

## Sofa Love: A Housing Romance

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**Tatiana:** Bon voyage, sofa bed!

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**Manny:** What are you doing?

**Tatiana:** What does it look like I'm doing? I'm getting rid of that man's sofa. Everything that belonged to Boris has to go *immediately!* Bye, bye, sofa bed... Bye, bye, Boris. You broke my innocent heart.

**Manny:** Okay, okay, I get it. The sofa has to go. But if you want to get rid of it, you can't just throw it out the window.

**Tatiana:** Oh.

**Manny:** Look, Tatiana, I understand how you feel. You just have to do it properly.

**Tatiana:** How?

**Manny:** I don't know. I have to run. I am meeting my wife at the airport. She is arriving in one hour!

**Tatiana:** Don't leave me, Manny. Help me.

**Manny:** Call 311. They will help you. I really have to run now. My wife is arriving to the U.S. today. I'm seeing her for the first time in five years!

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**Director:** Cut! Cut! Oh, Manny, you forgot the flowers! Okay, everyone, let's reset. Someone get eyes on Manny for me, please. The boom is in shot. Higher. Thank you.

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**Clara:** Oh, Manny, so sweet. You labeled everything for me, to help me learn English even more.

**Manny:** Make yourself at home. Let me help you.

**Clara:** It's a little cold in here. Do you have heat?

**Manny:** Yes, sometimes...

**Clara:** Radiator... *Cold* radiator!

**Manny:** Oh, right. I guess the heat isn't on.

**Clara:** Is this how you water your plants?

**Manny:** Tatiana! Please, come in. I'm glad to see you well.

**Tatiana:** Where should I put these? On the dinner table? Do you have a vase?

**Tatiana:** Your husband is such a gentleman. You're so lucky.

**Manny:** Clara, my dear, this is Tatiana. She lives upstairs. You cooked all of this? She's a great cook!

**Clara:** Really? Is that all?

**Manny:** Tatiana's had a difficult day. Would you like to join us for dinner?

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**Manny:** How did you sleep, *mi amor*? Would you like some coffee?

**Clara:** I didn't sleep a wink.

**Clara:** And my stomach is upset.

**Manny:** I noticed you didn't touch Tatiana's food.

**Clara:** Manny, I have been thinking about everything that you told me... that Tatiana was breaking up with her... What was his name?

**Manny:** Boris.

**Clara:** And you helped her when she was in need. But I, I have to be honest. I'm not sure I can trust you any longer.

**Manny:** Oh, no... You can. Of course, you can. I have been faithful for five long years. I've been counting the months, days, hours till our reunion.

**Clara:** Well, I wish you were taking care of this apartment instead. There's no heat. There's no hot water. There's a waterfall in that dark corner!

**Manny:** I just moved here last month. I looked hard to find a cozy home for us. I've been busy at the denture lab. I'm going to fix these problems. I'm going to take charge of it all.

**Clara:** Manny, I want to believe you. But now, I'm not sure if I made the right decision to leave home to live in this... misery. I want to go home.

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**Javier:** Hot chocolate!

**Musa:** Hot chocolate? It's spring!

**Javier:** Yeah, but it warms you up inside.

**Musa:** That's what heat is for, Javier. This radiator is cold. You need to speak to your landlord.

**Javier:** I just moved in. I don't want a conflict. My old landlord raised the rent every time I asked him to fix something.

**Musa:** That's wrong. You have the right to heat, hot water, and an apartment in good condition. You need to read this. It's from my office – the Public Engagement Unit. I think it will be useful in your real life and your soap opera, too. Is that how you water your plants?

**Javier:** No. I think this just started.

**Musa:** It looks like it's not stopping. I think you should go upstairs to tell your neighbors there is a leak. Right now!

**Javier:** It's 9 o'clock!

**Musa:** Yeah, but you have to take care of it. If you don't go, I'm going.

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**Bao:** Yeah, I turned off the valve. Thanks, Frantz. I'll let him know you're coming tomorrow. Bye. Frantz will come to your place in the morning. We just moved here a couple of months ago, but he's already helped us with a few repairs.

**Javier:** You know, I can't help but notice... It's nice and warm in here. My apartment is cold.

**Bao:** It's probably a problem with your radiator. When you see Frantz in the morning, tell him about it.

**Javier:** Okay.

**Ushi:** I think I know where I've seen you before... On TV. You're in *Sofa Love*. You're

Manny, right?

