

CHANGING ARTS AND MINDS

a 1-hour TV Drama

Episode 101: "Temporary Position"

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TEASER

INT. OLD SEDAN - NIGHT

MARIA PAPPAS (30s) a curvy, no-nonsense former military soldier sleeps in the reclined passenger seat of an old sedan parked within sight of Daedalus Gymnasio in the suburbs of Athens.

Maria, covered with a single Greek Army blanket, tosses and turns uncomfortably in restless sleep. We hear the deep authoritative voice of a male Commanding Officer (40s). We see Maria's Army officer's uniform folded nicely in the back seat, along with a leather bath bag and backpack.

Maria tosses and turns. She HEARS gunfire and the screams of victims.

COMMANDING OFFICER (V.O.)  
Remember your exit strategy.  
(beat)  
Have a nice day!

Maria wrestles the blanket back to sleep.

COMMANDING OFFICER (V.O.)  
We're going to miss you around  
here, Ypolochagos Pappas!

EXT. GYMNASIO - MORNING

Maria HEARS a BELL and stirs awake, and exits her car fully dressed. She wears a bright Hawaiian-type blouse, khaki pants, and tennis shoes, and carries a canvas military backpack on her back.

It's a warm spring morning when the school bell RINGS again outside "Daedalus Gymnasio."

Maria marches to the front door. She mumbles to herself.

MARIA  
I want this job!  
(beat)  
I need this job!  
(longer beat)  
I earned this job!

She looks left and right, as if for enemy combatants, before flinging open the heavy front door.

INT. GYMNASIO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maria takes two steps inside the door, where she's stopped by a kindly janitor Niko BAROS (40), a handsome, shy Greek in workers clothes, and carrying a mop.

Niko sees the sweat on Maria's brow, but quickly realizes she isn't a threat, and smiles sincerely.

NIKO  
Can I help you?

MARIA  
I'm here for the temporary art teacher job. Maria Pappas.

Niko politely guides Maria to the office.

NIKO  
Right this way, Kyria Pappas.  
They'll ask you to wear a visitor's badge until you get a staff badge issued.

Niko points to the office.

MARIA  
Thanks, Kyrio...?

Niko sees a Boy (14) wandering the halls, and quickly heads his direction.

NIKO  
If you'll excuse me.

INT. GYMNASIO OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Maria bursts into the office to the front desk to see a stern, elderly woman, KYRIA GEORGIU (late-60s), open her eyes widely in fear. Maria is sweet as can be, as she hands Kyria Georgiou her I.D.

MARIA  
Maria Pappas. I'm here for the temporary art teacher job.

Kyria Georgiou looks confused and frightened, as Maria hands her a resume.

KYRIA GEORGIU  
 We have no jobs here at Daedalus  
 Gymnasio.

Maria takes a step back. Stunned. Inhales a big breath.

KYRIA GEORGIU (CONT'D)  
 We have positions.  
 (beat)  
 The regular art teacher, Kyria  
 Harris, ran a tight ship. Her baby  
 decided to come a month early, so  
 we needed the help. Some students  
 disliked her, but they all  
 respected her. Most dropped her  
 class. Only six students remain.

MARIA  
 Six students stuck it out.

Maria exhales, as Kyria Georgiou scans the resume.

KYRIA GEORGIU  
 (alarmed)  
 You're not Kyria Stout!

MARIA  
 Kyria Stout couldn't make it.  
 Probably out on emergency paternity  
 leave. District sent me.

KYRIA GEORGIU  
Paternity leave, but she's a...

MARIA  
 Uh huh! That's what I said.

KYRIA GEORGIU  
 It's only one month until the end  
 of semester. One class. Six  
 students who need the art class  
 credits to advance to 2nd Year  
 and...

MARIA  
 (interrupts, yells)  
 I'll take it!

END OF TEASER

## ACT ONE

INT. GYMNASIO OFFICE - MORNING

Kyria Georgiou glares at Maria suspiciously.

KYRIA GEORGIOU  
First period. They're waiting for  
you. Room 106. I'll get you a  
temporary security badge.

Kyria Georgiou stands and walks into the next office as her  
phone RINGS.

Maria reaches over and grabs the phone.

MARIA  
Daedalus Gymnasio.

Maria buries the phone in her gut to muffle the sounds of a  
mad woman screaming into the phone.

Maria turns to whisper a threat into the phone.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
That position's been filled.

Maria listens to the woman yell, then replies sternly.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
I said, that position's been  
filled!

Niko walks up behind Maria.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Understand?

Maria hangs up but keeps her hand on the phone.

NIKO  
Everything okay, Kyria Pappas?

Kyria Georgiou returns with a visitor's badge and sees  
Maria's hand on the phone.

KYRIA GEORGIOU  
Who was...?

MARIA  
(interrupting)  
Wrong number!

Kyria Georgiou reluctantly hands Maria a clip-on Visitor's badge.

KYRIA GEORGIOU

Niko can show you to your classroom. I'll have to do the routine background check, Kyria Pappas.

MARIA

You do that!

KYRIA GEORGIOU

I'm sure Principal Mikos would like to meet you after class and give you a tour...

Maria smiles at Niko.

MARIA

Tell him I'm busy. I'll pick up my permanent security badge tomorrow. I gotta get to class.

Maria hooks Niko's arm and marches away, leaving Kyria Georgiou dumbfounded.

INT. GYMNASIO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maria marches down the hall with Niko struggling to keep up and sees the sign for the Men's Room.

Maria smiles at Niko, pulls her arm free, and races to the door.

MARIA

I'll need some art supplies.

Niko's eyes open widely, but he doesn't stop her.

INT. GYMNASIO MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maria enters the men's room to see two Boys (13) vaping.

The boys' eyes open widely as Maria yanks the two electronic cigarettes from the boys' mouths, breaks them in half, and tosses them in a dirty toilet.

She grabs six paper towels from the towel dispenser and stomps out.

The boys' eyes open widely and stare at each other.

INT. GYMNASIO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Niko guides Maria to Room 106. The door is open.

MARIA

Thanks, Kyrios Baros.

NIKO

Call me Niko.

MARIA

Niko, Victor of People. That's what you are. Call me Maria.

They share a moment before she enters.

INT. GYMNASIO CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maria cautiously enters the room containing 25 desks.

Six students are scattered around the perimeter of the room, five of them stare at Maria with open eyes and dropped jaws, with one student, ERNESTO BAROS (13), a boy in the back corner of the classroom, slumped forward, and looking in the opposite direction toward the windows.

Maria's eyes scan the room once more, as a soldier would to evaluate threats in priority order.

She eyes the two exits.

Finally, Maria takes a deep breath and sets her canvas military backpack aside the teacher's desk.

