

*Caught in the mix of her
parents divorce she learns*

The Difference between comfort and love

By Stephany Vasquez

A young Stephany leans on her father for strength.

For the first time in my life I had no one to run to and that scared me more than anything. My mother had had an affair and my father was soon to find out. I became my mother's confidant and my father's shoulder to lean on.

Who did I have? I really was not sure. My parents' crazy love fiasco affected me more than they could realize. I figured out that I was a reflection of the things that destroyed and built their marriage. My own love affair with love was a walking contradiction. I had thought my parents' relationship was once ideal until I started to understand it.

My parents first met when they lived in Mexico. My mother was sixteen and my father was a twenty-one-year-old playboy. Dad had many girlfriends and lovers at a young age.

He was very handsome, charming and outgoing.

My mother, on the other hand, was reserved and uniquely beautiful. Men adored her, but she never found an interest in any of them.

The day my father met my mother, he fell head over heels for the one girl who did not want him. because of his playboy reputation. My dad didn't care because he was determined to make her his girlfriend. Day after day, for three straight weeks he drove an hour to meet her outside of school and walk her home.

My mother wasn't too happy with that so she tried to avoid or ignore him, even telling him to leave her alone. But Dad returned, and by the fourth week, she was so annoyed, flustered, and so overwhelmed by his determination that she agreed to be his girlfriend.

After a one-month "relationship," my father, his

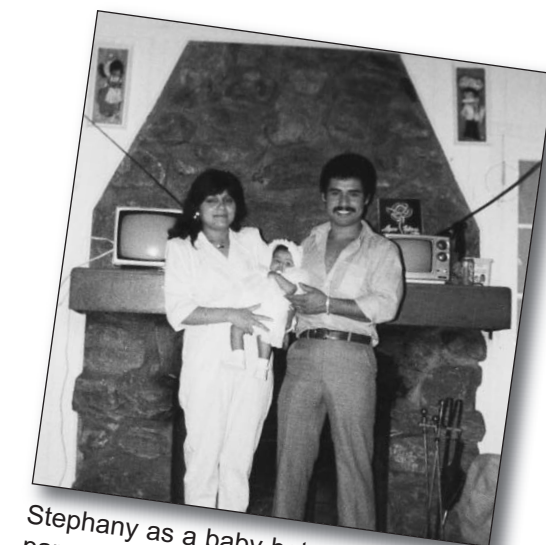
brother and friend decided to force her to marry my dad by kidnapping her on a Wednesday. By Saturday, my mom and dad were married through court, against my mom's better judgment.

I always thought it was a romantic love story that the two could look back on and laugh at. I was far from right.

When I turned fifteen, the fighting and yelling put a wedge in their partnership. I guess when you're younger it's hard to find wrong in the people that love you the most.

I knew that my parents loved each other. I understood the love they had for one another was not mutual. My father had thought of my mom as a prize, something valuable that made him worth something

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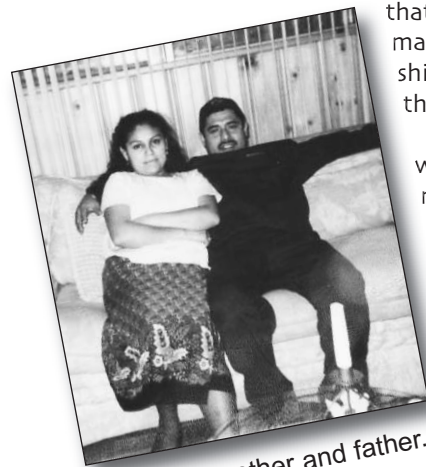
*Stephany as a baby between her
parents.*

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and without her, he would be nothing.

And my mother loved him as the father to her children. Their interpretation of love confused me because I couldn't understand why people can be together and not love each other the same way.

It seemed to just make sense one day as I learned that comfort in a marriage or relationship can be stronger than love.



Stephany's mother and father.

When I was growing up, my dad would work all day, stay out late with his friends, go to bars, get drunk and come home – almost everyday. My mom stayed home and raised my sisters and me.

She had been a 22-year old woman with three kids, no friends and no social life – everyday.

While my father lived his life, my mom was consumed in raising her children.

When my younger sister graduated from high school, my mother became aware of the fact that my sisters and I were growing up. She felt unneeded anymore and had a lot of free time on her hands.

So when my parents finally had time to just be alone and on their own, my mother wasn't ready for that at all.

It was awkward to see my parents “hanging out” without an emotional connection, just two people comforted by each other's presence. I never saw that when I was younger.

One day I encouraged my mother to hang out with some of her fellow co-workers. She never had gone out much with friends outside of business events or gatherings.