**Musa:** Yes, he is. My friend, Manny... The man with apartment problems in both of his lives – his soap opera life and his real life!

**Javier:** It's true. But thanks to all of you, I am beginning to solve them. Musa works for the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit.

**Bao:** What's that?

**Musa:** It's a City agency. We have a Tenant Helpline that gives tenants information about their rights. We also help people facing eviction and other housing issues. We connect tenants to other services, too, like food assistance and health care enrollment.

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**Musa:** Now I'll have some of that hot chocolate. See, Javier? Not all landlords are terrible. In any case, all tenants have rights and can get help if they are facing problems.

**Javier:** As you said, I am dealing with – or really *not* dealing with – apartment problems in both of my lives.

**Musa:** It's real life that really matters. Use some of your acting skills in real life.

**Javier:** What do you mean? How?

**Musa:** You know... Get into your role and practice your lines. It will help you get over your fear of talking with landlords, and you'll know what to say. Imagine I'm the landlord. What are you going to tell me about the problems in your apartment?

**Javier:** There are a lot of them. Where do I start? Give me that script!

**Musa:** Forget that script. Start with the leak or the cold radiator.

**Javier:** Hello, Ms. Fix. Ms. Fix is the landlord.

**Musa:** Got it.

**Javier:** Ms. Fix, I'm, ah, sorry to bother you, but I need to talk to you about a couple of problems in my apartment.

**Musa:** Okay, tell me. What is it?

**Javier:** Well, first, it's cold. There's no heat. I know it's spring, but it's still cold outside.

Actually, Musa, I think I need to find out the rules. What rights do tenants have in regard to heat?

**Musa:** The landlord has to turn on the heat when the weather is below a certain temperature. If you don't get heat, use a thermometer to show the temperature, and call 311 to make a complaint. I want you to call 311 or go to the 311 website and get all the details about heat.

**Javier:** Okay.

**Musa:** For now, let's practice about the leak. You're going to see the super in the morning. Imagine I'm Frantz. What are you going say to me?

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**Javier:** Am I going to have a hole for a while?

**Frantz:** No, you won't. I'll open it up, fix the pipes, patch it up. It'll be finished today.

**Javier:** Thank you, Frantz. Bao and Ushi told me that I can rely on you.

**Frantz:** Well, I live here, too. And we need a building in good condition.

**Javier:** Actually, um... I think there's a problem with the heat, too.

**Frantz:** You're not sure?

**Javier:** I mean... I *know* I have a problem. You feel how cold it is in here? If the temperature outside is below 55 [Fahrenheit], the heat needs to be on. I checked on the City website.

**Frantz:** Yep. Those are the facts. You know your rights.

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**Boris:** *None but the lonely heart can know my sadness... alone and parted, far from joy and gladness. Everything! She threw out everything! My record collection... My knob TV... Even, even my sofa... My red Naugahyde beauty.*

**Clara:** Your sofa, too?!

**Boris:** Yes. My sofa... *Our* sofa... The sofa we cuddled on... The sofa we dreamed on... The sofa of endless nights and so many memories. Gone! Out the window!

**Clara:** *Out the window?! Is that how she got rid of the sofa?*

**Boris:** No, no... The memories are out the window.

**Clara:** How did she get rid of the sofa?

**Boris:** I heard she called 311. It had a mattress, you know, so there are special rules.

**Clara:** 311? What's that?

**Boris:** You know, the number for City services and information. They have information about all City services. It's not just for making complaints about noise or for parking rules. You can get information about vaccines, help with food, emergency rental assistance. You can even file a complaint if the landlord doesn't fix problems in your apartment.

**Clara:** File a complaint...

**Boris:** They can connect you to services that can help with evictions.

**Clara:** 311... Good to know!

**Boris:** Yes, especially for this building. My love letters... She threw them out. *All of them.*

**Clara:** I am so, so sorry. Did you say your name is Boris?

**Boris:** Yes, but you can call me Bo. That's what... That's what Tatiana called me.

**Clara:** Okay, Bo. I have an idea. I have a pen and a notebook in here. Why don't you write Tatiana a letter – a love letter – like the old days. I'll give it to her. I'll make sure she gets it.

**Boris:** You are an angel from heaven. Thank you!

**Clara:** Yes, yes!

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**Clara:** That's right, Mr. Landlord. You heard me correctly. If you don't fix these problems, I'm going to have to take action.