She stares at Ernesto, as she sets her paper towels on the desk and feels for the Roll Call Sheet.

MARIA

I'm Maria, your art teacher for the last month of the school year. What's the matter with him?

MATT LOWENSTEIN (13), an insecure, mumbling, Jewish student in expensive clothes, sits in the front row, and speaks in a low volume and a thick New York accent. He lacks the confidence to make eye-contact when he speaks.

MATT

That's Ernesto. He talks when he wants to, which isn't often. Kyria Harris, picked on him a lot just because...

Maria glares at Matt. Ernesto looks out the window.

MARIA  
(interrupts)  
Who are you?

MATT  
Matt Lowenstein. My parents moved  
here from New York. Just flew in!  
Boy...

Maria snaps her fingers and glares at Matt.

MARIA  
(imitating Matt)  
Are my arms tired!  
(angry)  
Old joke. Save it for history  
class.

No one sees Ernesto turn and crack a quick smile, before he  
stares out the window again.

Maria points to LYRA SIDARIS (13), dressed like a thug with  
an equally dangerous look.

LYRA  
What'd I do?

MARIA  
What's your name?

Lyra looks away.

LYRA  
Lyra Sidaris, Kyria...

Maria glares at Lyra.

MARIA  
Call me Maria.

LYRA  
Kyria Harris was a jerk, so most  
everybody dropped the class, 'cept  
us. You're not gonna be a jerk, are  
ya, K...?

Maria snaps her fingers at Lyra.

MARIA  
Uh huh.



Maria turns to write her name on the whiteboard: "Kyria Maria Pappas." She underlines "Maria" as Matt mumbles.

MATT

Kyria Pappas? Can I go to the...?

Maria snaps her finger at Matt and he shuts up and sits up straight.

MARIA

Call me Maria!

Maria points to HUI "EMMA" CHANG, (13), in a smart, matching pantsuit and white blouse. Emma wears glasses.

MARIA (CONT'D)

What's your story?

Emma speaks beautiful English with a slight Chinese accent.

EMMA

I'm Hui Chang, from the People's Republic of China, but my Greek name is Emma Chang.

MARIA

What are you doing in this class?

EMMA

Tired of math and science. My father disapproves. Wants me to be an engineer. I want to be an artist.

Maria strolls over to Emma's desk and speaks softly.

MARIA

"Change is the essence of life; be willing to surrender what you are for what you could become," said Reinhold Niebuhr.

Maria looks around to see all eyes are on her, even Ernesto's eyes.

Maria turns harsh. She points at DIMITRIS KALLIS (13), a big, athletic, handsome blonde in a sports jacket, jeans, and cross-training shoes.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Let me guess. The football coach told you this might be an easy grade to play sports.

Dimitris laughs.

DIMITRIS  
Mind reader, Maria?

MARIA  
(laughs)  
If I read your mind, I'd draw a  
blank!

Dimitris is stunned, but Matt chuckles to himself.

Maria spins to point to DORRI KHAN (13) a shy, Middle-Eastern beauty in a ritzy black athletic suit. Maria sees the tip of a beautiful hijab sticking out of Dorri's backpack under her desk, and her slightly messed up hair.

DORRI  
Dorri Khan. Needed the credits in  
art and humanities to pass to 2nd  
Year.

MARIA  
Persian art has one of the richest  
art heritages in world history,  
including architecture, painting,  
metalworking, weaving, pottery,  
sculpture and calligraphy for over  
5,000 years.  
(staring at the hijab)  
We should be proud of our cultural  
heritage, don't you think?

DORRI  
Yes, Kyria Pappas.

Dorri proudly pulls out, and slips on her hijab.

MARIA  
Maria!

The other students look perplexed.

Maria turns to Matt and hands him the paper towels.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Pass out the art paper to your  
classmates, will you, Matt.

Matt's eyes open widely, and he hesitates to stand.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Get a move on, Matt. Let's go.

Matt grabs the paper towels, rises, and begins to walk around the room.

Maria sees that Matt has a prosthesis on his right leg.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Michelangelo said, "A man paints with his brains and not with his hands."

Matt begins mumbling incessantly. Lyra, Dimitris, and Emma chuckle at Matt's attempted humor.

MATT

Went all out on art supplies,  
Maria.

(beat)

Must have taken two trips to the  
bathroom.

(beat)

Is this so our art projects can  
hang in the Louvre or the Loo?

Maria smiles warmly.

MARIA

Louvre or Loo? You get points for  
that international potty humor, but  
speak up when you talk, Matt.

Matt smiles weakly, looks away, and retakes his seat.

MATT

Thanks, Maria. You're all-art!

MARIA

(to Matt)

Not punny, Matt.

(to the class)

How many of you would be in this  
class if you didn't need the arts  
and humanities credits to move on  
the 2nd Year?

Emma slowly raises her hand.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Or to not anger their parents?

Emma slowly lowers her hand. Ernesto glances at Emma then he looks out the window.

Maria strolls back to a long-thin table against the back of the classroom with three drawings or paintings per student on the table.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Your best projects each?

DIMITRIS

Our three best products each. If we do a better one, teacher puts it in, and yanks out the loser before the final art show.

MARIA

There are no losers in art.

Maria's face suggests otherwise, as she scans poor watercolor paintings of flowers in a vase, poor sketches, and misshapen clay pots.

MATT

The principal and teacher have to agree on our grade at the end of semester.

LYRA

Unfair! Only class where the grade depends on a stupid principal.

Maria turns and glares at Lyra.

MARIA

No one said life was fair. Art is very subjective, but I see room for improvement.

The students groan.

Maria looks at Ernesto's art to see a precise square, rectangle, and triangle.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Take out a pen, not a pencil, and draw a self-portrait. Do not write your name or the date on the page. You have five minutes. Go!

The students grumble. Ernesto stares blankly out the window.

LATER

MARIA (CONT'D)

Time is up. Turn the papers over on your desks. Lyra, collect the papers without looking at them.

Lyra struts around the room like a hard-ass and collects the artwork.

She slaps them down on Maria's desk, and struts to her desk and plops down.

Maria shuffles the papers and shows one to the class: it's a great drawing of a beautiful girl with Asian eyes. Matt mumbles, as everyone looks at Emma.

MATT

Eyes got it! It's Emma! Duh!

MARIA

May not be as easy if I asked in Beijing, population over 21 million. Emma, put your drawing on the final-three table. A-plus.

Emma smiles at Ernesto, grabs the drawing, and runs to the back of the room.

EMMA

Which art project do I remove from my top three?

MARIA

It don't matter. It's subjective.

Everyone chuckles.

Maria pulls up another drawing, a poorly drawn portrait of an unsmiling Greek woman.

