

Making New Friends

Lionel: Shh! *Mami*, don't... He's dreaming.

Silvia: He's snoring. Bobby's snoring with him.

Lionel: They're dreaming together.

Silvia: I don't know what to do about my father. He doesn't shave. He wears the same shirt the whole week.

Rolando: And the week before that, too.

Silvia: Since Lionel went back to school after the summer, he's home alone and not doing anything. I'm worried about him.

Silvia: Mrs. Belkina? Umme? Anyone home?

Umme: We'll be out in a moment. ... Mrs. Belkina only got up for the bathroom twice last night.

Mrs. Belkina: I slept like a dog. Like my Bobik. Unfortunately, this is my last night at this apartment.

Silvia: What are you talking about?

Umme: Mrs. Belkina got a letter from her landlord. They're asking for a big increase in rent or she has to leave the building.

Silvia: I don't think they can just push you out of the building.

Umme: What about talking to someone at the senior center?

Mrs. Belkina: You are right. I should go back to speak to someone at the senior center. They have very helpful people who work there.

Rolando: Hmm... There are a lot of senior centers around here.

Silvia: I think it would be good for *papi*. I'm going to check one out.

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: We also have a lot of activities to help people stay healthy, physically and mentally – dance classes, trips to museums, shows... We also have benefits clinics.

Silvia: Benefits clinics? What are those?

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: Information about social services. Services sometimes change and it's important to have good information.

Silvia: What kind of services are you talking about?

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: Healthcare services, help with food and also housing problems.

Silvia: Can you take a look at this? It's from a client. I think she is getting pushed out of her apartment.

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: If your client can come to the center, we can help.

Silvia: I'll let her know. ... Wow, that smells good.

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: That's right... Hot lunches every day. You pay whatever you can. If you don't have money, it's free.

(They move to the computer lab.)

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: We also have a computer lab. Some of our seniors enjoy it and some don't.

Silvia: You know, my father is very proud and can be a little stubborn. He may not want to do everything. He may not want to come at all.

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: Hi Ana.

Ana: Hi, hello.

**Senior
Center**

Coordinator: Ana's a social worker. Let's see what she suggests.

Social

Worker (Ana): Here's what I think. People want to feel in control, in charge of their lives. Seniors often feel like they're losing control.

Silvia: That's interesting. So what do you suggest? How can I convince my father to come here?

Social

Worker (Ana): Here's what I recommend. Don't try to convince him. It would be good if he can come to visit. He can make his own decision.

Silvia: I visited a senior center. It was a good experience.

Luis: I don't like it.

Silvia: I know how you feel. I'm not sure if it is for you.

Luis: Why do you say that?

Silvia: Oh, I don't know. There were friendly people and there was some very delicious hot food, but you are comfortable here.

Luis: Food? What kind of food?

Silvia: I didn't taste it. It smelled very good.

Luis: Why do I have to go there?

Silvia: Who said you have to go there? I didn't say you have to go there. Don't go there!

Luis: I'm not old.

Silvia: I didn't say you were old. Most of the people I saw there didn't look old, actually. Hmm, that's interesting.

Luis: So why do they call it a senior center?

Silvia: Because it's not for little kids. It's for mature adults.

Luis: But what about Bobby if I go there? What is Bobby going to do?

Silvia: I'm not worried about Bobby. *Papi*, I think it's a good idea for you to visit. Take a look at the senior center and make your own decision. I'm not going to decide for you. I respect your decision.

Silvia: You were right about the senior center. The social workers there can help.

Mrs. Belkina: Those social workers are great. I want to go back there.

Silvia: That's a very good idea. ... Well, Mrs. Belkina, this is goodbye. You're back on your feet. You don't need us anymore.

Mrs. Belkina: I'm so sad. You and Umme are my heroes. Umme called me yesterday. She said she spoke with 311. They told her about a rent freeze.

Silvia: What's a rent freeze? It sounds like a cold apartment.

Mrs. Belkina: No, it's not that. It's a City program to stop the rent from going up.

Silvia: Can I get a rent freeze?

Mrs. Belkina: No, it's not for kids like you. It's for seniors like me who live in rent-regulated apartments and don't have a lot of money. I'm going to find out the details.

Silvia: Don't forget to tell me.

Mrs. Belkina: Don't worry. I won't forget you.

(Silvia and Mrs. Belkina are saying goodbye at the apartment door.)

Mrs. Belkina: Thank you so much for everything you have done for me, my dear. Hopefully, I won't need to see you again.

Luis: I don't need to visit. I've decided I'm not an old man. I can take care of myself.

Silvia: I know you can.

Luis: This is not my first day of school.

Silvia: Of course it isn't.

Luis: If I go inside, I will do it on my own.

Silvia: I know you will, but if you want me to go with you, I'm happy to do it.

Luis: No, thank you. I'll be fine.

**Senior
Center**

Volunteer: So, I hope you enjoy your visit with us.

Luis: I'm worried about Bobby.

**Senior
Center**

Volunteer: Who's Bobby?

Luis: Bobby's my dog. He's very faithful. You would love him if you could see him.

**Senior
Center**

Volunteer: Oh, he's very cute. Hey everybody, look how cute Luis's dog is.

Mrs. Belkina: Oh, he's so handsome. Such a beautiful dog.

Luis: He's very smart too.

**Senior
Center**

Volunteer: Hey, Luis, I'll be right back.

Mrs. Belkina: He does look smart. You know what? Bobby and Bobik sound alike.

Luis: Is your dog named Bobik?

