… From "The Song We Left Unfinished"

Marge walked down the hall and entered through the open door of her dressing room. The space was miraculously empty. She locked the door behind her and pressed her back against it, the cool metal sending shivers down her spine.

A wall of mirrors was before her—Astra, looking back, her makeup alone worth one person's weekly salary. The perfect mask for a face she barely saw anymore.

She grabbed the makeup wipes and removed her lipstick; another wipe removed the black and silver eyeliner. A third wiped away the foundation and highlight.

She worked the wipes hard until Astra was gone. Another face emerged: dark brown hair without gold extensions, black eyes that had already lost their spark. At twenty-two, after five years of playing the star, Marge Mendez looked exhausted.

"Hey, Marge," she whispered to her reflection.

She saw what Astra's lights always manage to conceal: a tiny frame that felt even smaller without the high-heeled boots, olive skin now paled from too many late nights without sun, and —her favorite flaw— a small scar on her chin from a childhood fall. She remembered it had hurt terribly, but now she felt it was the only mark that tied her to her old self.

Someone knocked on the door, and a hiss followed—Steve. Her time was long gone, but Marge ignored it. She reached into her bag under the counter and pulled out her notebook.

The cover was worn, and the spine was cracked from all the times she had opened and closed it. The pages were filled with her handwritten lyrics—her own. She flipped to a random page in the middle of the book and ran her fingers across the words she had written.

She gets to play a happy girl.

What a sad life.