DIMITRIS

Lyra.

MARIA

How can you tell?

DIMITRIS

The anger?

Lyra turns to sneer at Dimitris, who responds defensively.

DIMITRIS (CONT'D)

What'd I say?

Maria shows a drawing of an empty circle, and almost perfectly symmetrical circle. Maria stares at the drawing.

Silence.

Ernesto looks out the window.

Maria looks briefly at the other poorly drawn faces. None of the self-portraits show smiles, but Dorri's shows a face with a frown.

Maria glances at Dorri. Both look sad.

MARIA  
That's all for today.  
(points to the door)  
Go!

MATT  
But the bell hasn't rung.

MARIA  
(stern)  
I said, that's all!

The students trudge out with their backpacks.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
(mumbles)  
What have I gotten myself into?

INT. GYMNASIO TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Maria helps herself to a coffee mug that reads: "Mr. Big" and pours a cup of coffee. She sits.

Niko walks by, peeks in the door, and whispers.

NIKO  
That's Principal Mikos's mug. Very possessive.

MARIA  
I didn't...

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (60), a short, thin, bald man in a gray suit storms into the lounge holding Maria's resume.

He glares at the coffee mug, and Niko disappears.

Maria stares at his Greek Flag lapel pin.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Thanasis Mikos. Call me Principal Mikos. You must be the temporary art teacher.

(reading the resume)

Maria Pappas, Art History major, highest grades, sailed through your teaching credential.

MARIA

Principal Mikos.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

I'm looking into why Kyria Stout declined the position. District sent you, huh?

Maria looks away as the Principal keeps reading.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (CONT'D)

Decorated Army veteran, two tours in Afghanistan.

The Principal slaps the resume in his hand.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (CONT'D)

Why didn't you go straight into teaching? The highest calling!

Maria looks back, smiles, and speaks softly.

MARIA

I asked myself that every day in the desert.

(looks away)

Wish it was an easy answer. To pay off college loans. Get out of Athens for a while. To change minds...

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

(interrupting)

Well, what was it?

Maria glares at him and stands, towering over her boss.

MARIA

Sir, to serve my country, sir.

The Principal is at a loss for words.

He points at his cup, sheepishly.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
That's my coffee mug.

MARIA  
Sir, sorry, sir. I'll wash it up  
good! Won't use it again.

Principal Mikos takes a step back and speaks quickly.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
Welcome to the staff. Don't let  
your students out 'til the bell  
rings! Niko can give you the tour  
tomorrow after school. Your  
military training may be of little  
use here.

Principal Mikos turns and exits quickly.

MARIA  
(mumbles)  
I doubt that, Sir.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (O.S.)  
I heard that!

Maria smiles.

END OF ACT ONE



## ACT TWO

INT. GYMNASIO CLASSROOM - DAY

The six students filter into the room and shrug at three Blick Essentials Paint and Draw Easels (double-sided) in the back of the room.

The students scatter to their same seats. Ernesto looks at the door waiting for Maria to enter.

Ernesto sees Dimitris eyeing Lyra's body with lust in his eyes.

Ernesto turns to see Matt sneaking glances at Dorri, who seems to know she is the target of Matt's affection.

Ernesto sees Matt turn back to the front of the room before Dorri smiles in his direction. The other students are oblivious to the games being played.

Emma turns completely around to scold Ernesto, who is four seats back from Emma. She whispers to Ernesto.

EMMA

Stop breathing down my neck, creep.

Emma turns around.

Ernesto turns his head slowly from the open door, to look out the window in the opposite direction, hesitating briefly to smile in Emma's direction.

Emma spins around again to see Ernesto staring out the window.

Maria bursts in the door with her canvas rucksack on her back and a Brand Tablet computer in her hand.

She sets down the rucksack by the side of the desk.

Maria holds up her Brand tablet computer and shows a photo of the cave art from Altamira Cave in Spain from the Stone Age.

MARIA

Let's play detective. Who, what, when, where, why? Our first question is who?

MATT

(mumbles)

So simple even a caveman can do it!

Maria chuckles as she walks to each desk showing the picture.

MARIA

From the TV commercial! Ha! Speak up, Matt! Cavemen, yes. Neanderthal or modern humans, we can't say for sure.

(beat)

What? What is it?

EMMA

Bison?

DORRI

Or buffalo, right?

MARIA

Right.

(beat)

When was it painted?

DIMITRIS

Like a million years ago?

Maria shakes her head 'no.' She strolls over to Ernesto's desk. He takes a one-second glance at her tablet computer and turns back to the window. Maria moves to the other desks.

MARIA

Our ancient human-like ancestors, Homo Erectus, were engraving shells as far back as a half-million years ago, but this is more recent and highly sophisticated art.

MATT

Did you say Homo Erectus?

Maria ignores Matt, but Lyra is annoyed.

LYRA

Between 14,000 and 37,000 years ago!

Maria is stunned. She smiles at Lyra.

MARIA

That's right, Lyra!

LYRA

The cave's in northern Spain! I assume "where" was the next question.

MARIA

Very good. You surprise me.

Maria stops and stares at everyone for dramatic effect, though Ernesto is still looking outside.

MARIA (CONT'D)

The big question is why?

MATT

So he could post it on Cave Book?

MARIA

Seriously? Why?

DIMITRIS

To brag about his kill! Hunter's 1, animals zero!

MARIA

Good, Dimitris. Why else?

DORRI

To record an event that would outlive the artist.

MARIA

Great, Dorri. "Life is short, the art long," Hippocrates said. Why else?

Lyra speaks in a low, dull, slow voice.

LYRA

Maybe he was just bored like the rest of us.

Maria gives Lyra a quick sneer of disapproval.

MATT

Maybe he couldn't spell the word bison, so he drew it. B-I-S-...

Maria turns sternly to Matt.

MARIA

Matt, you said it was so simple even a caveman could do it?

Matt smiles.

MATT

I sense a game show-like challenge  
coming up with the new art  
supplies!

Matt jumps up and heads to an easel in the back of the room.

The other students follow. Ernesto is the last to join on the  
back side of the easel furthest from Maria.

MARIA

Get to drawing, cave men and women.  
I want you to draw the bison I  
showed you, the best you can  
remember it. Two students to an  
easel. A charcoal pencil is  
waiting. Those art supplies cost me  
three-days' pay so make the most  
out of them. You have twenty  
minutes.

Dimitris pulls out his Brand smartphone.

MARIA (CONT'D)

No help from smartphones, Dimitris!  
Rely on your superior brain power  
and memories from the hunt!

LATER

Class is almost over.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Sign and date the bottom of your  
cave art.

Maria walks to the back to see Matt's crude drawing first.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Not so simple is it, Matt?

