't think I've loved someone that much.**

**Laurie:** It's been, like you said, you know, really bonding for us to talk this stuff over and to have these interview sessions. Like we're really doing this thing together. So I want to know, quite honestly, will you still love me?

**Diego:** Let me tell you —

**Laurie:** Love is a...is an action. It's not just, like, a greeting card.

**Diego:** You know, sitting here...like sometimes I just look up and smile because I look at you and it's like...I think it's one of those things I'll never forget, you know, sitting next to you in this room, and just knowing, we're telling the story together. Yeah. It's, it's powerful.

**Diego:** You are my mom. And I just want to thank you for helping me find my own voice and helping me find my way.

**I think it's a beautiful thing. What we've done.**

**MUSIC: A beautiful, dreamy electric guitar that builds, begins.**

**AD BREAK**

**Diego:** Thanks for listening. Stay with us as we go deeper — into the history of Guatemala and the civil war, and to hear stories from other Guatemalan adoptees like me....that's coming up in the next two episodes of Defining Aa Tiko'.

**MUSIC:** Bright piano and guitar with synths pulsing with discovery begins.

**Dolores:** When the army, they opened up the fire, thirteen people died here.

**Carlos:** After some five-six months, they already told me that they found my birth mother. Who has also a sixth finger on both of her hands.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I came with a big burn and my parents had like, no idea, like where that could have come from.

**Dolores:** He's born here. And his blood is from the Tzutujil people. I mean, the root is here.

**MUSIC:** Bright piano and guitar with synths pulsing with discovery ends.

**MUSIC:** A hopeful and optimistic melody of acoustic and electric guitar begins.

**Diego:** All Relative: Defining Diego is a production of Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment.

**Laurie:** It's written and hosted by me, Laurie Stern.

**Diego:** And me — Diego Xicay Luke.

**Laurie:** Mia Warren is our senior producer.

**Diego:** Associate producers are India Witkin and Kyra Assibey-Bonsu.

**Laurie:** Executive producers are Lizzie Jacobs, Jude Kampfner, and Tom Koenig.

**Diego:** Lizzie Jacobs is our editor.

**Laurie:** Production management help from Ike Egbetola and Lily Hambly.

**Diego:** Dara Hirsch is our engineer and we had additional mixing by Sam Bair. Our theme song was composed by Gautam Srikishan.

**Laurie:** Fact-checking by Natsumi Ajisaka.

**Diego:** Translation by Dolores Ratzan and Alex Petzey. No relation.

**Laurie:** Our adoptee consultant is Erik Mohn.

**Diego:** A big thanks to all the folks at Somethin' Else and Sony who gave us feedback on earlier versions of the show — Megan Detrie, Grant Irving, Khrista Rypl, TJ Raphael, Luisa Tucker...

**Laurie:** Tiffany Walker, Julia Doyle, Rob Dozier, Pallavi Kottamasu, Janelle Brown, Jenn Womack, Lauren Pagoni, Charlie Yedor, and Steve Ackerman.

And Jude, thank you for making this project a reality.

**Diego:** Thanks to Ben Fossen and Adoptees with Guatemalan Roots — a great organization. And thanks to Gemma Givens, founder of Next Generation Guatemala. You helped start us off.

**Laurie:** And thank you to Dolores Ratzan, our friend and translator for more than 20 years now. You've taught us so many things, including how to say thank you in Tzutujil. Matiosh.

**Diego:** Matiosh, Dolores. And special thanks to my dad, Dan Luke. We couldn't have done it without you.

**Laurie:** Dan, we love you so much.

**Diego:** And thank you to all the Tzutujiles and members of my family in Santiago Atitlán. Juan. Josefa. Cristobal. And the biggest thank you in the world goes to my mother, Isabel. You gave birth to me, and you opened up to all of our questions over the years. Matiosh.

Julia, I miss you and love you.

Carter and Gavin — I love you guys. Let's get together soon.

Finally, a thank you to my two best friends, Aedan Hodgson and Liliana Pickert. Thank you for believing in me, even when I didn't.

From one adoptee to all adoptees: Let's keep the conversation going. You know, the journey never really ends. I'm still Defining Diego. But I wish you the best on all of your paths forward. Sending you all my love and support.

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**MUSIC:** A hopeful and optimistic melody of acoustic and electric guitar ends.

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## CITATION

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