

Gigi finds her voice



By Lorena Romero

Gigi's favorite thing in the world was to sing. Every day after school, she would run to her room, turn on her favorite playlist, and sing all through the evening. She would sing while doing her homework, during dinner, and in the shower. In her sleep, Gigi would dream of singing in front of thousands of people, just like her favorite pop stars.

The only problem with her dream of becoming a pop star was that Gigi had never had an audience. The only other person who had ever heard her sing was her Tío Daniel, and that was because he was the one who had taught her how to do it. Gigi's parents had left when she was little, so she had gone to live with her uncle. Whenever she was sad, her uncle would sing to her, and she would join in. Singing helped her get through tough times, and eventually, it became her favorite hobby.

Even though that had happened a long time ago, Gigi still sang to her uncle whenever she learned a new song, and he always told her she had the most beautiful voice he had ever heard. One time, at a birthday party with her grandparents, Tío Daniel told everyone about how beautiful Gigi's voice was. Her grandparents made a HUGE deal about it, and all of a sudden, everyone at the party gathered around her, demanding for her to sing. "¡Ándale, canta!", "come on, sing!"

Gigi felt her face grow hot as blood rushed to her head. Her hands turned so clammy she could see them glistening with sweat. She grabbed the sides of her dress as tightly as she could and attempted to sing her favorite song, but a lump had formed in her throat, and nothing came out. Everyone was watching and waiting. As the thumping in her chest grew louder, the room started to spin. Afraid she might pass out, Gigi hung her head and ran out of the room.

"I'll never try to sing in front of anyone else!" she thought. Whenever her family asked to hear her sing, she would feel that lump come right back. She always shook her head no. But any time she was by herself or alone with her uncle, her throat was clear, and her

singing voice rang out. She would get so angry at herself. How would she ever become a pop star and sing in front of thousands of people if she couldn't even sing in front of her own family?

One day, Gigi was walking to class when a flyer caught her eye. "TALENT SHOW-NEXT WEEK. AUDITIONS TODAY AFTER SCHOOL." "This is my chance!" Gigi thought. Her dream of singing to a crowd of fans was coming true a lot sooner than she had imagined. The talent show was the only thing on her mind throughout the school day. She thought about things that might help her stay calm, so the party fiasco wouldn't repeat itself. She imagined her favorite pop star effortlessly singing in front of everyone. What was their trick? Gigi's plan was to close her eyes and pretend she was the pop star. Then everything would go to plan, right?

When school was finally over, Gigi sat down in the auditorium and waited for her turn to audition for the talent show. A girl from her class, Madeline, tap danced and Clay, another classmate, played the guitar. Everyone was so talented! Gigi quickly began to lose her confidence. How was she going to go up against any of them?

"Up next, Gigi. Please take the stage!" said Mr. Kim, the drama teacher. Gigi began to feel it again—the blood rush to the head and the clammy hands. She walked up to the mic and grabbed it with shaking hands.

"Hi, Gigi." She heard Mr. Kim's voice, but she couldn't see anyone in the audience. The stage light was so bright!

"What talent will you be showing us today?" he asked. "I'm g-going to s-s-sing" she said, squinting out towards the audience. The lights were hot, too.

"Ok Gigi, whenever you're ready." Gigi still couldn't see him. Feeling her legs wobble, she steadied herself and closed her eyes. She would pretend

she was the biggest pop star in the world. That would make her feel brave! She took a deep breath, about to sing the first note.

All of a sudden, the room was spinning again, and Gigi felt the familiar lump in her throat. Her eyes began to water, and she knew there was no way she could do it now. She dropped the microphone and hurried off the stage, grabbing her backpack as she ran out of the auditorium.

When she got home, she went straight to her room and slammed the door. She hid under the covers, and all the tears came out. She was so silly to think she would actually become a pop star someday. She couldn't even sing in front of a few people!

[Knock] "Gigi? ¿Estás bien, mi amor?" She heard her tío from the other side of the door. "You didn't even say hello when you got home. ¿Qué pasó?"