Matt smiles weakly, as Maria moves to Lyra's drawing, which  
is a little better than Matt's.

The students follow Maria as she assesses the drawings.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I see promise here. It wasn't  
simple for them either. They  
gathered manganese from the  
Pyrenees Mountains 150 miles to the  
north, and heated it to over 1600  
degrees to get the long-lasting  
black in the drawings.

Maria nods approvingly at Emma's drawing and Dorri's drawing.

LYRA

Fools burning all that wood for art supplies when they probably needed it to stay warm, cook food, and fend off bears and wolves and shit.

MARIA

Not to mention saber-toothed tigers and monstrous cave bears. Art must have been important to them.

Dimitris' drawing looks like a simple stick figure making the other students chuckle.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Maybe football is so easy even a caveman can do it.

Dimitris laughs at Maria's joke.

DIMITRIS

I tried.

Maria and the other students see Ernesto's drawing and their mouths drop in awe.

DORRI

Wow!

Ernesto's "painting" is a close copy to the photo he saw for only a second, including red colors. We see a bloody paperclip and Ernesto's hand is bleeding.

Maria's eyes open widely, but she speaks calmly.

MARIA

Dimitris, run and get some paper towels.

MATT

Dimitris, she means, art supplies.

MARIA

Ernesto, apply pressure to your finger until Dimitris returns.

Maria stays calm and keeps teaching.

MARIA (CONT'D)

The red pigments in the cave paintings came from limonite, containing iron hydroxide.

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

When limonite is heated, it turns into red ochre. Used by prehistoric humans over 300,000 years ago in Zambia. Still used today.

Dimitris returns and hands wet and dry paper towels to Maria.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Thanks, Dimitris.

(to Ernesto)

Let's keep this to ourselves, shall we?

The students nod 'yes,' while Ernesto looks out the window.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Lesson for today is 'nothing is simple.' Especially art.

(softly to Ernesto)

Jonathan Swift said, "Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others."

Lyra looks away, but the other students stare at Ernesto.

Silence.

Principal Mikos pokes his head in the door and coughs loudly, as he sees Matt's and Dimitris' poor drawings. He can't see Ernesto's painting.

Maria and the students turn toward the Principal.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

I hope those art supplies didn't come from our modest school budget, Kyria Pappas.

MARIA

Sir, no, Sir.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

And I hope we see far better works of art in the future from your class, Kyria Pappas. If these students perform this poorly for my end-of-semester art review, they won't be moving on to 2nd Year. Good day!

Maria bites her tongue and looks away.

The Principal exits quickly. Everyone is stunned.

The bell RINGS and the other students, except Lyra, pat Ernesto on the back before grabbing their backpacks and leaving.

Maria stares at Ernesto's fine painting.

MARIA

Ernesto, put your beautiful cave painting on the back table. This is one of your top three! A-plus!

Ernesto smiles weakly and looks away.

INT. GYMNASIO HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The school is deserted. Niko leads Maria on a tour.

NIKO

You know your classroom and the teacher's lounge.

(beat)

You learned to stay clear of Principal Mikos and his coffee mug.

MARIA

All I need to know.

NIKO

Canteen?

MARIA

Had enough military rations to last a lifetime. Thanks, anyway.

NIKO

How's your class?

MARIA

Six students who need the units to move up. Only one has skills, but all children have potential.

Niko looks away and snickers. Maria sees it.

NIKO

All of 'em? You haven't met the bullies.

Maria stops Niko by putting a hand on his muscular arm. She speaks sternly.

MARIA

Every child has the potential to do great things! If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't have become a teacher!

Maria turns and stomps to an exit.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Thomas Edison said, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

Niko looks bewildered and sad.

EXT. GYMNASIO - AFTERNOON

Maria walks past a group of Four Bullies, including three Tough Boys (mixed ethnicity, ages 12-14), and Lyra, who looks away.

The Bullies sneer as Maria walks by.

Maria ignores them but has a long way to walk to her car (a junky old sedan), so she picks up her pace.

The boys glare at Maria. Lyra looks down.

Maria senses the stares, and spins around to yell at the boys.

MARIA

You got nothin' on the terrorists who only looked at me once that way!

Maria sneers at the boys, then turns toward her car.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Minds are changed by teachers, not bullies!

Seconds later, Maria hears the BOOM of a firecracker thrown in her direction.

Maria dives to the ground and covers her head. The contents of her bag (art supplies) spill out.

The boys and Lyra scatter to the four winds.

Niko runs out of the school and yells!



NIKO

You students get back here!

Maria quickly picks herself up, grabs her art supplies and bag, and walks proudly to her heap of a car.

Niko sees Maria get into her car, and slowly drive off. He frowns.

INT. GYMNASIO CLASSROOM - MORNING

The six students are each one-seat closer to the middle and front of the room when the bell rings.

Moments later, Maria busts in the door and writes on the whiteboard: Elements of Hieroglyphs.

She turns quickly toward the speaker when Principal Mikos's voice comes over the P.A. System.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (O.S.)

Dear students, faculty, and staff.  
It has come to my attention that four of our students were involved with lighting fireworks on school grounds after school. This violates not only our school policies, but because of our unfortunate past with an active shooter, any use of explosive or incendiary devices of any kind are cause for immediate expulsion.

Maria glances around the room. All eyes are on hers except for Lyra and Ernesto.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We are currently reviewing security video of the event, but if those four students come forward now, some may get off with a warning or suspension.

(threatening)

If no one comes forward, the school dance will be eliminated. You have five minutes to come forward!

Maria shakes her head in disgust and she shows a slide of Hieroglyphs from her tablet computer to the screen.

MARIA

(mumbles)

Good luck with that!

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Hieroglyphics were an ancient form of artful writing used by the Egyptians, and described poorly by early scholars as simple picture stories.

EMMA

They weren't just pictures?

DORRI

Far more sophisticated than that!

MARIA

Right, Dorri. At first glance, and to the untrained eye. But if you look closely you see the sun rising and setting behind figures, blood oozing from victims, and snakes that look to be striking.

Lyra snaps at Maria.

LYRA

Those were all drawn in two dimensions with the third dimension inferred by the viewer.

Principal Mikos coughs loudly at the door.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Were you late again, Kyria Pappas?

MARIA

Right on time, Sir.

Dimitris, Emma, Dorri, and Matt nod yes. Matt speaks in a low, droll tone.

MATT

My watch has been running fast, Principal Mikos. My shrink says it's because I was born immaturely.

Principal Mikos is puzzled.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

You mean, prematurely?

MATT

No, Sir, I'm sure he said immaturely, but you might be right. I was just a child when it happened.

Dorri laughs, which Matt sees, and he smiles at her.

