

THE
MARIA
SERIES

MARIA'S

many

COUSINS



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Chapter One

Maria, come here, my
love!”

Maria closed the book she
was reading and jumped up.
“Coming!”

She found her mama and
papa sitting at the table.
Mama held some paper, and
Papa was smiling.

“Here is a letter from

Papa's brother, Uncle Bruno," Mama said.

"He wants you to visit him and his family!" Papa added excitedly.

"Victor!" cried Mama. "I wanted to tell her."

"Sorry." He grinned. "I haven't seen Bruno in so long!"

Maria danced with joy over to Mama and peeked at the letter:

*If you can spare her,
please bring Maria to stay*

*with us for a few weeks.
Carmen would love to
have a girl her age to play
with.*

Maria giggled at that.

“With six brothers, Carmen could use a girl around,” she said.

“Yes,” Papa agreed. “It will be good for you and Carmen to spend time together.”

“So, Maria, do you want to go?” asked Mama.

“Yes, please!” Maria was already planning all the

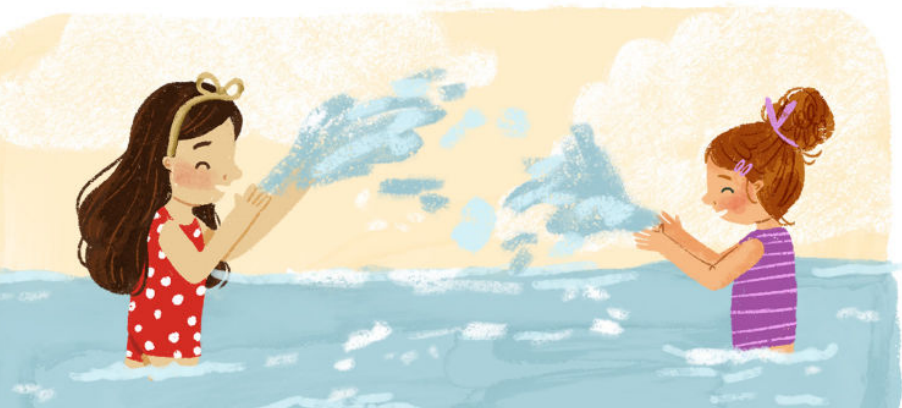
fun she and Carmen would have, like when they were little: swinging from trees, splashing in the river, and rolling down the grassy hills.

“Then I will write to Bruno



and tell him you are coming.
When can you make the trip,
Victor?”

“Tell him we will be there
next Thursday,” Papa
replied.



Only one week away! Maria had so much to do!

Over the next few days, Maria got ready for her trip. She washed her clothes and hung them in the sun to dry.



She gathered bunches of flowers and dried them too— one bunch for Carmen and one for Aunt Ana.



She also made a big box of colorful cookies to take. Six boy cousins would surely eat a lot!





MARIA'S *many* COUSINS

Maria has been invited to visit her uncle Bruno and aunt Ana! She is particularly excited to see her cousin Carmen again, but when Maria arrives, Carmen does not seem very happy to see her. If there's anything Maria knows how to do, though, it's how to help people and be kind! Maria and her cousins set out to help Carmen overcome her mysterious sadness and learn about the nature of friendship along the way.



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