

# "Maria and the Hat"

(Unknown origin)

**Moral of the story: Take your costume off! Your true self is waiting to be revealed.**

apartment on a side street in New York. She was a junior clerk in a large company, and her life was gray, routine, and mundane — aligned with everything Maria thought of herself.

One morning, on her way to work, Maria noticed a new hat shop that had just opened. A spark of playful curiosity suddenly arose within her, and she walked into the shop.

Maria wandered around the shop, examining the variety of hats and occasionally trying them on. Suddenly, on a top shelf, a magnificent hat caught her eye. Maria reached for it and placed it on her head. She glanced at the large mirror. The hat was stunning.

A little girl who visited the store with her mom stared at Maria, pulling on her mother's sleeve. "Mom, Mom, look how beautiful that woman is with this hat," she said.

Her mother looked at Maria with a smile and felt the need to compliment her. She approached Maria and said, "Miss, the hat suits you beautifully."

Another customer overheard the mother and came closer to compliment Maria as well. "Miss, you look really beautiful with this hat; it fits you perfectly," he said.

Maria approached an even larger mirror and gazed at her reflection. For the first time in her adult life, she really loved what she saw. There was a sparkle in her eyes, and a beautiful smile was resting on her face. That hat is coming home with me, she thought. She quickly went to the counter and paid for it. When she walked out to the street she immediately felt different.

A new world unfolded before her very eyes. Never before had Maria noticed the vibrant colors of flowers or the feeling of cool air flowing through her nostrils. The bustling traffic and busy crowd were a pleasant harmony to her ears. She was nearly floating to work. A happy song was playing in her heart. When she passed the café, as she did every morning, a handsome young man looked at her with a huge smile on his face. “Hello, beautiful! You look stunning. Let me buy you a cup of coffee.” Maria thanked him and continued down the street, the song in her heart getting even stronger.

The doorman at her office building opened the door for her and greeted her with a cheerful “Good morning” for the first time. Never before had he paid any attention to her. A man in the elevator kindly asked her what floor she needed. Her colleagues seemed to notice her much more, as if for the first time, mentioning the sparkle in her eyes. They showered her with compliments on how good she looked and how beaming she was. Her department manager invited her to have lunch, with the excuse that it's been a while since they'd discussed her work.

As the amazing and magical workday ended, Maria decided to hail a taxi home. Two cabs stopped at her side before she even blinked. She got into the back seat of the first taxi, thinking about her incredible day — all thanks to the magnificent hat she had acquired.

As the amazing and magical workday ended, Maria decided to hail a taxi home. Two cabs stopped at her side before she even blinked. She got into the back seat of the first taxi, thinking about her incredible day — all thanks to the magnificent hat she had acquired.

Maria rang the doorbell as she arrived, a smile still painted on her face. Her mother welcomed her at the door with a surprising look. “There is something different about you,” she said, “You look radiant. There’s a spark in your eyes, like the one you used to have as a little girl,” she added.

“I can really feel that,” Maria replied, “And it’s all thanks to this beautiful hat.”

Her mom looked at her, puzzled. “Maria, what hat?” she asked.

Maria placed her hands on her head and found nothing. She suddenly realized that her worst fears had come true — the hat that had changed her life was gone. She had lost it. Maria collapsed on the couch and began to retrace her day step by step. She was determined to find out where she had lost the wonderful hat. She didn’t remember taking it off in the taxi, during her lunch break, in the office, in the elevator, or on the street. Maria retraced her entry into the shop — the moment her eyes spotted the hat on the shelf, putting it on her head, looking in the mirror, walking to the counter to pay for it. And then she remembered painfully and clearly how she had placed the hat next to the cash register so she could take her wallet out of her bag, and how she had left the hat on the counter.

Maria realized that her luminescent energy came from within, and with it, the entire enchanted day unfolded.

**Food for thought:**

**Do you have an item of clothing in your closet that makes you feel different as you wear it?**

**Now, give yourself a compliment even through you're not wearing it.**