



THE
MARIA
SERIES

MARIAS
Many
COLORS

BY
BRECKYN
WOOD



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY



In a little brown town on top of a hill lived a girl named Maria. Maria's house was made of rugged brown stones. The goats in her yard had coarse brown hair. Maria's dress was scratchy, patchy, and very, very brown.

Brown was not Maria's favorite color.

Six days of the week, Maria awoke with the sun. The yellow rays warmed her as she brushed her brown hair and put on her dress and sturdy brown shoes.

After her breakfast of brown bread and goat cheese, Maria went out into the yard to milk the goats, feed the brown chickens, and fill her basket with brown speckled eggs.

But on Sundays, Maria hopped out of bed before the

sun came peeking over the hills. Maria loved Sundays for one little reason and one big reason. The little reason was that on Sundays, Maria



got to wear a prized dress.
The fabric was snowy white,
but her mother had used
every color of thread in her
basket to trim the dress.
Bright bunches of roses,



bluebells, daisies, and lilies
grew up the front and along
the collar, their green leaves
twisting around. Scarlet
macaws and golden finches
soared on the sleeves.



Maria loved that dress, and she loved her mother for the many days and nights she had spent bent over the dress, her silver needle flashing in the light.

The big reason Maria loved Sundays was that Sundays were for church, and church was a full day of songs and prayers and friends and colors—so many stunning colors. The windows in the church were stained glass, which means they were like

pretty paintings. When the sun shined into one of the windows, the whole church was filled with heavenly light.





MARIA'S *many* COLORS

Maria's world is brown, brown, brown! That is, except for her beautiful Sunday dress, and the wonderfully-colored stained glass windows at church. When a storm causes a tree to fall and shatter the precious windows, Maria wants to do something to help earn enough money to replace them. Her ideas, her hard work, and her generosity bring beautiful colors and joy to the entire community.



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THE
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MARIA'S *many* COOKIES



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When Maria woke up, the sky looked as sunny and happy as she felt. She sang as she gathered the eggs, tapped her toes as she milked the goats, and did a little dance as she swept the floors. She tried to peek in the kitchen to watch Mama and Papa make her birthday

dinner, but they shooed her away.

“Skip to the market for me, my girl, and get some peppers,” Papa told her, slipping a few coins into her hand. “Our garden has run out.”

“This is too much for just peppers, Papa,” said Maria, looking at the coins.

He gave her a wink. “Get yourself a birthday treat too.”

Maria had many friends in the market from her time

selling flowers. Mr. Morgan, the boot maker, smiled as Maria walked past, and Mrs. Lopez called “Hello!” over her clay pots.



Mrs. Brogan, the dressmaker who had helped Maria sell her flowers, waved Maria over to her stall. “Good day, Maria,” said the kind old woman, giving Maria a kiss on the cheek.



“What brings you to the market today?”

“Good day, Mrs. Brogan,” Maria replied, staring at the pretty dresses hanging up in the stall. She reached out to touch a row of pink roses on the hem of one dress. “My papa needs peppers.”



“Well, you tell your papa I say hello, and your mama too,” said Mrs. Brogan.

Maria smiled, pulling her eyes away from the colorful dresses. “I will. Thank you.”

After buying five peppers, Maria still had two small coins left to buy a birthday treat. She jingled them in her hand as she looked around at the market stalls. Fruit, cakes, candy—what did she want? As she walked toward the bunches of cool

purple grapes, Maria saw something moving out of the corner of her eye.

Poking out of an alley was a face, a dirty and



hungry-looking face. It belonged to a boy she had never seen before, and he was staring at the grapes with a wild look in his eyes.

He watched her as she picked a bunch, but when she turned to walk toward him, he was gone.

The alley was dark and a bit scary, but Maria took a few brave steps in, calling “Hello? Hello?” When nothing happened, she added, “I have grapes!”

The face peeked out from
behind a wall.



Maria tried to smile. This boy looked like he needed a smile almost as much as he needed the grapes. “Here,” she said, holding them out to him.

Quick as a flash, the boy snatched the grapes and ran back to his hiding place. Maria heard loud crunching and slurping sounds. She sighed. “You’re welcome!” she called.