Mrs. Belkina: Yes. Look. I miss my Bobik so much.

Luis: Oh, don't tell me...

Mrs. Belkina: Yes, it's true. Bobik passed away last year. I think of him every single day.

Luis: I'm sure you do. I understand.

Mrs. Belkina: Let's not think about that. Let us look at the calendar. At 11 o'clock, there is chair yoga with Benji.

Luis: I'd like that.

- Silvia:** *Papi*, you stayed a long time at the senior center. How was it?
- Luis:** I didn't like it. It was boring. I spent most of the day by myself. I'm really very happy to be back home with Boby and Lionel.
- Silvia:** They didn't have any activities, workshops or games?
- Luis:** Uh, I don't think so.
- Rolando:** Well, if you're not happy there maybe we can find a different senior center for you to visit?
- Luis:** Oh, don't be so dramatic. What's the rush?
- Lionel:** Did you make any friends?
- Luis:** I need more practice to make friends. I'm going to give it another try.

- Social Worker (Ana):** Mrs. Belkina, I spoke with an expert about housing —someone who knows about tenant rights.
- Mrs. Belkina:** Thank you, Ana. What do you mean, “tenant rights”?
- Social Worker (Ana):** Tenant rights are the rights of people who rent apartments from landlords.
- Mrs. Belkina:** So, what rights do tenants have?
- Social Worker (Ana):** Tenants have the right to heat and hot water, a building in good condition and many other things. This guidebook has good information about tenant rights.
- Mrs. Belkina:** Oh, it's in Russian. Thank you, Ana.

Social

Worker (Ana): It comes in other languages too.

Mrs. Belkina: What about the letter I got? It says I have to leave if I don't pay a big rent increase.

Social

Worker (Ana): A landlord can't just push you out. I will help you make an appointment to speak with a housing lawyer for free to look into your situation. We will work on this together.

Mrs. Belkina: So I don't have to sleep on the street?

Social

Worker (Ana): No, you won't have to sleep on the street. You know, Mrs. Belkina, if you live in a rent-regulated apartment you may be able to get a rent freeze. That's when...

Mrs. Belkina: They stop the rent from going up for seniors.

Social

Worker (Ana): Yes, and for people with disabilities too.

Silvia: I'm so happy you're enjoying the center.

Luis: Silvia!

Silvia: *Papi*, what are you doing? Why are you wearing a tie?

Luis: You mean this? You think it looks good on me?

Silvia: *Papi*? Is everything okay?

Luis: Everything's okay, except I'm not coming home for dinner.

Silvia: You're not coming home for dinner? What do you mean?

Luis: I'm invited to my girlfriend's house.

Silvia: Your girlfriend?! Who is your girlfriend?

Luis: I mean, my friend. She goes to the senior center. She wants to show me some pictures of her dog.

Silvia: Well, okay, I guess. What time will you be home?

Rolando: Girlfriend? What girlfriend?

Silvia: Shh, let's not talk now.

Rolando: But what time did Luis say he's coming home?

Silvia: He said he won't be late.

Rolando: Okay.

Lionel: Where's *Abuelo*?

Silvia: He's having dinner with a new friend from the senior center.

(Lionel enters the room.)

Lionel: That's great. He's making new friends.

Rolando: Yeah.

Luis: These are really delicious. What do you call them?

Mrs. Belkina: They are called *vareniki*.

Luis: Are they from Russia?

Mrs. Belkina: No. The Bronx, my kitchen. Would you like some more?

Luis: No, no... I'm getting full, thank you.

Mrs. Belkina: Can you show me your favorite picture of your grandson?

Luis: Sure. This one... This is Lionel, like a lion. Next to my other lion, Boby. Lionel calls me *Abuelo*. It means "grandpa" in Spanish.

Mrs. Belkina: So, *Abuelo*, would you like to see more of Bobik's pictures?

Luis: Absolutely, yes.

Mrs. Belkina: This is my Bobik. I miss him so much. Look how beautiful he is. This one, look.

Luis: I like that one.

Mrs. Belkina: How nice, yes. ... Yeah. And this one.

Luis: Oh...

(It's a little later in the evening. Luis and Mrs. Belkina are dancing.)

Luis: You're doing well.

Silvia: How was last night?

Luis: Okay.

Rolando: So Don Luis, who's your new friend?

Luis: I met her at the center.

Silvia: Why don't you invite her over? We'd like to meet your new friend.

Luis: I'm going to be late for the center. Today we have a money workshop. It's about managing money. I don't want to be late.

Social

Worker (Ana): You can learn about many services at the ACCESS NYC website. You can apply online in your languages.

Silvia: Mrs. Belkina?!

Mrs. Belkina: Silvia? What are you doing here?!

Silvia: I *live* here. What are you doing here?

Luis: Oh, good Silvia, you're home. I'd like you to meet my... my friend, Mrs. Belkina.

Luis: Don't worry, Irina. You could always stay here. Right, Silvia?

Silvia: *Papi!*

Rolando: Of course. You're always welcome here, Mrs. Belkina.

Luis: I could sleep on the sofa and Mrs. Belkina can have my bed.

Silvia: *Papi*, you're too old to sleep on the sofa.

Luis: Too old? I'm not even a senior. I'm a mature adult.

Mrs. Belkina: Don't worry. I found out that I don't need to leave my apartment, and I am applying for a rent freeze. Nobody needs to sleep on the street or the sofa. Right, Bobby? Very good boy. Nice, nice dog. You are so nice.

We Speak NYC is a production of the City of New York.