



*Fake Jewelry*, colored pencil,  
Marie Duprez

**But it doesn't matter if you live near  
a sewage plant or in a castle,  
life isn't about the prestige  
of high social class.  
Life is about the happiness  
in ourselves that makes us powerful.**

# The Lie La Escritora

**H**umid air dampens my lungs. Beads of sweat cling to my shirt. On the patio with a view of a Lake Wylie, the water drains brown sewage. The vivid green grass shrivels in the cool breeze. The children around me grip their phones, mindlessly scrolling, while hummingbirds drink from brightly colored feeders.

I can hear the laughter of parents and their friends as they drink wine from the vineyards of Madrid, vintage 1961. The children discuss their parents careers. Going down the line, their voices high in pride, they tell each other:

"My father's a doctor and my mother's an engineer."

"My parents are both doctors."

"My mom is a CEO at a firm."

When it gets to my sister and me, our eyes fall to the floor and our faces blush red – but not from the heat. "Well my dad works in homeland security and my mom is a... she doesn't have a job."

It was a lie. A lie that was a rule my mother made for us. A law. Broken, it would be a travesty to her.

She wasn't drinking the special wine from Madrid made in 1961. No, she was cooking the food, cleaning the plates, and throwing out the trash. She cleaned their rooms and made their beds. She came to Mrs. Mauris' house every other week to bleach her toilets and vacuum her rugs.

From the time we were five, my mother taught my sister and I to lie about her job. Once parents began to stick their noses into children's business, my mother knew that we had to learn.

"When they ask about what I do for work, you tell them I don't work. I stay in the house, nothing else. Understand?"

Though her words blurred from Spanish to English, we understood her command. She came home every day with the tips of her fingers cut and dry, her shirt splotted with bleach. Her arthritis kept her from moving without pain.

While we lied.

There was no pride in house cleaning. It was a disgrace, like the one-story cottage that we own

with only three bedrooms and two bathrooms. To have a high social status is an addiction, a monster, an illusion.

Green bills and three-story houses were not only our dream, but also a living nightmare. It will not be until we are living in a mansion, sipping champagne with the white, rich kids that my mother will be at peace.

No matter how many times we adorn the kitchen and bathrooms of our house with expensive tile, no matter the amount of clothes that no longer fit from Nike, Kate Spade, or Ralph Polo in our closet, no matter the number of extra jobs my mom gets to earn more money – none of it will ever be enough in her eyes.

She doesn't understand the debt we'll

accumulate from spending money we don't have, the dream that will eventually hit rock bottom. That sometimes I imagine a foreclosure sign on our house, or that I am afraid that if I spend one more penny, we will be eaten by the bank, or that I wonder if we can afford to

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pay for college.

Addiction goes beyond drugs or alcohol. It is something that makes people desire and want more and more of something even if they have enough. Addiction is a sickness that is planted in our society. A disease that brainwashes the mind into thinking that the amount of zeros on your net value is your identity.

But it doesn't matter if you live near a sewage plant or in a castle, life isn't about the prestige of high social class. Life is about the happiness in ourselves that makes us powerful, how we live our lives – not how much we earn.

The desire for wealth is an addiction that can only be cured with personal happiness and health. Money is paper with power. It can easily collapse and burn, but is the basis of our foundation as humans.

Money is only important because we put value into it. We think that the number of zeros on a paycheck dictates self-worth.

Our real addiction should be pure happiness.