**Manny:** Maybe the landlord's not a bad guy.

**Clara:** I called 311, and they put me in touch with the Tenant Helpline. I learned my rights to an apartment in good condition and with heat and hot water. If you don't fix these things, including the leak and the peeling paint, they're going to help me write a letter to document the problems.

**Manny:** Are you sure you should say this to the landlord?

**Clara:** And if it's necessary, I'm going to file an official complaint. Your name is not going to look good in this city. Okay, 6 o'clock. Tomorrow?

**The Voice of the Letter:** *My dearest, I can't get you out of my mind. Not a moment has passed without thinking of you...*

**Clara:** Great.

**The Voice of the Letter:** *Your eyes, your lips, your touch.*

**Clara:** See you then.

**The Voice of the Letter:** *You are everything to me... Love, me.*

**Clara:** The landlord got the message.

**Manny:** Clara, my Clara... I go to work for a few hours and come back to find...

**Clara:** Oh, this? You misunderstand. It's a love letter.

**Manny:** I know it's a love letter. I just don't know who wrote it to you. I never imagined you would do this to me.

**Clara:** It's from Bo. He...

**Manny:** Bo? Who's Bo?

**Clara:** Boris. You know, the man with the sofa.

**Manny:** *Sofa?! What sofa?!*

**Clara:** I think it was a sofa *bed*.

**Manny:** What am I hearing? My marriage is falling apart!

**Clara:** Manny, my dear. Bo is Tatiana's boyfriend. You helped her with his garbage. I found him crying in front of the building this afternoon. He told me his story. I told him, write a love letter to Tatiana. I told him I would deliver it to her.

**Manny:** So... why didn't you bring it to her?

**Clara:** Manny, I was going to bring to her, but first I had to take care of the problems with this apartment. Boris told me about 311. I called 311, and they put me in touch with the Tenant Helpline, too.

**Manny:** I told you... I was going to take care of things.

**Clara:** So why didn't you do it then?

**Manny:** I just moved in.

**Clara:** I think you were afraid.

**Manny:** That's not true. I was busy... working overtime.

**Clara:** Excuses! You need to take action. And you need to know your rights. Manny, I was ready to go back home, but now I know what you told me is true. I know you were faithful. And I have always loved you.

**Manny:** I've always loved you, too.

**Clara:** So let's get this place fixed, and let's make it our *home sweet home*.

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**Manny:** It's a chilly day today. Good thing the heat is working.

**Tatiana:** I brought these for you.

**Clara:** Oh, so beautiful!... You didn't have to.

**Boris:** Potluck!

**Clara:** Potluck? What's that?

**Manny:** It's an expression, *mi amor*.

**Tatiana:** An American tradition. A potluck dinner is a dinner party, and everyone brings a dish or two to the party.

**Boris:** These are Tatiana's recipes. But we cooked them together.

**Tatiana:** Clara, Manny, how can we ever repay you? You saved our lives... *our love*.

**Manny:** It was our pleasure.

**Boris:** Oh, please, excuse us.

**Tatiana:** Yes, please, excuse us. We can't control our emotions.

**Clara:** We understand.

**Manny:** Sometimes... we can't control ours either.

**Clara:** Oh, but, how can we ever repay you for the help you gave us with the apartment. Boris, your information was priceless.

**Manny:** It's true, Boris. And thank you, my love, for showing me how to take charge... to assert our rights, to speak with the landlord, and to make our *home sweet home*. I have a suggestion.

**Tatiana:** What's that?

**Manny:** I say we *rendezvous* over there and have a toast to each other and to our beautiful homes.

**Boris:** That sounds perfect.

**Manny:** We can sit on our new sofa. I think we will all fit.

**Boris:** Is it...? It is! It's my sofa! Where did you get it?

**Clara:** We found it in a thrift shop.

**Manny:** We thought it would be a nice gift.

**Boris:** You're giving it to me?

**Clara:** To you *and to Tatiana*.

**Tatiana:** Ahh... My dears, you are too kind. But, but what are you going to cuddle on?

**Manny:** I have an idea. Let's shop together.

**Clara:** For a new sofa!

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**Contact the  
Tenant Support Unit**

**Go to  
[NYC.gov/TenantSupportUnit](https://www.nyc.gov/TenantSupportUnit)**

**Call 311 and say  
Tenant Helpline**