

Flor's Journey to Independence
Modified Version
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Chapter 1

Flor Pacheco and her daughter, Betina, visited Flor's family for three months in Mexico. They came back to Denver on the bus. The weather was hot. Betina was tired. In the bus station, Flor looked for her husband, Ricardo. She didn't see him. They waited for a long time. Ricardo didn't come. Finally, Flor got a taxi to their apartment.

Flor opened the apartment door.

"Oh, no!" she cried. Something was wrong. The apartment was empty. There was no furniture. What happened to the sofa, table and chairs, and the TV? Where were they? And where was Ricardo? Did something bad happen to him?

Betina started crying. Flor wanted to cry, too. She hugged her daughter and said, *"Let's go to the manager's apartment. We will call your Aunt Maria. She speaks English. She will know what to do about the furniture and help us find Papa."*

The manager was a nice lady. She could not speak Spanish, and Flor could not speak English, but Flor said, "Telephone, please," and the manager understood.

Flor spoke in Spanish on the phone.

"Maria, I think we were robbed. Everything is gone! The apartment is empty, and Ricardo didn't come to the bus to meet us! I am so worried and scared."

Maria was not friendly. She was angry.

"Flor, why are you here? Ricardo told you not to come back. You were gone a long time. He has a new family now."

Flor felt dizzy. What? Ricardo had a new family? She took a deep breath. She and Betina needed help from Maria. She must not be angry with Maria.

“Maria, we need some towels and blankets and cooking pots. I will call Ricardo. Give me his phone number.”

Maria said *“Call me tomorrow,”* and hung up the phone.

Flor and Betina went back to the empty apartment. Betina played with her doll. Flor thought, *“What am I going to do? Ricardo and Betina are my life here in America. Now I only have Betina.”*