

The true story of a girl from Bolivia (South America)



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Mayra leaves for school early every morning. At this time the sun is brightly shining down on the neighborhood. The moms are outside sweeping their stoops. They throw water in front of the door to stop the dust from getting in. The mix of dust, water and sun give the air a special smell.

Mayra is 9, and like most of the kids her age, Mayra loves this smell.

Each time she breathes she can hear her mother telling her not to forget her handkerchief.



“Don’t forget your handkerchief!”

Mayra’s mom reminds her every morning. Mayra has a medical problem which means she can’t control her saliva so she drools a lot and has to keep wiping her mouth. This grosses out a lot of the kids at school.

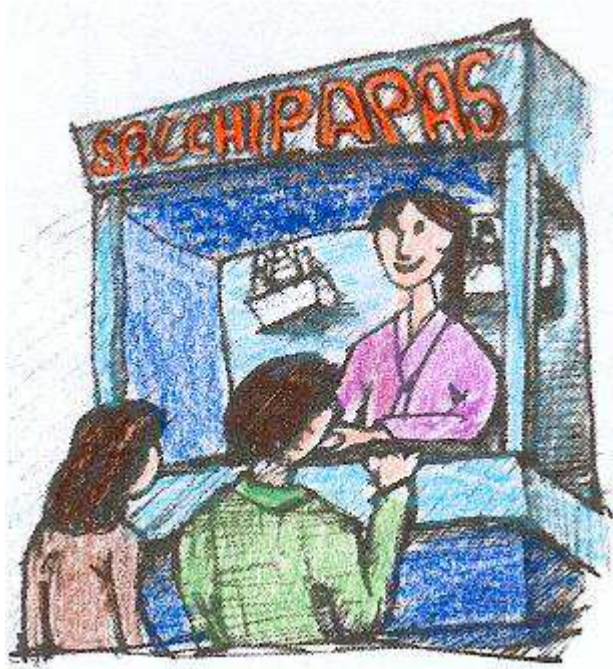
“I’ve got it mom” she says.

Her problem could be cured, but her family can’t afford to send her to the doctor for treatment.

Mayra doesn’t like being reminded about her problem too often, but she knows that her mom is just trying to protect her from getting teased by the other kids.

Every morning before school, Mayra’s mom gets up very early to get breakfast ready for her sister Maribel and her. While they are at school their mom spends the day peeling potatoes.

In the evening, she sells Salchipapas (fried potatoes and sausages) from a stand on the street.



Mayra thinks her mom is awesome since she gets out of bed real early and goes to bed real late.

When Mayra gets to school that day, her classmates are already at their desks. The teacher asks her why she is late but she doesn't reply. Her teacher thinks that she is probably late because she was playing too much on the way to school.

One of the boys, Carlos, says, "Mayra has a lot on her mind."

The teacher is surprised by this and thinks to herself,

"That's why she was late! It must be hard to have the other kids staring at her all the time."



Mayra has already taken a seat at the back of the class when the teacher replies to Carlos,

“You’re right; she does have a lot on her mind.”

The teacher also knows that Mayra takes care of her grandmother after class, helps her mother in the evening, and sometimes even goes into town to sell things.



“Did everyone do their homework? Hand in your books!”

Everyone but Mayra hands in their books. This isn’t the first time she hasn’t done her homework and since she isn’t happy at school, she really doesn’t want to work.

While the teacher isn’t looking, she fights with the other girls at the back of the class. Every day is hard for Mayra. Her classmates don’t want to work or play with her.



She really doesn't care anymore and stops taking care of herself.



One day she decides to stop going to school.

Her mother goes to the school to talk to the teacher.

“Mayra doesn't want to come back to school because the other kids make fun of her. I want her to come, but she won't listen to me.”

The next morning, the teacher says to the class,

“I think I am a bad teacher. Mayra doesn't want to come back to school. I didn't realize that Mayra wasn't happy. I feel it's my fault if a kid doesn't want to come to school.”

Some of the other kids say,

“It was our fault too.”

“We called her stuff like drooler and dribbler.”

“We said that we didn't want to be her friend.”

After class, the kids go to see Maribel to ask about Mayra.

Maribel says to them,

“What do you care? You don’t even like her?”



Some of the kids go to see the teacher to ask her to visit Mayra:

“We did a bad thing, and now Mayra’s sister won’t listen to us.”

When the teacher goes over to Mayra’s house she finds her playing in the street.

Mayra is surprised and expects to get scolded, but her teacher is smiling.

Mayra runs to give her a hug and invites her into the house to meet her grandmother



The teacher tells her what happened at school.



“The other kids in the class are worried about you. They miss you and want you to come back to class.”

Mayra says, *“I like school, but I feel sad and dumb!”*

The teacher tries to convince her and just before she leaves she says,

“I really want you to know that we all want you to come back to class.”

A few days later Mayra comes back to school. All her friends are happy and want to be with her. Mayra is very happy.

It is Carlos' birthday. Mayra says happy birthday to him, gives him some candy and...



She kisses him on the cheek.



If you were in Mayra's class, what would you do?

What would you say to Mayra to get her to come back to class?

Do you know any kids like Mayra?