



Reflection

Encanto (2021) · Not Rated · 1596 words

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Fandom: Encanto (2021) Rating: Not Rated Category: Multi

Warnings: Creator chose not to add warnings

Relationships: Camilo Madrigal & Dolores Madrigal, Camilo Madrigal/Original Male Character(s), implied/referenced - Relationship

Characters: Camilo Madrigal, Dolores Madrigal

Tags: Ambiguous/Open Ending, Camilo Madrigal Needs a Hug, Dolores Madrigal Hears Everything, Good Sibling Dolores Madrigal, Caring Dolores Madrigal, Dolores Madrigal is a Little Shit, Overdramatic Camilo Madrigal, Lies, Shapeshifter angst, Camilo Madrigal's Room, Accidental Catfishing

Words: 1596 Chapters: 1 chapter Status: Complete Published: 2025-06-30

Camilo takes a lot of forms. Some he only uses when he needs them. Others, however, he likes particularly well. One of these favored forms gets him in a bit of trouble.

Luckily, he has his wise, all-hearing big sister to help him out.

Might add more someday, might not

Camilo's room was a dark, shapeless expanse of mirrors and fog. He could make it look like something else if he wanted to, but he didn't feel the need to at the moment. He was too busy wallowing in self pity to care.

"Hermano?" Dolores' voice echoed through the fog. It was tinged with far too much amusement for Camilo's liking.

Of course she already knew.

"This isn't funny." Camilo groaned, burying himself further into his bed as the room around him rippled and changed until it resembled a theater, him and his bed on full display on the stage.

Dolores, no longer impeded by the maze of mirrors, climbed the steps to the stage and sat next to him. Her hand rubbed comfortingly into his shoulder, and he leaned into the touch.

"You have to admit," she whispered after a moment, "it's a little funny."

Camilo rolled away from her, glaring. She just smirked at him. He rubbed his face with his hands, looking away again. "Okay, alright, a little. But it's mostly horrible!"

"So..." Dolores grinned, voice still quiet but excited, "are you going to say yes?"

"No." Camilo said firmly, ignoring the way his reflection in the mirror across from him started crying at the word.

"Why not?" Dolores asked, surprised. "You've said he's your best friend plenty of times, and I know I heard you giggle when he started flirting with you." She smirked wickedly, "Right before you ran away, anyways."

"Shut up!" Camilo snapped. "I did not *run away*! I, I, I retreated from the situation!"

"Uh-huh."

"Besides, he's not my best friend." Camilo added bitterly, his form shifting into his favorite female one. Dolores had always thought it looked a bit like her, but with more yellow and orange and hair that was closer to his regular style than hers. "He's Carlota's best friend. How's he going to react when he finds out..?"

He shifted back to his regular self, gesturing vaguely at his body.

"This is what you get for lying." Dolores scolded. "This never would've happened if you'd just told him who you were from the start."

"Oh, please." Camilo scoffed, flopping back against his pillows. He peeked to make sure his sister was fully on the bed before letting his room's form start shifting. A cozy park, that sunlit room with the desk he liked writing plays in, a library, a kitchen for some reason... always, always filled with so many *mirrors*. "Most of my friends don't know who I really am. It's not easy making friends as a Madrigal."

"I have friends." Dolores argued. She didn't pay much attention to the shifting room, she was used to it.

"Yeah, well..." Camilo sighed. "I just... Like it, then, I guess. It's nice controlling what parts of me others get to see. And that's fine for a friend, but I can't just lead some guy on. Right?" He added, turning to his older sister for guidance. His room had stabilized again, back to the darkness and the mist and the mirrors.

"Right, you most certainly cannot." Dolores agreed firmly. More excitedly, she asked, "Does that mean you *are* interested in him?"

"Maybe. I don't know." Camilo muttered, unafraid of being too quiet for her to hear. "I don't want to turn him down, at least. But he's not going to be interested in me once

he finds out I'm not a girl. Dios mios, he probably won't even want to be my friend anymore when he finds out I've been lying this whole time."

"You can't lead him on, you don't want to turn him down, and you don't want to tell him who you really are." Dolores counted out on her fingers, giving him an unimpressed look. "Not sure what your plan here is, hermanito."

"I'm never going to leave my room again." Camilo informed her, as if it was the most obvious thing on the world. "I've got a whole world in here, and you and Antonio can bring me food. That way, I never have to turn him down or tell him the truth. He'll just think Carlota disappeared one day, mourn me, and move on. Everyone wins!"