Principal Mikos is upset.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Kyria Pappas, Niko said you might have been injured. I'm sorry if any harm... er.... could you identify the students involved?

MARIA

I'm new here, Principal Mikos, I barely know my six students' names, let alone the hundreds of other students here.

Lyra looks away.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

They won't get away with this!

MARIA

No, Sir. I'm sure the boys will step forward, so the other students are not unfairly punished by withholding the school dance.

Dimitris looks horrified.

DIMITRIS

Can't do that, Principal Mikos! I already bought a new jacket and kicks. The ladies will be so disappointed!

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Your fellow students are to blame, not me!

Maria strides to Dimitris to console him, as Principal Mikos looks on.

MARIA

Dimitris, I'm sure Principal Mikos isn't serious about a collective punishment, where many innocent students are all punished for the actions of a few.

Principal Mikos's eyes open widely.

MARIA (CONT'D)

First recorded in the second-century BCE in the Qin Dynasty in China where if one person in your family committed a crime, that person and nine innocent family members were executed.

Emma is shocked.

EMMA

So cruel!

MARIA

Or the Intolerable Acts levied by King George III of England on all American colonists after the Boston Tea Party!

MATT

That's un-American.

Principal Mikos shakes his finger in anger.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

See here, Kyria Pappas!

MARIA

In Ancient Greece, a convicted murderer would be killed and his family's house razed, so his family would suffer too.

Principal Mikos yells.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

That's enough, Kyria Pappas!

Maria glares at the Principal.

MARIA

Truth is, collective punishment creates bigger monsters. Justifying the atomic bomb on innocent civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki created a world filled with dangerous nuclear weapons.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Kyria...

Maria stomps toward the open door in anger.

MARIA

A cowardly drone attack that kills one terrorist and a dozen innocent civilians at the same time creates hundreds of new terrorists, Principal Mikos. I've seen it! I've been there! Collective punishment doesn't work! It never changes anyone's mind for the good!

DORRI

No! It doesn't!

Maria slams the door in the Principal's face.

Matt, Dimitris, Dorri, and Emma cheer.

Ernesto hides a smile and looks outside.

Lyra look curiously at Maria as she returns calmly to the whiteboard.

MARIA

Hieroglyphs consist of three kinds of glyphs: phonetic glyphs, including single-consonant characters like an alphabet; and various art figures, which narrow down the meaning of the phonetic words.

The speaker in the room screeches.

KYRIA GEORGIU (V.O.)

Kyria Pappas, please report to the Principal's office.

Everyone looks at Maria, who ignores the voice.

MARIA

Hieroglyphs are written in rows or columns and can be read from left to right or from right to left. The direction of the human faces always points toward the beginning of the line.

KYRIA GEORGIU (V.O.)

Now, Kyria Pappas! Principal's office!

Maria picks up her canvas military backpack and tablet and marches toward the door.

MARIA

Draw me some hieroglyphs about what  
you learned today.

Maria storms out.

The students have looks of pity as they trudge to the easels.

END OF ACT TWO

## ACT THREE

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Maria sits in silence as the aggravated Principal shuffles papers behind a huge desk.

Maria sees a wood plaque on his desk that reads, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

She nods approvingly at the plaque.

Principal Mikos speaks with authority.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
You know why you're here!

MARIA  
Art and history are as intertwined  
as the mind and the heart?

He scrambles the notes on his desk angrily.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
I can't seem to find my notes on  
Kyria Stout, the teacher we wanted  
to hire before you showed up.

MARIA  
(mumbles)  
Imagine that?

He presses his intercom to Kyria Georgiou.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
Rita, do you have my notes on Kyria  
Stout.

KYRIA GEORGIU (O.S.)  
A clean desk is a happy desk.

Principal Mikos slams his fists on his desk.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
I will not have my authority  
undermined by a temporary art  
teacher! Do I make myself clear,  
Kyria Pappas?

MARIA  
Undermined. Interesting word  
choice. Sir, no, Sir.  
(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

If the military taught me anything,  
it's that respect didn't come from  
rank, it was earned.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

I'll get to the bottom of this!

MARIA

No doubt, Sir.

Maria turns the wooden plaque to face the flustered  
Principal.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Your plaque, Sir?

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

It was here when I got the job  
twenty-four years ago...

Maria stands, and turns to exit.

MARIA

Know who said it?

Principal Mikos stares at the plaque.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Who?

MARIA

Malcolm X, Sir. A militant African-  
American leader in the United  
States.

Principal Mikos stands, irate and speechless.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I better get back to class.

Maria exits and winks at wide-eyed Kyria Georgiou, who heard  
everything.

INT. GYMNASIO CLASSROOM - DAY

Maria enters the classroom to see Ernesto sadly looking out  
the window from his desk, while the other students stare at  
his easel. We don't see Ernesto's artwork.

The other students see Maria and dart to their easels to  
continue drawing hieroglyphs.



MARIA

Sup?

The students stop drawing and shrug their shoulders.

Maria walks slowly past the other students' art projects before getting to Ernesto's easel in the corner.

She peeks at Ernesto's work and her jaw drops open in shock.

Ernesto's dark, gloomy artwork is an amalgamation of the history of collective punishment. We see second-century BC Chinese soldiers in the upper portion of the drawing killing peasants with swords, King George's redcoats bayoneting colonists, an ancient Greek house in ruins, Hiroshima's mushroom cloud with bodies beneath it, and a drone strike killing children in the Middle East.

Maria admires the art, then turns horrified and sad for Ernesto.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Ernesto. Will you forgive me?

Matt leaps to stand between Maria and Ernesto, facing Maria.

MATT

Forgive you? For what? Teaching history and art?

EMMA

She has to turn him in. We all had to sign a sheet at orientation.

DIMITRIS

District policy to protect students from suicides and violence against classmates!

Maria glares at Dimitris then squats to be eye level with Ernesto, who remains looking out the window.

MARIA

I know your art isn't a threat to you or anyone.  
(drops her eyes)  
But it can be viewed as a threat by someone having other personal issues.

Maria stands, and Lyra gets in Maria's face.

LYRA

He didn't mean nothing by it.

DORRI

He wouldn't hurt a fly!

Maria paces in a mix of concern and fear.

MARIA

Any sign of potential threat of violence against other children. Could be verbal, email, poetry, art -- anything. I have to run it by Principal Mikos, and he isn't exactly my friend. It's school policy.

MATT

(mumbles)

They'll send him away again.

MARIA

Away? Again?

DIMITRIS

He just drew what you said!

MARIA

The law and policies are perfectly clear. I have to inform the Principal. He has to tell his folks, and it has to be reported...

MATT

(mumbles)

To the police?

Matt rips Ernesto's art page from the easel.

