

MARIA'S DAY OUT

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

MARIA FARRO (20) kneels on a chair in front of the mirror above her desk, applying eyeliner. She wears a red tank top and compression tights. On the wall next to Maria's bed hangs a string of photos: Natalia Lafourcade, Maria swimming, Maria hugging an OLDER WOMAN (45) that looks just like her. Maria's phone sits on the desk. The screen says "MAMI," and is on speaker.

MAMI

Hola mi niña. What are you up to?

MARIA

I'm going out to eat with Angela. I just wanted to let somebody know in case something happens.

MAMI

Si, mamita. Está bien. Angela is...?

MARIA

She's the one from my interior design class. I think we're gonna be best friends.

Maria smiles, not trying to conceal her joy. She picks up the curler and gets to work on her eyelashes.

MAMI

Ooh, que bueno. She's picking you up, right?

MARIA

No, I'm walking. She's gonna meet-

MAMI

You cannot walk there by yourself-

MARIA

It's only a couple blocks away.

Maria wiggles into a jean jacket.

MAMI

Take your pills, at least. You've been having a lot of blackout episodes lately.

MARIA

Obvio. I have them.

Maria grabs an orange pill bottle off the desk and slips it into her purse. A pin on her purse says "SOY FUERTE" above a picture of a Frida Kahlo flexing. Maria slings the purse over her shoulder without closing it. She grabs a pair of boots from the closet and wrangles them on.

MAMI

I would feel better if Angela-

MARIA

Anyways, gotta run, just wanted to let someone know. Bye. Te quiero.

MAMI

Te quiero mija. Cuidate-

Maria hangs up. She stands up slowly, checks herself one last time in the mirror, and flies out the door. As she turns, the pill bottle catapults out of her purse and lands SOFTLY on a pile of clothes on the ground. Maria doesn't notice. SLOW PUSH IN on the pill bottle.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

OVERHEAD SHOT of the stairwell as Maria skips down a couple of flights of stairs, HUMMING to herself.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - AFTERNOON

Maria jaunts along through the bustling square. She takes in the MUSIC of a street musician, the CHATTER of a nearby chess match, and the FLUTTER of a flock of birds overhead. She whips out her phone and texts ANGELA "I'M ON MY WAY!" Maria's smile sputters for a second when she spies a MAN (23) watching her from a park bench. The man is writing in a small booklet and wears a gray knit sweater. Maria averts her gaze. Maria cuts across the square towards a corner café with a glamorous green-and-yellow striped façade and a sign that reads in big black letters: "EL RINCONSITO."

INT. EL RINCONSITO CAFE - AFTERNOON

Maria enters the café and heads for an empty table in a corner near a window that looks out at the town center. Maria settles into her chair and checks her messages.

Nothing. Maria twists her mouth, closes her phone, and observes the café. POV MARIA - The door opens and the man in the gray sweater enters. His booklet is tucked under his arm. As the man passes Maria's table, he shoots her a quick glance out of the corner of his eye. Maria again looks away.

The man continues to a table at the far corner of the café. Maria takes a deep breath, tries to act casual. BUZZ. Maria looks down. She opens a message from Angela that says

"HEY CHICA, I'M SOOO SORRY! RUNNING LATE! BE THERE SOON!"

Relieved, HEARTs the message. She slips her phone into her pocket and rises quickly. She stops for a moment, puts one hand on her head, one hand out by her side as if to steady herself. She gives a slight head shake, brushing it off. She passes through the café to a small jug that has a sign that reads: "AGUA." Next to the jug is a small stack of plastic cups. She grabs a cup and fills it up. While the cup is filling, Maria throws another glance in the direction of the man in the gray sweater. Another MAN has joined the first man at a table. The two of them are chatting. Maria relaxes. She takes a drink, draining the cup. She fills it up again and returns to her table. Maria plops down. Suddenly her eyes clench closed and her face scrunches up, pained. Her hand again goes to her forehead. Her weight leans against it. POV Maria - The table in front of her, the glass of water coming in and out of focus. The edges of the table pulse with a dark vignette.

BUZZ.

Maria reaches into her pocket and slowly removes her phone. A message from ANGELA reads "MARIA, I'M THE WORST. I FORGOT I PROMISED BRYAN THAT WE'D DO A MOVIE TONIGHT." Maria frowns. She leans back in her seat, closes her eyes.

