

Flor's Journey to Independence
Modified Version
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Chapter 8

Betina stayed at the hospital overnight. The hours passed. Flor and Ricardo began to talk. This time, they did not fight.

"Flor, I don't want your life to be hard," said Ricardo. "I still love you and Betina. I want to help."

Flor's eyes filled with tears. *"You left us!"*

"You were gone a long time. I love my new wife, Sandra, too. She was here with me."

Flor wiped her eyes. *"If you really want to help, give me some money for an apartment. It's \$400 a month."*

"OK. I want you and Betina to have a home."

They smiled. They were exhausted, but Betina was going to be fine, and they were going to be fine, too.

My Journal, Monday, December 19

I love my apartment. Is small and soft. We look the beautiful snow. My manager the Burger King is my friend. He have the party Christmas. Betina, she head is better now.

Karen:

Flor, your apartment sounds cozy (not soft). The snow is beautiful. Do you look at it or see it or watch it fall from your apartment window? It is nice that your manager at Burger King is your friend. I'm glad Betina is better.

Flor and Betina moved into the apartment in December. Ricardo brought Flor the double bed from their old apartment. He said he and Sandra had another one. Flor found a table and four chairs at a flea market and a comfortable sofa. She had enough to start her new life.

A few days later she went to work. Linda and David were waiting for her. She wondered what was wrong.

David smiled at her. *"Flor, we want you to be our new cashier."*

Flor felt confused. She didn't know enough English. *"No, thank you. Not yet,"* she said. *"I'm not ready."*

"Yes, you are. You're our best worker," said David. *"You arrive on time, and you always agree to work extra hours. Linda will train you and teach you what to say. You'll get a dollar-an-hour raise."*

Flor thought about it. She could get a telephone with the extra money. *"OK,"* she said. *"Yes."*

As soon as the telephone was installed, Ricardo called Flor often. He was friendly on the phone. He made jokes and made her laugh. One Saturday he arrived early to pick up Betina. He sat down at the table. *"I'll have a cup of coffee,"* he said.

"Do you think I'm going to make you coffee? You must think I'm your wife!" said Flor.

Ricardo looked surprised. Flor was surprised, too. Why did she say that? Then they both laughed.

“You’re so pretty,” said Ricardo. He stood and put his arms around her. *“I want you back in my life. You, me, and Betina here in this nice little apartment.”*

(Insert drawing here of Flor and Ricardo embracing.)

Illustration 8

Flor thought she was dreaming. Ricardo was saying all the words she wanted to hear.

“I’ll come every Saturday and spend all day and all night. Sandra will never know. . . .”

Flor pushed Ricardo away. Did she struggle for months, spend all those lonely nights, worry about money and Betina, to become Ricardo’s mistress? What about Sandra? What lies was Ricardo telling her?

“No!” she said. *“I won’t be the second woman in your life. Things are fine the way they are now.”* She handed him Betina’s suitcase. *“You’re my friend now. My good friend.”*

Ricardo didn’t look angry. He looked disappointed. Suddenly he smiled. *“You can always change your mind! I’ll see you tomorrow.”*

Flor shook her head. She closed the door. She wasn’t angry. She felt good. She said no to Ricardo. Now, it was her choice to be alone with Betina. She was in control of her own life.