After that, my mother became a different person – more outgoing, confident and less dependent on

my dad. Everyone, except my father, enjoyed the change.

It was rare for my mother to stay out after 10 p.m., so when she stayed out one night until just after 2 a.m., my sisters and father were up waiting for her. Frantic calls to her cell phone had gone to voicemail.

After my night out, I pulled up in the driveway to see my mother dropped off by someone. We both were walking together toward the house when she said, “Fany, your dad is going to kill me.” I figured it was because she was drunk (which was probably the second time I had ever seen her drunk) and she was coming home late.

After my mother reached the house, my father and sisters bombarded her with questions. I decided to step in before my mother answered to anything and simply replied to them that she was with me.

They all stood there confused but they all backed off immediately as soon as I had said that. My father gave me a disappointed look and walked off to bed. I was still stumped from everything that had happened in a matter of minutes. I didn't ask an explanation from my mom. I just wanted to go to bed.

I had gotten into a fight with my boyfriend Kris over our relationship before I got home. I was with him for a year and our relationship was going nowhere, although I had grown to love him.

We first met at a bar in St. Charles and soon as I saw him I wanted him to be mine. He was tall, dark,

handsome and emotionally unavailable.

It was sad to say that he didn't exactly feel the same way for me. I knew he loved me, but he never expressed it emotionally or physically.

When we became intimate there was no passion or lust between us. It almost felt like a chore. It bothered me because I

knew better and I had had better but I couldn't help but think that maybe one day he wouldn't be so cold.

That night I asked him why he couldn't show me that he loved me, He simply replied, “That's just the way I am.”

The next morning my mother came to me and asked to talk. I knew something was wrong because she looked scared, disoriented and almost ashamed.

We sat at the dining room table while everybody

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else was at work. She said she was sorry, but figured it was because I had to lie for her so she wouldn't get in trouble. But in the end it was for other reasons.

“I'm seeing another man,” she blurted while staring face down at the table. She couldn't look at me and I couldn't look at her. My heart was pounding and my hands were sweaty.

She explained her circumstances that seemed like almost everything that I was going through with Kris. I couldn't help but make the parallel. She finally looked up at me and said, “He never made me feel like a woman.”

A lot happened the next couple of weeks after she confessed. My father started to notice the changes: no dinner waiting for him, and no glasses of water waiting for him during his break from work, only an empty house with his wife nowhere to be found.

One day he asked me what was wrong with my mom. I was scared and didn't know what to say. I just told him I didn't know. He made phone calls, met with people and followed my mom.

The day he found out, he came up to me with her phone bill, asking if I knew the number that was called repeatedly during the day. I still said I didn't know. He broke down that day in front of me and asked me, “Why would she do that?”

I knew why, but I just didn't know how to tell him. All I could do was play the scenario game with him saying “if's” and “but's” to explain everything. It was sad to see that he never had a clue of what my mother felt, even though over time she tried to explain herself.

As I continued to date Kris during this whole fiasco, I explained to him that I never wanted to be what my parents became. He assured me that it would be impossible. I believed him.

I could see that I was now in a relationship for pure comfort while hope for him to change. I couldn't imagine what my mother felt like for twenty-some years while her life unraveled.

As my mother tried to pull herself from her marriage, my father tried to pull himself in with nice gestures by helping her with laundry, making dinner, bringing flowers, kissing and hugging her.

He told her, “I love you.” It was awkward to hear because my father never did those things. Everything

my mother always wanted became true within a matter of weeks as my father overwhelmed her with love that she no longer could exchange.

My father tried hard but it was too late. My mother had found someone else that made her feel the way she always wanted to feel.

The next few months were rough while my parents were in the process of divorce. As our family fell apart, so did my spirit. I couldn't help think that I was a liar and cheater for being in between all of this.

I wanted comfort from Kris, but it was never offered. I felt so alone. My relationship with him was falling apart and he never even noticed as he brushed my explanations and hoped that I would just get over it.



Stephany's mother years ago.

“He broke down that day in front and me and asked me, “Why would she do that?””

After weeks of disillusion I decided to just go out and get distracted from it all, my relationship and my family. A few friends and I met for cocktails in Naperville one night just to relax and catch up.

When I walked in the door to the lounge, I caught eyes with a very attractive fellow sitting next to an old friend. His

eyes followed me all the way to where they were sitting. When I got to the table, he stood up from his chair and introduce himself.

His name was Ian. He was charming, something about him made me nervous (as in butterflies in my stomach) and he had a glow like nobody else I had ever met. My friends and I sat at the table next to him.

I could see him peeking over to look at me over people I blushed every time we caught eyes. Something felt so right the night I met him.

Maybe, after all, love can be found anew.