SLOW PUSH IN on Maria as her breathing grows heavy. The CLATTER and CHATTER of the café fades out and are replaced with a HIGH-PITCHED WHINE. The whine INCREASES. Maria's face distorts, her neck cranes back, and her eyes roll up under her eyelids. The whine CRESCENDOS. Maria strains, strains, then suddenly falls totally limp. All sound drops out. SILENCE. EXTREME WIDE - Maria, unconscious, limp, in the corner of the café. The other customers and workers behind the counter go about their business, totally unaware of Maria's episode. Beat. RUSH of SOUND. Maria comes to with a jolt. Now the sounds of the diner are HYPER-SHARP, too loud. Maria breathes heavily, her eyes trying to open. Her hand rises an inch off her leg, holds for a second, then collapses. Maria's head rolls to one side of the chair, rests. CU on the man in the gray sweater on the other side of the café. His friend chats to him while he looks past him towards Maria. The man in the gray sweater looks concerned. After a beat, he returns his attention to his friend. Maria swallows, tries to sit up. She is weak. She spies the Frida pin on her purse: "SOY FUERTE." Maria lifts her hand and catches a corner of the purse. She GROANS as she pulls it towards her and fishes inside. Maria's breath stops as she realizes that her pill bottle is missing.

She starts to hyperventilate. Maria changes course and snags a corner of her phone, which she slides towards her. She holds down a button.

MARIA
Call... Angela.

PHONE A.I. VOICE

Sorry, could you repeat that? Maria sighs. She presses the button again.

MARIA (CONT'D)
CALL... Ange... la...

PHONE A.I. VOICE

Sorry, I still didn't catch that.

Maria's eyes tear up. She slouches back against her chair, broken. Her eyes flutter closed.

INT. EL RINCONSITO CAFE - NIGHT

ECU - MARIA'S EYES crack open. The light is low. She is afraid. Maria sits up, stronger now, and scans the café. She is the last customer. She looks towards the counter where a couple of WAITERS (EARLY 20's) are cleaning up. One of them, a skinny type with a crop of dark hair elbows the other and WHISPERS.

WAITER
Dude, she finally woke up.

Maria grabs her water and finishes it off. She checks her phone. No new messages. It's at 5%. Maria grits her teeth. Maria slips her phone into her purse and slings it over her shoulder. She breathes deeply and then carefully stands up. She waits. Beat. Nothing happens. Maria heads for the exit. Pushes the door open. The waiters watch her leave. They chuckle, confused.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - NIGHT

Maria pushes her way through invisible molasses, her arms folded, barred against the chill. The town center has lost its charm. Somewhere in the distance, a car alarm BEEPS. A couple of TEENAGERS are sitting on a bench sharing a joint. They stare at her as she passes. Maria ignores them, speeds up.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Maria enters the stairwell, closes the door behind her as quickly as she can. She turns and gazes up the stairway. POV MARIA - The stairway descending upwards forever.

Maria pushes her shoulders back, grips the railing tight, and takes the first step. She pauses. All good. She ascends. Maria makes it to the first landing. She catches her breath. She starts up the next flight. She gets halfway, then her progress slows. She leans heavily on the railing, her breath ECHOING throughout the stairwell. POV MARIA - The concrete stairs in front of her waver in and out of focus. Maria's knuckles turn white as her grip tightens. The WHINE creeps back in as Maria starts to crumple. Suddenly a RINGING. RINGING. The whine disappears. Maria pulls out her phone. It's "MAMI." Maria answers the phone and puts it feebly up to her ear.

MARIA

Mami ...

MAMI

Hey mamasita, how'd it go?

Maria hangs on the rail, musters the strength to speak.

MARIA

It was terrible. Angela didn't show. I passed out.

MAMI

Ay, mija—I told you—

MARIA

I KNOW!

MAMI

Ok, ok—where are you right now?

MARIA

On the stairs. I can barely walk.

MAMI

Listen to me Maria. You can do this. You're almost home...

Pause. Maria doesn't move, or respond.

MAMI (CONT'D)

Maria? Me escuchas?

Maria Cries.

MARIA

Ok... ok...

Maria gathers herself, lifts her foot, manages another step.

MAMI

Asi es miya. Muy bien. One step at
a time... one-

The call cuts. Maria glances down. The phone is dead. Maria begins to tremble, then grits her teeth again. She lets out a low, defiant growl.

Maria continues, painstaking step after painstaking step. Her head hangs heavy, but somehow she continues to rise.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maria collapses onto the bed, her hands falling above her head. Her hand still clutches her cellphone. The sound of her HEARTBEAT pounds in her ears. Her eyes drift open. POV MARIA - Shadows from the street outside dance on the photo of Maria and her mother on the wall.

Her breathing steadies. A hint of warmth fills Maria's eyes..

THE END.