



Trapped

Encanto (2021) · Not Rated · 2008 words

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Shapeshifters don't do well when stuck in one body. It's an issue most people don't have to deal with, finding comfort in stability with their appearance and growing upset if it changes too drastically, rather than the other way around.

Or...

Unlike the rest of his family, Camilo's never had any big emotional issues. Unlike his family, there's nothing to fix when the Miracle is gone. There is, however, something to break.

Art by me, it took me 32 minutes.

(Ignore Eris, she's for a different idea I had)

Edit: As of May 25, 2026, this is my 15th fic to reach one hundred kudos... maybe I should stop counting them now? XD

Chapter 1

He ends up calming down and starts changing his appearance through clothing/hairstyle/makeup at a worrying rate. It's more an extended breakdown than actually healing, but it keeps him afloat until Casita and his Gift are back.

I had ChatGPT condense my interpretation of Camilo into a paragraph:
I see Camilo as someone who's always known exactly who he is. His shapeshifting isn't a disguise — it's self-expression. Losing his Gift doesn't reveal a hidden self; it traps him in just one version of who he is, when he's used to being many.

It had taken months, but Casita was almost rebuilt. It might've taken longer, but the entire village had gathered to help the family that had served them so long. The only Madrigal who didn't help was Antonio, who spent his time playing with other kids and the animals that still liked him despite his missing Gift.

Casita was almost rebuilt. They all hoped that meant Casita was almost back to being alive, but they tried not to say it out loud.

They had other things to talk about. Luisa was crying at least twice a day, but they were happy tears more often than not. Isabella had learned how to dye her hair from a woman in the village, going around with styles that made Abuela cringe. Abuela, who was making an effort to pay more attention to them all, especially Mirabel. Dolores was wearing earmuffs now, her hearing still sensitive despite no longer being inhuman.

Everyone was laughing and bonding over the years of stress they were no longer hiding, even Agustin and Felix were opening up about the insecurities they had marrying into such a magical family.

It seemed the only one not opening up was Camilo, no matter how Mirabel and Dolores tried to gently talk him into venting. He was the only one who, ironically, didn't change.

He wasn't very strong and carrying bricks was tiring, but he helped out where he could, cracking jokes to keep the others' moods up even when he had to call it quits for the day. He pranced about, spinning and twirling and laughing, just as he'd always done. His appetite wasn't as big as it had been, but he still gleefully packed away seconds at every meal.

The others sent him sad looks. 'Mijo, please, you don't have to pretend to be happy' when he joked about a scrape he'd gotten. 'There's no shame in resting, Camilo' when he tried to push himself just a little bit more. 'We won't judge you for who you really are, Primo' when he just kept acting like he always had.

After the first few weeks, Camilo was legitimately considering giving the audience what they wanted. Or what they expected, anyways. He knew none of them wanted him to be broken. But all of them were broken, and they couldn't believe he wasn't.

If I don't laugh, I'll cry. It was a simple role, the broken jester. He could start small, tiny cracks, snapping at people 'without' meaning to. Even without his Gift, he was sure he could pull it off. *Who am I if I'm not someone else?* Yes, he could make them believe he felt that way, easy. Then they could help him 'heal', feel good about themselves, and move on to focusing on their real issues.

In the end, he decided against it. The family had enough of sacrifice and lies to last a lifetime, he wasn't going to add more. He was Camilo, he had always been Camilo, and his biggest worries were for his family. *I'm fine* was always a lie with the Madrigals, but it wasn't a lie for him and it never had been.

Camilo had been fine his entire life, even when everyone else was crumbling. He had been less fine when he lost his Gift and Casita had died, but then weeks had passed and his family was actually getting better, and he was starting to feel like everything was going to be okay.

Then months had passed and Casita was almost rebuilt... And Camilo was not fine anymore.

It had started with small things. Getting hit in the head by a ball because he'd tried to shift smaller instead of dodging. Staring at a tall shelf for five minutes wondering how to grab something without shifting taller, until he remembered to use a stool.

A freckle he'd long ago moved to a place he liked better being back to its original spot, his nose being smaller than he liked, finding a scar he didn't know he had. His hair needing to be brushed instead of shifting itself tangle-free. Waking to the same face in the mirror *every single day*.

It started small. But it built. He threw himself into rebuilding Casita, joking less and less as he pushed himself harder and harder, until he could almost forget what it felt like to be anything he wanted to be. Still, he didn't tell anyone what was wrong. They assumed his masks were *falling* rather than coming up, and didn't prod him for fear of pushing him back into the shell he never had.

It wasn't that he was hiding his problems, exactly, just... He didn't even know how to explain it. How to put this feeling into words. How could he tell someone else if he couldn't even understand it?

He'd always liked himself. But now his body felt *wrong*.

Not always. Sometimes it felt just right. Hugging his sister, writing silly little plays in his notebook, even just sleeping. Camilo's body felt just right during those times. But then there would be a situation where he felt too slow, too short, too tall, too old, too young. A situation where he wanted to dance with his sister's grace or carry things with Luisa's strength or where he suddenly, desperately, achingly wanted to try to perfect his Bruno impression now that he had the *real thing* to mimic. Or not mimic.