MARIA'S *many* COOKIES

Maria's story begins and ends with cookies—birthday cookies! For her birthday Maria gets a purse, not the dress she wanted! She quickly decides to earn money to buy one. While at the market, she meets Carlos, a hungry boy with no family. Will Maria help Carlos, or will she save her coins for herself? One day three items go missing from the market. Were they stolen? Follow Maria as she finds ways to give and forgive.



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THE
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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

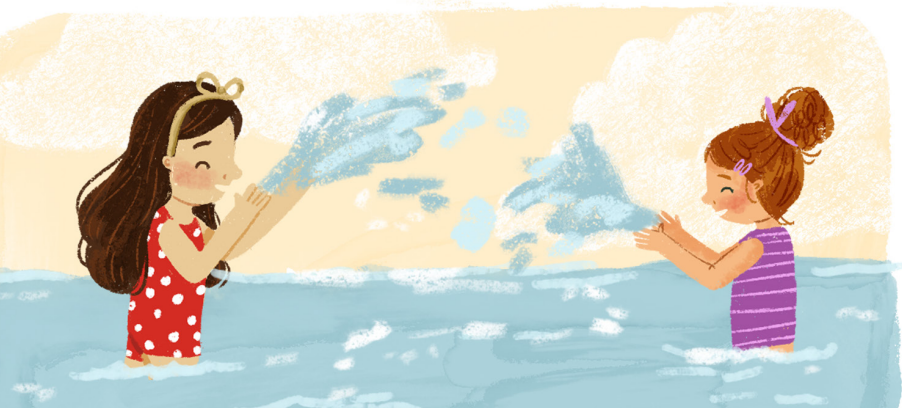
fun she and Carmen would have, like when they were little: swinging from trees, splashing in the river, and rolling down the grassy hills.

“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

M aria 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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THE
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MARIA'S

Many

KITTENS

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Chapter Two

Outside, Maria picked flowers of all different colors. She looked at them closely and tried to see something new, but they were the same flowers that grew near her house every year.

She watched a line of ants marching into their little hill.



She tried to sit back and watch the clouds, but there weren't any—the big blue sky was empty, just like her notebook.

Maria sighed. What did Mrs. Powell want her to learn?

“Maria?” called Carlos.

Maria sat up. “Over here!” she said.

Carlos walked over and sat down next to her. “Any plans for the project yet?” he asked.

“No!” Maria exclaimed. “I don’t know why I feel so stuck.”

“That’s too bad,” said Carlos kindly. “I found this neat plant in the alley behind

the boot shop. It's poking up between two bricks. I don't know how it can grow without any dirt, but I'm going to watch it and see what happens."



“That’s a great plan for you, Carlos,” said Maria.

The friends sat next to each other in silence, taking in the sounds of the farm. A fly buzzed nearby, the chickens clucked softly, and the goats bleated to each other. After



a while, Maria heard a new sound.

“Do you hear that?” she asked Carlos, turning her ear toward the goat shed.

“Hear what?”

“Shhh, be quiet.”

Over the buzzing of the fly, there came a small but clear sound, like a little cry.

“That,” said Maria.

Carlos scrunched his eyes closed, trying to hear. The cry came again, louder this time. “I heard that!” he said.

Maria hopped up. “It sounds like it’s coming from the goat shed. Come look with me.”

The two friends opened the shed door slowly. Maria peeked in and gasped.



“What?” asked Carlos.

“What is it?”

He poked his head in and gasped too. “Wow!” he said.

There, in the corner on a pile of hay, lay a big orange cat and . . .



“Kittens!” Maria and Carlos whispered at the same time.

Not wanting to scare the mother cat, Maria and Carlos crept quietly into the shed.

“They’re so tiny!” Maria squealed softly. “I wonder how long they’ve been in here.”

“Their eyes aren’t even open yet,” said Carlos. “So likely not long.”

Maria looked closely at the little balls of fur. “You’re right. I didn’t know kittens

were born with their eyes closed.”

“You could write that down for your project,” he offered.

Maria’s jaw dropped.

“Carlos, you’re right!” She quickly flipped open her notebook. “I’ll have so much to write about now! I can’t wait to tell Mrs. Powell.”

MARIA'S *many* KITTENS

Fire! Fire! When a lantern falls and breaks, an unexpected disaster strikes. Join Maria, her inspiring school teacher, and a pile of kittens as Maria learns new lessons and gets a few surprises along the way.



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