

Flor's Journey to Independence
Modified Version
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Chapter 3

Flor was tired after the training session. There was so much to remember: how long to cook the fries, and new phrases like “for here or to go?” For a few hours she forgot about Ricardo. Back in the empty apartment, lying on one of Maria’s blankets, the questions started again in her head. Questions about Ricardo. *Why did he leave us? When did he find another woman?* And questions about Betina. *Who can take care of her while I am at work? Will Lena help, even if she is Ricardo and Maria’s mom?* Flor thought about telling Felipe, her brother, but she was too ashamed.

In the morning, she went to see Betina right away.

“Mama! You’re here. Come see Grandma. She made me hot chocolate and tortillas for breakfast.”

Flor followed her daughter into the kitchen. Lena was shorter and rounder than Maria. She turned and greeted Flor with a smile. *“Flor. How good to see you! I missed you and Betina when you were away.”*

They talked about Flor’s family, her new job, and then the problem of what to do with Betina while she was at work. Lena said she would love to have Betina stay with her.

Flor asked, *“Are you sure? I am so worried about what to do. It will really help me. But I will find something more permanent soon.”*

“You take your time. I know things are hard and confusing right now,” Lena said.

Lena was so understanding. Was this kind, helpful, and caring person really Ricardo and Maria's mother? Flor told Betina she would stay with her grandma for the week. She promised to call or visit every day. Then she hugged Lena and Betina and waved good-bye.

On her way home, Flor passed by the school and noticed a big sign on the fence in English and Spanish that said, "Now Enrolling—Pre-school Class."

Flor had time before work, so she went in to the school office. A woman who spoke Spanish helped her. *"Yes, you can enroll your daughter. Fill out these papers and bring in her immunization record and birth certificate. The classes start next week. They are every afternoon from 12:50 until 3:30. Also, we have an excellent adult English program here. Are you interested? Classes are three mornings a week, from 9:00 to 11:00. There is childcare then, so you can bring your daughter, too. And it's all free! You can begin on Monday morning."*

Flor smiled. *"I am very interested in the classes. Thank you!"*

There was still time to go home, change into her uniform, and get to work. Her life had changed so much in just three days. Flor took a deep breath and left the school.