Gigi crawled out of bed, opened the door, and jumped into her uncle's arms. She knew he would give her time to cry before asking any more questions. After her tears had cleared away, Tío Daniel asked gently, "Are you ready to talk about it?"

Gigi told him about how badly she wanted to participate in the talent show and how upset she felt that her voice had disappeared again. "I just don't know why I'm like this" she added with a sob.

"I feel like such a loser. I don't even want to go to school tomorrow."

"Mija, look at me." Tío Daniel gently turned her face with his hand. "Do you remember how we used to sing together when you were little?"

"Y-Yeah," she said.

"You have the most beautiful voice I have ever heard, but it is so much more than that. You are so strong in here," Tío Daniel said, pointing

at her heart. “Singing in front of a few people is nothing compared to what you have gone through in your life. Your voice is so much more than just for singing. It is your strength, it’s what makes you the amazing person you are. You’re so much tougher than you think.”

Tío Daniel wiped her tears with his hand. “You will go up there and show everyone how strong you are, and I will be right there to see it with my own eyes. You got this. I believe in you!”

The next day, Gigi visited Mr. Kim during lunch. She apologized for freezing on stage and asked if she could still join the talent show. Mr. Kim reassured her that she had nothing to be sorry about, and let her take the last slot available.

Gigi prepared all weekend. She did vocal warm-ups like lip trills and siren noises to relax her singing muscles and practiced breathing deeply so that she wouldn’t panic. Her tío even took her out shopping for a brand-new dress.

The weekend flew by, and before she knew it, Gigi was sitting in the front row of a packed auditorium. She kept looking back at her uncle a few rows behind her. He was holding a bouquet of flowers, and every time she turned around, he smiled and gave her a thumbs up. Gigi thought about all the times her uncle had hyped her up. He was her biggest fan, always reassuring her that she was a great singer and stronger than she knew. She felt so confident in her pretty new dress and matching hair bow.

You got this. You got this. Her tío’s words kept repeating themselves in her head. “Please give it up for our final act, Gigi Rodriguez!” Mr. Kim announced her name to the crowd. The applause quickly snapped her out of her thoughts. Gigi felt like her heart was going to beat right out of her chest.

She walked up to the stage, again blinded by the bright lights. She grabbed the microphone and said, “Hi. My name is G-Gigi. And I’m going to s-s-sing today.”

Gigi took a deep breath and closed her eyes. As she opened her mouth to sing her first note, she felt the lump starting to form in her throat, threatening to block out her voice again. She swallowed hard. There was an awkward silence in the crowd. The room was spinning, her hands were sweating. It was over. It was about time to run off stage and transfer to a new school.

Gigi opened her eyes, ready to make a run for it. But somehow, right at the edge of the bright light, she saw Tío Daniel. He was grasping the bouquet of flowers and nodding. All the memories of her singing with her uncle rushed to her head, and his words began to echo in her head. You got this, you got this.

She did have this! She had gotten through things much harder than singing to a bunch of people. Gigi grabbed the mic, squeezed her eyes shut, and opened her mouth. Suddenly, a powerful note pushed past the lump in her throat. The awkward silence turned into stunned silence as Gigi’s clear and shimmering voice rang through the auditorium.

Gigi sang the entire song with her eyes closed. Instead of imagining herself as a pop star, she imagined herself singing with her uncle in the living room, feeling the strength of his love and his belief in her own bravery. Before she knew it, she had sung the entire song. When she finished, there was a short silence as the crowd stared in awe. Then, the entire auditorium was on its feet, cheering at her beautiful performance.

Gigi beamed. She had overcome her fear, and that was all she wanted. But, a few minutes later, Mr. Kim announced to everyone that Gigi had won first place! Now it was her turn to be stunned. “Mija, I’m so proud

of you! You are amazing,” exclaimed her tío. Gigi ran into his arms for a giant hug.

“Thank you, Tio,” she said. Gigi went home that night with some extra shine—a bouquet of flowers all for her, a fancy new dress, and a gleaming first-place trophy. But the biggest bright spot was that she had found her voice. She didn’t need to think like a pop star. All she needed to do was imagine the person she loved the most in the world...to find her own strength.