Ernesto stands, and stops Matt from ripping his art.

Tears flow from Ernesto's eyes.

Matt lets go.

MARIA

I'll explain it to Principal Mikos.

Maria grabs the artwork, which Ernesto is reluctant to surrender, but he finally does.

EMMA

Wait! If Ernesto tore it up, we could all keep quiet.

Ernesto shakes his head, 'no.'

DORRI

He doesn't want it torn up!

MARIA

Come on, Ernesto. You'd better come with me. It's just art. They'll understand.

DIMITRIS

How do you know they'll let him off?

MARIA

A 16-year-old boy turned in an art assignment in America that showed him executing a police officer who busted him for marijuana. Art teacher filed the report as required. The student never directly threatened anyone. Even the police officer didn't feel threatened, and it was an assigned class project to depict injustice.

MATT

So the student got off?

MARIA

Yes.

(very serious)

Did any of you feel directly threatened by Ernesto's art?

The students shake their heads 'no,' as the bell RINGS.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Then they only have to determine if he's a threat to himself, which I'm sure he's not.

(beat)

They'll let him off!

Maria and Ernesto begin to walk out side by side.

Lyra shakes her head in disgust at Maria as she walks by.

LYRA

Like hell they will.

Maria and Ernesto glance back at Lyra sadly as they exit.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Maria and Ernesto sit quietly in two chairs, all alone in the office. Ernesto's artwork is on the Principal's desk. The door is closed.

Principal Mikos and a female uniformed Police Officer (60s; gray hair) approach the door from outside, but do not enter.

Maria and Ernesto see them whispering, and pointing to the artwork on the desk.

Finally, the Principal and Police Officer enter, and shut the door.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

This is Officer Remis from Athens Police. She's just observing our routine process. Nothing to worry about, Ernesto.

Principal Mikos half-smiles at Ernesto, then glares at Maria.

MARIA

Nice to meet you, Officer Remis. This is entirely a misunderstanding, you see...

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

We've already discussed the report, Kyria Pappas.

(points to the art)

I've sent a photo to the District Psychologist and she agrees one-hundred percent.

MARIA

Agrees with what?

Niko opens and bursts through the door. Ernesto stands and leaps to hug Niko.

NIKO

Son!

ERNESTO

Daddy!

MARIA

Son?

NIKO

I should have...

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
 Niko, I'm glad you're here.  
 (to the Police Officer)  
 You too.

NIKO  
 What's going on here?

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
 Ernesto has drawn some very  
 disturbing, some say threatening,  
 images of killing school-age  
 children.

Niko and Maria are shocked.

What?                      NIKO                                      What?                      MARIA

Ernesto stares out the window with a blank look.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
 It's not the boy's fault. He was  
 totally unsupervised during class.

Maria gets defensive.

MARIA  
 You summoned me to your office!

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
 Kyria Georgiou called you in.

MARIA  
 Under your orders, presumably.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
 Regardless, the District  
 Psychologist is very worried.

NIKO  
 Worried? About what?

Principal Mikos whispers, but Ernesto turns toward him to hear.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
 Niko, she's concerned he may harm  
 himself or others.

Niko, Principal Mikos and the Police Officer study the gloomy artwork.

Maria slams her hand on the art.

MARIA

All art has context. Principal Mikos interrupted my class and threatened students with collective punishment, cancelling the school Dance for all students because of the actions of a few.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Another matter entirely.

MARIA

I launched into a quick history lesson on the failings of collective punishment.

Maria points out portions of Ernesto's artwork.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Qin Dynasty, China, killing innocent members of a family...

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Please stop, Kyria Pappas. You're not helping...

Maria points at different parts of the art.

MARIA

Boston Tea Party, Hiroshima, and cowardly drone strike. It's all here!

(to the Principal)

You heard me too. All Ernesto did was draw it.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

(to Niko and the Police Officer)

No one draws that fast in a few minutes. The District Psychologist confirmed this anger came from deep within the poor child.

Maria gets in Niko's face.

MARIA

You know he can. You must have seen him do this before.

Niko looks bewildered at Maria and his son.

NIKO

I've never seen him draw. He barely talks. Says Daddy a lot since... his mom passed.

Niko looks away, tears in his eyes.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

That boy needs more help than we can provide.

MARIA

You're wrong! Let me show you his caveman art.

The Police Officer helps to restrain angry Maria.

Maria glares at the policewoman.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Don't you dare touch me!

Niko calmly steps between the women.

NIKO

Not helping. Calm down. Please.

Maria shakes free and takes a seat.

MARIA

Just let me show you.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Your five other students drew Egyptian hieroglyphs?

MARIA

Yes, but...

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

We have some concerns. So does the District. Ernesto will just receive a little extra counseling at the county hospital.

Niko hugs his child.

NIKO

What?

ERNESTO

No!

Maria shakes her head in disgust and mumbles.

MARIA

Totally unjust!

The Police Officer grabs the artwork and guides Niko and Ernesto out the door.

Niko and Maria exchange quick glances.

Halfway out the door, Ernesto races back to hug Maria.

MARIA (CONT'D)

We'll keep your desk warm for when  
you come back. Okay, Ernesto?

Niko turns back to see Ernesto smile.

NIKO

I rarely see him do that too!

MARIA

(to Niko)

He's the one student with all the  
vision. The rest of us are simple  
observers.

Maria pats Ernesto on the back as he exits with his dad.

END OF ACT THREE



## ACT FOUR

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Maria drives her old sedan slowly in front of a dark, dilapidated house in a poor neighborhood.

She squints to read the address on a yellow sticky note, "Baros -- 1043 Agnew."

She parks and grabs a rolled-up piece of art from class, and slowly approaches the door.

She hesitates before knocking.

Niko opens the door a few inches to see Maria.

NIKO

Hi, Maria. This isn't a good time.

MARIA

I wanted to apologize and show you something.

Maria holds up the rolled-up artwork.

Niko opens the door, and Maria steps in.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Maria sees a neat but sparsely furnished home. It's dimly lit, adding to Niko's somber mood. There is a small couch, end table and lamp, and a TV in the family room.

NIKO

I have the one couch. The psychologist said it helps bring us together.

MARIA

Is Ernesto okay?

NIKO

Sleeping. Sleeps with a TV on a cartoon channel all night.

MARIA

Whatever works.

NIKO

Yeah. Whatever works.

Maria sits on the couch, and pats the couch for Niko to sit next to her.

MARIA

Look, I had to do it. I didn't know his mental status, and...

Niko sits down, but avoids eye contact.

NIKO

You don't have to explain.

MARIA

I do. You said you never saw him draw.

NIKO

I hadn't. He watches cartoons.

