

# Mariah

Two sisters: Destiny (11), and Sasha (5)

Mom is in the Army National Guard

Interests: Running, baking, reading magazines,  
listening to music, hanging out with friends



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JUNE 17

## Off to War

Two weeks to go until Mom leaves for Iraq and everybody is feeling the stress. Mom is in the Army National Guard, and I never really thought much about being a “military family.” She would just do her weekend drill and a summer camp, and that’s it. I’ve known about the war, but didn’t think it would ever be something that I had to worry about. Well, she got her orders about a month ago and she’s getting ready to leave. Everything is pretty confusing right now—Mom and Dad have lots of paperwork and business to take care of. I get scared when I think of her leaving. We’re pretty close and I talk to her about everything. Dad’s great but it’s not the same. It freaks me out sometimes thinking about Mom being so far away....

I’m going to make a card for Mom and hide it in her duffel bag. I want to tell her how proud I am and how much I love her. She can keep it by her bed (or maybe she’ll sleep on a cot in the barracks over there, I don’t know). I’m going to include my favorite picture of us from our camping trip last summer—I know it will make her cry. I sure hope we can keep in

touch by email and that we can talk once in a while...I just want to be able to hear her voice.

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**AUGUST 31**

## **My First 5k Race**

Ran my first ever 5k race yesterday. It was a really hot day, so I was exhausted after...but I was so pumped to have finished and got a cool race t-shirt. My dad and sisters were at the finish line cheering me on which was sweet. The race was a fundraiser for the cancer unit at the local children's hospital, so it was for a good cause.

Getting up WAY too early on a Saturday morning was worth it. I made pretty good time, and bet I'll be even faster at the next race in a couple weeks (hopefully it will be cooler!). My legs are SO sore today—ugh!!

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**SEPTEMBER 20**

## **Iraq—The Other Side of the World**

Mom has been gone for two months now—we're doing OK but still trying to figure out who does what chores and how Destiny, Sasha, and I can get to all our practices, games, and school stuff. Before Mom left we had a couple family activities—a short camping trip and a movie night. It was fun but...I really miss Mom. It's so different without her.

Sometimes I can't watch TV when they show bombs, people getting hurt, and lots of homes and buildings being destroyed. It keeps me up at night—I have nightmares. I'm terrified Mom might get really hurt or, even worse, might not come home at all—what would I do without her? I can't believe she's over there—she seems so far away and sometimes I feel really alone.

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SEPTEMBER 29

## Got My Ears Pierced

Got my ears double pierced at the mall last week. Now I bet Destiny will want to get hers done, too. Dad's not happy, but I think it looks cool. Maybe I'll surprise him with a nose ring some day. ☺

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OCTOBER 15

## Military Group

Joined a military group at school. Our school counselor, Mr. Rodriguez, organized it and we meet about once a month. I even get to get out of math class to go to group. There are 12 kids and we all have parents who are or have been in Iraq or Afghanistan. We just talk about what's going on—what's hard about having a parent so far away and in danger. I haven't said anything yet, but it's OK—you don't have to talk if you don't want to. Things at home are pretty tense these days—a lot of drama and yelling. This is hard on Dad, too. I think we all miss Mom...I think I'm mad at her for leaving me....

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OCTOBER 31

## Halloween

Destiny and I gave out candy tonight to the trick-or-treaters. Sasha dressed up as a princess—she was so cute. It made me think a lot about Mom, though, because she loves helping us get dressed up for Halloween.

Anyway...I tried out for the school play last week. I'm not much of an actress, but it helps to stay busy and it gets my mind off the war. It feels good to be thinking about something else...but sometimes I feel guilty that she's off at war and I'm doing fun stuff....

Our military group at school is having a fundraiser. We're selling candy and using the money to put together care packages to send to Iraq.

