

THE STRUGGLE

My name is Marie. I'm going to tell you the story of how we lost it all. In 2015 I lived in a very big house in Hawaii. Everyone at Wheeler Middle School thought I was rich. They expected me to have an expensive phone, clothes, and hairstyle. It wasn't that way. My parents had all the money.

Our house was made out of bricks with lots of windows. People could have stalked us if they wanted to, but they didn't because of all of the surveillance. I don't know how we could afford the house. It could have been because my mom had two jobs and my dad had three. Actually, Dad had two, but he also sold things out of the house. He never showed anybody what he was selling, but there used to be tons of little black and yellow lighters around.

The pool in our backyard was six feet deep. It had little turtles all around it, but it didn't have protection like it should have. It was missing ladders. My brother, Noah, and I had to be creative about how to get out. Once Noah almost drowned. Mom was on the phone talking to her tired old boss, and Dad was focused on a sale.

Another time, I heard the fire alarm beeping. I went up to my parent's room where smoke was escaping. I opened the door. My dad was sitting there with a girl who wasn't my mom. His hand was around her, and the room was filled with cigarette smoke. I asked him who she was.

"Work friend," he said, but she wasn't dressed like a work friend in her crop top with short shorts. She was holding a lighter behind her back and staring at a picture of my dad and mom. Then Dad said, "Get out."

I tried to calm myself and think about it. I called my mom on the phone, but she wouldn't answer. I wondered if they would get divorced or do nothing because I knew they loved each other way too much. I decided to take a long nap to get that off my mind.

I woke up to the sound of loud sirens. I looked out our window and saw an ambulance. I had to sit down. When I looked out again, I saw the car wreck. I went outside. They were putting my dad and his "work friend" in the ambulance.

So many things came to my mind that night. Was Dad trying to

get away from Mom? Was he trying to take the woman home? Was he trying to leave us? I will never know. Dad came home paralyzed. He could no longer speak.

We lost it all, the nice cars, the nice house, and the nice furniture. Dad lost his jobs. No more black and yellow lighters, no more people leaving ashes behind, and no more smoke. Mom went crazy. She sat staring at something Noah and I couldn't see. She talked to herself about a child Noah and I didn't know.

The apartment we lived in was pretty nice though. One day Noah was going to the pool that had just opened up. I didn't care. I just wanted to stay home and nap. I always wanted to just stay home and nap.

An hour later, I woke up to a siren and flashing lights. I could hear my mom crying her heart out. It sounded like a thunderstorm, and I started to shake. My heart stopped for a minute.

I went down the stairs where Dad sat in his wheelchair by the window. Tears came out of his eyes, but he was silent. I knew he saw it all. It was Noah. It's too hard to say, so I won't.