Maria rolls out Ernesto's cave drawing.

Niko's eyes open widely.

MARIA

He glanced at a photo of a cave drawing on my tablet computer for less than two seconds, and painted this in thirty minutes.

Niko can't believe his eyes.

NIKO

No! Why didn't you show this to Principal Mikos?

MARIA

I couldn't. It was supposed to be with a charcoal pencil only.

NIKO

So?

MARIA

He stabbed his hand with a paperclip for the red pigment. I didn't know what to do.

Niko shakes his head in disbelief.

MARIA (CONT'D)

The proportions are identical to the photo I showed him for two seconds.

Maria pulls out her phone and shows the cave art to Niko.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Recalled it perfectly from memory.

Niko picks up the artwork.

NIKO  
Stabbed himself?

Maria stands and paces. She whispers.

MARIA  
I didn't see it. His easel was in the corner. Not a peep out of him. His self-portrait the day before was an empty perfect circle! I expected the same for his next assignment.

NIKO  
I see.

MARIA  
I sent a student to get paper towels to clean up his hand. Ernesto applied pressure and his hand stopped bleeding. I probably should have said something.

NIKO  
But you didn't know I was his father.

MARIA  
And self-mutilation for the sake of getting the art exactly right. I've never seen anything like this.

Niko stares at the artwork.

NIKO  
Tragically beautiful.

MARIA  
You smiled at me the first time you saw me. That meant a lot to me.

Silence.

Maria sits inches away from Niko and moves in for a kiss, but doesn't kiss him.

She moves back a few inches on the couch.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Is Ernesto okay?

Niko stands, paces and whispers.

NIKO  
Four years, two months, and  
thirteen days ago, Ernesto was  
diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

MARIA  
But his gift for art...

Niko rolls up the artwork and hands it back to Maria.

He sadly looks Maria in the eyes.

NIKO  
His mom walked out on us that  
night. Haven't seen her since.

Maria stands and motions awkwardly like she wants to hug  
Niko, but he turns from her.

MARIA  
Oh, my God. I'm so sorry.

Niko pleads with Maria, pointing at the scroll of art.

NIKO  
The blood.  
(beat)  
You can't tell anyone about that.  
They'll take my boy away.

Maria puts the scroll behind her back.

MARIA  
No. No. I won't. Ever! I'll swear  
on a stack of bibles it was paint.

Niko guides Maria to the door.

NIKO  
He sees the District Psychologist  
tomorrow.

Niko opens the door.

MARIA  
But his gift?

As she steps out the door, she turns to see Niko drop his  
head and make the sign of the cross.

NIKO  
You see a gift. I see a curse.

Maria is shocked.

MARIA  
What?

NIKO  
Ernesto won't be returning to your  
class. I'm sorry.

Niko shuts the door.

INT. GYMNASIO CLASSROOM - DAY

The five remaining students sit around the perimeter of the classroom again, occasionally looking back to Ernesto's empty desk.

SUPER: "Three Days later."

Lyra is doodling in a notebook.

Maria shows a slide of a statue from Ancient Greece.

MARIA  
A major evolution in art can be  
seen in Ancient Greece, where fifth-  
century BCE sculptor Polykleitos  
set a new standard for carving  
human proportions and musculature.

Maria looks around the room to see no one is paying attention.

She turns a desk toward the students and takes a seat.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Do you want to talk about it?

EMMA  
(angry)  
You never mention ancient Chinese  
art.

The students turn to Emma.

MARIA  
Fair point. My classes were in  
Western Art History. We knew so  
little about the far east. Sorry.

DORRI  
You skipped over Mesopotamia too.

MATT  
Maybe Jewish artists are like  
Jewish sports legends.

Maria chuckles.

MARIA  
Sorry again. But this isn't what's  
on everyone's mind.

Dimitris sits up straight.

DIMITRIS  
What's gonna happen to Ernesto?

MARIA  
I can't talk about it.

Lyra stops doodling but doesn't look up.

LYRA  
Or won't.

Maria stands and paces, twitching a bit.

MARIA  
Can't talk about a student's  
personal matters. It would be  
unethical.

Lyra glares at Maria.

LYRA  
Was it unethical to yank him from  
class!

Maria returns to the desk she was sitting in. The students  
see her twitch nervously from time to time.

MARIA  
I can tell you everyone has some  
kind of issue, but it's not my  
place to talk about them.

MATT  
We should be able to talk about  
anything.  
(glances at his leg)  
But I know we don't.

Dorri glances at her backpack.

Silence.

Maria establishes eye contact with the students as she speaks.

MARIA

I have P.T.S.D., and not a mild case.

MATT

Post-something, right?

MARIA

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.

(beat)

No one returns from war unscathed.  
Recurrent horrible memories.  
Reliving 'em. Nightmares. Cold  
sweats. They can hit anytime.

Lyra looks away. Maria sees it.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Used to love fireworks as a child.

(sad)

They scare me to death now.

Maria stands and paces.

MATT

Geez!

MARIA

I still get help. I don't want your pity.

(beat)

The reason I'm telling you this is I'm better than most. Saw some bad things. Very bad things. Saw fellow soldiers, just kids, go insane.

(whispers)

See, mental health isn't black or white. It's all a spectrum -- a gradient.

(faces the students)

Nobody's perfect and it doesn't take much for fairly normal people to come unglued, to have a bad day, or have an incident. Know what I'm saying?!

All students, but Lyra, nod 'yes.'

Maria stands and laughs.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Enough sad talk. I'm reminded of one of my favorite books, Practical Demonkeeping by Christopher Moore, who said, "If you think anyone is sane you just don't know enough about them."

Everyone chuckles, even Lyra, who writes down, "Practical Demonkeeping" by Christopher Moore.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Your next assignment is to draw, paint, or mold clay into anything Greek. Your best work. Go!

The PA speaker in the room squeals, as the students head to the easels.

KYRIA GEORGIU (O.S.)

Kyria Pappas, please stop in after class.

Maria rolls her eyes in disgust.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Maria enters Principal Mikos's office to hear Principal Mikos talking on a speaker-phone to MADELYNN YATES (50s), a stuffy woman.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

Yes, Ma'am, that's when Kyria Pappas just showed up.

(beat)

In fact, she just stepped in the office, so could you repeat that, Ma'am?

MADELYNN (O.S.)

Yes. This is Madelynn Yates from Human Resources at the District. Kyria Pappas, can you hear me, okay?

Maria moves in closer to the speaker, and answers questions in loud humming, rather than words.

MARIA

Uh huh!

Principal Mikos looks curiously at Maria.



MADELYNN (O.S.)  
Did you know that your temporary  
teaching position at Daedalus was  
first offered to a Kyria Rebecca  
Stout?

