

"Maria!"

"How I love Maria!"

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The rather small, petite, seventeen year-old Maria had received an intricate, beautiful little music box. A small doll that resembled her spun around in the middle, and it emitted a prideful, yet gentle song--

"Maria,  
How I love Maria!  
She makes my day  
When clouds are grey;  
With her cute smile  
And hazel eyes!  
It makes loving her  
Worth while-  
Maria!  
How I love Maria!"

It was a gift from Gilbert, the town puppeteer. He was more than capable of being able to make more than just puppets- creating all sorts of trinkets, odds and ends. That sort of thing.

He was a year older, eighteen, and standing over Maria almost like a tower. But he had chocolate eyes and dirty blonde hair, not to mention the loveliest voice.

Maria, in comparison, had hazel eyes that shined in the light, silky and curly brown hair that bounced with every step, pink skinny lips, and a knack for singing as well.

The thing was, he had proposed to her with the music box, and while it was so lovely and heartfelt, Maria just-didn't feel the same. She gave an apologetic smile- she remembered it so clearly, it was only a week ago, after all. Turn around the corner to make her way to the shop, she decided she would try to make up for making his heart break.

When she had entered the shop, the bells seemed to ring of joy as Gilbert waltzed his way over to her, singing gently, "Maria, how I love Maria!"

The brunette giggled and smiled softly in return, presenting the music box.

The problem was that it went off at random times. Any time, even when she didn't open it or set it off. It started to frighten Maria, who explained the situation as politely as possible.

"I'm sorry, I'll fix it!" Was the brief response she had received, as she bowed her head as a short thanks. But something didn't feel right. It felt as if her stomach was imploding, and her chest tightened. For a moment, she couldn't breathe, her eyes rolled back and body quivered. Until she had gone completely still.

She looked up, and it seemed as if her eyes had lost its shine, her hair lost the silky softness, her lips curved into an unusual smile. Most of all, her voice sounded rather-- dull. She had been a crisp, red apple gone rotten. Gilbert came back, alas, it seemed like he already knew what had happened.

He kissed the girl's forehead, gently singing,  
"Maria.. How I love Maria!"