Because he couldn't anymore.

And that hurt almost as bad as losing Casita did.

But he stayed strong, kept it inside, kept going. He could figure this little issue of his out after they had a real home again, after they weren't sleeping in villagers' guest rooms. He could hold it together until then. He had to.

He broke from the strangest, smallest thing.

He saw Antonio being carried, worn out from a long day of playing. More accurately, he saw Dolores carrying Antonio. And that made him realize two very shocking things.

The first was that never again would Luisa's form let him carry his sister like that. Someday, he wouldn't be able to carry Antonio either, and now he was jealous that Dolores was doing so.

The second was that never again would he be small. His body wouldn't be Antonio's, or his own toddler self's, or one of the villages kids'. Never again would he be small enough to be carried.

"Camilo? ¿Estás bien?" His Mamí asked, noticing the way he was staring at his siblings. "Camilo?"

Camilo turned to look at her. He blinked. She was only a bit taller than him. He would never think of her as weak, his Mama was fierce and proud, but she certainly wasn't able to carry so much as Luisa (even without her Gift, his cousin was strong).

Weeks before Antonio's Gift ceremony, something that felt like a lifetime ago now, Camilo had a nightmare. Pepa had spent the morning carrying him in various tiny forms as she went about her morning duties.

That was the last time he would ever be carried by his mother.

Camilo, suddenly uncaring as to who might see or hear him, burst out crying.

Camilo was sitting in the middle of a half-built room, his mother's arms squeezed comfortingly around him, his tear-streaked face pressed into her as he continued to sob. He could hear people coming closer, could hear them talking, but he didn't care. He was... Tired. He was done.

"Shh, hermano, it's going to be okay." Dolores' soft voice broke through the haze of his mind, her body pressing into his as she joined the hug on the floor. She didn't know what was wrong, but she did know that her brother very rarely cried.

Eventually, Camilo's tears began to dry, and he reluctantly pulled his face away from his mother. His Papi was standing near them, carrying Antonio, a sight that nearly sent him back to tears. Around them was the entire family and a handful of villagers, various looks of confusion and worry on all their faces. Some, like Luisa and surprisingly Isabella, looked just about ready to mortally injure whatever upset him.

If he ever was going to fake a lifelong identity crisis, now would be the time. The thought amused him enough to clear his head and decide to not do that.

Instead, he wiped his eyes, sniffled, and quietly asked the question he hadn't realized had been burning through his mind for so long: "How do you all live like this?"

"Like what, mijo?" His Mamí asked, rubbing his arms gently, her eyes wide with concern.

"Like, like..." He searched for the words, eyes darting between all the faces of the crowd, all the faces that he would never again see staring back at him from the mirror. Tears started streaming down his face again. His breath hitched. "I'm so trapped. I... I don't... I'm always the same height. My skin only gets darker in the sun and I can't control it. My hair is always the same length. I can only run so fast or lift so much or dance so well. I'm stuck like... Like this."

"Camilo, we love you just as you are." More than one family member promised.

Camilo chuckled, a broken sound. "But I'm not me anymore. I'm only part of me. I can only *be* part of me. I'm never going to be all of me ever again..."

Camilo's breath hitched again, eyes squeezing closed. The words he hadn't been able to string together even in his own head had finally been spoken, leading him to realize the terrible truth.

"I'm going to be trapped with one face for the rest of my life."

Chapter 2

I decided to add a little bit about when he gets his powers back.

Camilo laughed. He laughed and laughed and laughed until everyone was staring at him in concern. And then? Then he just laughed some more.

"Uh, primo?" Mirabel said slowly. "Are you okay..?"

Camilo grinned with Mirabel's mouth, her own voice replying "Of course, prima." Bruno "never" Abuela "better!"

Isa, Papí, Mamí, a few of the village kids... He danced and leaped around Casita's courtyard. In all the excitement and chaos of Casita coming back to life and everyone else getting their Gifts back, of Dolores rushing for her earmuffs and Antonio crying because he could finally understand his friends again, Camilo had taken a while to realize that he had his Gift back too.

He was free again! He ran like the long-legged man he'd once met at market, jumped like the bouncy girl he babysat, danced like his sister, and sung like his Papí. Bruno screeched and jumped about ten feet in the air when Camilo showed him his impression of him.

Not quite a perfect impression, he knew now, but he would get better. He had all the time in the world to practice, after all.

It was weeks before he was really comfortable spending long periods of time in his own body again (with his freckle moved and scar erased and hair just the way he liked it). He'd have nightmares, sometimes, of getting stuck like that again. Those nights, he'd stay up and pose in front of his mirrors, practicing his different acts again and again and again, until he was actually glad to see his own face staring back at him.

It was months before he got back to the fluid shifting he was known for, no hesitation or thought — merely becoming whatever he needed to be the moment he needed to. Growing taller like one reaches out an arm, shorter as one ducks, shifting like the breeze.

Free, and wild, and ever-changing.

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Just the way he liked it.

— end of “Trapped” —