Maria acts surprised.

MARIA  
Uh. Uh.

MADELYNN (O.S.)  
Principal Mikos, did Kyria Stout  
ever come in to secure her new job?

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
I heard from your office she would  
be coming in with a resume, but to  
the best of our knowledge, she  
never showed up.

MARIA  
HMMMMM.

MADELYNN (O.S.)  
Could have lost interest, I guess.

MARIA  
Uh huh!

Principal Mikos turns his head to Maria.

MADELYNN (O.S.)  
Kyria Pappas, you're to be  
commended for taking the initiative  
in looking for work, but we need  
you to resubmit your resume.

MARIA  
Uh huh!

MADELYNN (O.S.)  
We can't seem to be able to put our  
fingers on it. This place is a  
mess. I've got to run. Bye-bye now.

MARIA  
Uh huh.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
If there's more checking to do, I  
can...

Click. Principal Mikos and Maria hear Madelynn hang up.

MARIA

Well, that takes care of that. Hear anything more from the Baros family?

Principal Mikos shakes in frustration.

Kyria Georgiou enters the room quickly.

KYRIA GEORGIU

Kyria Pappas, a Mr. Wei Chang is waiting to speak to you in your classroom.

Maria smiles like it's good news.

MARIA

Oh, what a nice surprise!

She exits quickly.

END OF ACT FOUR

## ACT FIVE

INT. GYMNASIO CLASSROOM - DAY

WEI CHANG (40s) is dressed in a nice suit and tie, with a briefcase in hand, when Maria enters with a smile and outstretched arm.

MARIA

Mr. Chang. I'm Maria Pappas, Hui's art teacher.

Wei shakes her hand with a puzzled look.

WEI

Hui? Not Emma?

MARIA

That brilliant, talented, and beautiful girl of yours goes by Emma and Hui. She's proud of her heritage and culture, especially the arts.

Wei is at a loss for words, so Maria keeps going.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Even late in the semester, she shows great promise.

WEI

She says your class is her favorite by far.

MARIA

And she's been happy?

WEI

Yes, but we were steering her to the sciences and engineering.

MARIA

Where she was unhappy?

WEI

Yes, but for her future...?

MARIA

You'd like to see her less-happy than happy? What kind of future does she want, Mr. Chang?

Wei struggles to speak.

WEI

She hasn't shown us any of her art.

Maria looks around her desk. She sees Emma's self-portrait and Ernesto's cave drawing.

MARIA

Saving it here for Principal Mikos's final review at the semester's-end art show.

Maria shows Mr. Chang Emma's self-portrait.

MARIA (CONT'D)

She drew this. It only lacks a smile.

Mr. Chang looks away.

Maria slowly unrolls Ernesto's "cave art."

Mr. Chang's eyes open widely. He smiles.

WEI

It appears I have underestimated my daughter's art.

MARIA

Under-appreciated her heart, I would say.

(glares at Mr. Chang)

If you'll excuse me, I have a lesson to plan.

As Mr. Chang bows slightly and exits, Kyria Georgiou storms in.

KYRIA GEORGIOU

Kyria Pappas, please come with me.

Maria is perplexed.

MARIA

What is it now?

KYRIA GEORGIOU

Kyria Stout is in the office claiming you threatened her and stole her job! You're being dismissed.

Kyria Georgiou turns in a huff and exits.

MARIA

Maybe we can skip the trial and go straight to the hangin'!

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Principal Mikos sits like the judge, with KYRIA STOUT (60s), a gray-haired woman in a bland floral dress clutching her purse, as Maria enters.

Maria glares at Kyria Stout's clenched hands. Angry.

MARIA

I'm not gonna steal your purse.

KYRIA STOUT

You stole my job!

Maria remains calm.

MARIA

They only have positions here at Daedalus Gymnasio, and you didn't show up.

Principal Mikos stands to restore order.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS

I have a call into the District to settle the matter.

MARIA

Do whatever you think is right, Principal Mikos.

Kyria Stout points at Maria.

KYRIA STOUT

How did you hear about the position here? Eavesdropping?

MARIA

It was posted on the District website! I wandered in to see if it was still available. I needed work!

KYRIA STOUT

It was you on the phone who told me the job was filled! You threatened me.

MARIA

I don't recall!

Principal Mikos yells at Maria.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
You threatened an applicant?!

MARIA  
I said I didn't recall threatening  
an applicant. That's all!

Principal Mikos is stunned. He presses his intercom for Kyria Georgiou, who races into the office.

KYRIA GEORGIU  
Yes, Sir.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
Kyria Georgiou, did you threaten  
Kyria Stout on the phone the day  
Kyria Pappas showed up?

KYRIA GEORGIU  
No, Sir.

Maria looks away.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
Check with Niko.

KYRIA GEORGIU  
Yes, Sir.

Kyria Georgiou leaves in a huff.

Principal Mikos's phone RINGS, and he answers it right away.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS  
Ah. District H.R. We'll get to the  
bottom of this.

He turns from the others, and mumbles into the phone.

He listens.

He turns to glare at Maria.

PRINCIPAL MIKOS (CONT'D)  
I see. Yes, I know what to do.

Maria glares at Principal Mikos, then at Kyria Stout.

MARIA  
I'll get my things and show myself  
out.

Maria turns and exits with her head held high in dignity.

EXT. GYMNASIO - AFTERNOON

Maria exits the school with a small box of supplies and her canvas military backpack.

She sees Lyra and her three bully friends halfway out to her car.

Maria's head is held high in dignity, as the boys laugh, but Lyra, smoking a cigarette like a tough girl, speaks up.

LYRA

Hey, Maria, everyone's Greek art projects turned out great. Especially Dimitris'! Who knew, right? You'll love 'em.

(beat)

Where you goin', girl?

Maria glances over to Lyra.

MARIA

I was fired.

Lyra's eyes open in disbelief. She starts to follow Maria to her car. The boys stand there laughing.

LYRA

Fired?! For what?

Maria avoids eye contact with Lyra.

MARIA

Taking a job under false pretenses, threatening the real candidate for the job, teaching dangerous philosophies, and endangering young hearts and minds.

LYRA

You threatened that old lady who could barely walk in the front door.

MARIA

Watch it, girl. Age discrimination is as ugly as the others.

LYRA

That sucks for me!

MARIA  
(snickers)  
Not as much as the company you  
keep.

Lyra glances back at the boys as Maria opens her car door and  
throws in the box angrily.

LYRA  
They're just boys!

MARIA  
Dragging you down like a flightless  
penguin when you have a mind that  
should be soaring with eagles.

Maria gets in her car, mumbling.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Some exit strategy!

She races off.

Lyra stares at the car.

END OF PILOT EPISODE