

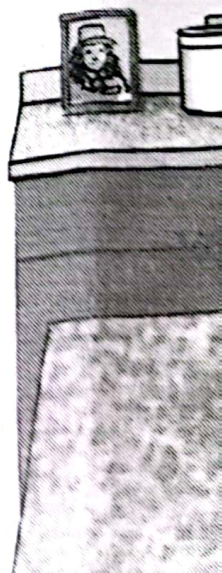
Citizen Soldier

Maya sat at the kitchen counter. Her head was resting on her hands. Tomorrow night was the mother-daughter pot luck dinner for her scout troop. Maya and her mom loved to cook together. Their favorite weekend activity was experimenting with new recipes. She wanted her friends to taste her Out of This World Tacos. Maya and her mom had created them together.

“What’s with the sad face, Maya?” asked Maya’s grandmother, Mimi.

“I just miss Mom,” said Maya, “She has been gone for so long now. Why does she have to be so far away? What is she doing over there that is so important anyway?”

Maya’s mother was a captain in the U.S. Army. She was serving overseas. Her tour of duty lasted eighteen months. She had another six months to go.



“Now, you know that she volunteered to go overseas. She is working in a country that asked the United States to help keep its people safe. In that country, there are some people who want to take over their government by using force. Your Mom is helping the majority of the people in that country. They want peace. They want to have elections. Your mom’s job helps a lot of people have the freedoms that U.S. citizens have.”

DID YOU KNOW?

This story is realistic fiction. The actions of the characters in this story could happen in real life.

Suddenly, Maya and Mimi heard a “bing” on the laptop. This meant that Mom was



Credits: left, right. © Seita Hayden/Wilkinson Studios, Inc.

available to talk to them. Smiles lit up their faces as they saw Mom's face on the monitor.

Mimi started by saying, "Maya doesn't understand why you are so far away. She wants you to be here tomorrow night."

Mom pursed her lips and sat quietly for a moment. She said, "Maya, do you remember watching your twin brothers when they were just toddlers? Each one had his own ideas. It was hard for you to get both to listen because one fought all the time?"

"Oh yes, I remember!" laughed Maya. "It was very frustrating!"

"Well the country I'm in has the same kind of problem. There are two groups. One group is trying to get its way by using force. That hurts other people. When I joined the army, I made a promise to our country to be a good citizen and help others. Right now our country needs me here to help the people who are being attacked. I hope you can understand."

"Oh I do, Mom. I just miss you so much!" said Maya.

"Me, too," said Mimi, "But you know what? I make mean Out of This World Tacos myself. I might even share my special ingredient with you, Maya."

Just then they lost their video connection. They could only hear Mom say, "Have fun tomorrow night you two. Tell everyone I am thinking about them."

"I guess I can show my own allegiance to Mom and be a good citizen for my family and scout troupe. So, what is that secret ingredient? Avocados?"

"No."

"Bacon?"

"No."

"Chili powder?"

"Keep guessing," laughed Mimi.



Credits: right © Seitu Hayden/Wilkinson Studios, Inc.