"If you do that, I will bring Antonio in here with his puppy eyes and have him ask you to come to his room and read him a story." Dolores threatened.

"You are evil." Camilo hissed, though more than one of his reflections were laughing. He sighed dramatically. "And what do you suggest I do, oh wise one, hearer of all?"

"I *am* wise, so you better listen to what I have to say." Dolores nodded, her voice soft as ever but demanding proper attention. Camilo sat up straight, giving it. "Good. Now, what I think you should do is tell him. He and the other kids are always talking about how cool it would be to know you better. You're one of the more popular Madrigals!"

Camilo thought about it for a minute, then asked pointedly, "Can you remember hearing him, even once, flirting with anyone who wasn't a girl?"

"Well, no." Dolores cringed. "But it's not like I can remember *everything* I've ever heard." She tried.

"It's settled, Carlota is MIA." He kissed his fingers, spreading his arm out. "Farewell, fair maiden, you shall be missed!" Before falling back down on his bed and hiding himself under a blanket.

"Come on, Camilo, you won't know for sure unless you try." Dolores urged him. "If you just avoid him, you lose him for sure. If you go to him and tell him the truth, he might surprise you."

"I know him." Camilo's voice was muffled by the blankets, but Dolores could still hear the pain in it. "He only ever talks about *girls* when he talks about dating or marriage or... Things like that."

"Maybe he's just never met a guy that peaked his interest, before." Dolores insisted. Frustrated, without thinking, she added, "Besides, it's not like you couldn't just turn into—"

Dolores cut herself off, eyes wide with what she had been saying, but it was too late. Camilo sat up, glaring.

"I see. That's why you think he'll like me either way." Camilo said coldly. "After all, *the shapeshifting Madrigal doesn't care, he's a little of everything anyways*. Right?"

Dolores flinched. Years ago, some of the townspeople had taken to calling Camilo... Well, whatever they wanted. He, she, they, it. They said it didn't matter, because he didn't care what form he took, so he wouldn't care what they called him.

He did care. A lot.

"That's not what I meant, hermano." Dolores promised, touching his arm. "Brother, I swear it wasn't. But you are different, and your body isn't always male or female, and whoever you end up with is going to need to be okay with that anyways. It's different than any other guy asking him out and you know it, so don't give me that face. He might surprise you. You're definitely going to surprise him."

Still pouting but less upset, Camilo shook his head. "Hermana, I—"

"Do you want to know what he's been doing since you ran off?" Dolores asked, interrupting him, deciding to show her hand. At his hesitant nod, she said, "He's been crying to his family because he thinks his best friend hates him for asking her out."

"I don't hate him!" Camilo said, making Dolores wince from his volume. Quieter, he muttered. "Lo siento. But how can he think I hate him for that?"

Dolores stuck her hand by her ear, listening more closely to the boy in question. "From what I can tell, he thinks that you think he was only pretending to be your friend to, er... Get in your pants."

"What? No." Camilo shook his head, quick. "I never thought that. He was always such a gentleman towards Carlota, never made her, er, me uncomfortable at all. I didn't mean to make him feel like... He's been my friend for years, of course I didn't think it was like *that*."

"Well, he thinks you do." Dolores shrugged. Casually, she added, "So, what's the plan, again? Let him mourn and move on, right?"

"...shut up." Camilo groaned, hauling himself from the bed and shooing his mirrors away from the path to his door. He ignored how scared and resigned some of his reflections looked. He also ignored how *smug* yet worried Dolores' reflections looked. Most of all, he ignored how hopeful one or two of his other selves dared to seem. "You win, I'll talk to him, happy? Though, I guess I need to talk to Mamí and Papí first..."

"Already done, they gave a glowing seal of approval." Dolores told him. "Just, uh, maybe bring an umbrella with you."

Remembering how panicked his Mama had been for Dolores' first date, Camilo nodded. An umbrella definitely was a good idea.

Still, he gave his sister the stink eye as he opened his door. "That sure I would cave in, huh?"

Dolores smirked, following him out. "You always do."

As the door shut, the room plunged itself into darkness. The mirrors faded away, leaving only the mist and the void, waiting for Camilo to come back and fill it with his reflections.

— end of "Reflection" —