

Flor's Journey to Independence
Modified Version
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Chapter 6

Flor sat in English class. She was exhausted. She looked for an apartment all weekend, but the cheapest rent she found was \$700. She told Carmen about it.

Carmen was sympathetic. *"Are you going to let me baby-sit Betina?"* she asked.

"Yes. I accept. And thank you!" said Flor.

"Sure, no problem," said Carmen. *"Listen, last week you said that you and Ricardo never really got married, right?"*

"Right."

"I looked up marriage on the Internet. In Colorado there's 'common law marriage.' If you live together for a long time and say you're married, then you are married. Also, Ricardo can't be married to two women."

"Is he breaking the law?" asked Flor.

"Yes, I think so," said Carmen. *"It's bigamy."*

All day, at work, Flor thought about this and how to tell Lena that Carmen was going to baby-sit Betina. Finally, the time came. Flor sat in Lena's kitchen after work. She was nervous. Her hands shook.

"Thank you for all your help with Betina," she said. *"But now a woman in my English class will take care of Betina while I am at work. She has a daughter for Betina to play with. Ricardo can see Betina on weekends."*

Lena was sad. *"Why?"* she asked. *"I am good to Betina!"*

Flor took Lena's hand. *"You are wonderful. But I'm afraid of Ricardo. He wants to take Betina away."*

Flor told Lena everything. Lena listened and then she said, *"I'm sorry for my son."* She stood up. *"I'm going to call Ricardo. You need to talk to each other."*

Ricardo came immediately. He seemed like a stranger. His eyes were cold. Flor told him about common law marriage and bigamy. Then she told him about Carmen and the babysitting. *"From now on, you can come to Felipe's house and get Betina on Sundays."*

"No! My family goes to church on Sundays," said Ricardo. *"And, I don't like Felipe. He glares at me."*

"Then you can come on Saturdays," Flor said. *"Call before you come, and you won't have to see Felipe."*

Ricardo left. Flor realized that she forgot to ask him for money. The weeks passed. Ricardo picked Betina up at Felipe's on Saturdays. The weather grew colder. Ricardo bought Betina some clothes. Flor was surprised. Who was this man? He did nice things for Betina, but he wasn't the man Flor knew. She still couldn't ask this stranger for money.