

ALMOST BY DESIGN

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FADE IN:

INT. MAXIM'S INTERIOR DESIGN - WORK AREA - DAY

A desk awash with drawings of classroom layouts.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

In design software, classroom furniture in various colors.

BACK

A computer pen in her hand, ALYSSA MAY (20s-30s) daydreams.

Enter Alyssa's stylish best friend, CARLIE (20s-30s).

CARLIE
'Morning, Alyssa.

Alyssa startles back to the here-and-now.

ALYSSA
Good morning, Carlie.
(laughs)
Caught me in a daydream.

CARLIE
Anything in particular?

Alyssa twists to face Carlie. Her brow furrows, serious.

ALYSSA
Just... my future.

Carlisle plops next to Alyssa.

CARLIE
And?

ALYSSA
In school, I saw myself designing
climate aware private residences.
Preferably large.

CARLIE
Climate aware interior design?

ALYSSA
Yes. Plastic free. Energy
efficient. With water saving
devices such as smart sprinklers
and faucet aerators.

CARLIE

And you would find that interesting?

ALYSSA

Well, the effort to reduce the carbon impact of redesigning cubicles, walls, ceiling paneling the selection of materials would be a challenge.

CARLIE

So dealing with wallboard and paneling?

ALYSSA

Yes. But what I would really enjoy would be coaching the owners on the importance of reclaiming used furniture.

Carlie gives a knowing smile, head nod.

CARLIE

You're old love. I see where you're going now. Antiques. Gotcha now.

ALYSSA

Imagine. Combing through estate sales. Bidding at Sotheby's. Christies!

CARLIE

But Maxim's designs for schools. You knew that.

ALYSSA

Fresh out of college, and with the loans to prove it, I went where the money was. They offered the most, and I could live with my family.

Carlie takes Alyssa's hand.

CARLIE

Sorry you're unhappy, Alyssa. Is there anything I can do to help?

ALYSSA

Being my friend is help enough. Don't worry. It'll work out.

INT. ALYSSA'S FAMILY'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Alyssa and her mother, FRAN (50's) prepare dinner. Alyssa cuts veggies. Fran tackles the chicken.

ALYSSA

I've tslked with Felix about it. He understands where I'm coming from. I told him I've had enough of the limits of desks and chairs arranged in circles, lines and semicircles.

FRAN

Not enough variety, eh?

Alyssa pots veggies to heat on the stove.

ALYSSA

The feel of upholstery. The swerve of drapes on windows. Carpet with different styles, thicknesses and colors. Translating a homeowner's vision into pleasing reality.

FRAN

Color schemes. Shades. Placements.

ALYSSA

You get it.

FRAN

There must be an interior design firm that would love to have you. Hopefully one that's close to us.

They continue dinner prep tasks in silence for a moment.

ALYSSA

Well, we'll see. But my quick review of openings suggests there are none near us. Which both Felix and I see as a bit of a problem.

(a thought)

Read the paper this morning?

FRAN

Didn't have the time.

ALYSSA

Iowa is ranked first in the Nation for wind-generated power.

Fran smiles and pats her daughter's shoulder.

FRAN
My little environmentalist.

ALYSSA
Second in wind-generating capacity.
Just behind Texas.

FRAN
Hooray for Iowa.

Alyssa SIGHS.

ALYSSA
Can't wait for the day we get rid
of coal-fired power plants. And the
pollution they spew.

FRAN
Certainly would help slow climate
change if they did.

ALYSSA
You can say that again. This
spring, it's been thunderstorm
after thunderstorm. I've never seen
anything like it.

FRAN
Weatherman said as many as 50 in
three months.

ALYSSA
Wish we were greener.

INT. SMALL CAFE - DAY

Alyssa and Carlie are lunching together in a small cafe.

ALYSSA
I'd really like to work in large
homes.

CARLIE
Lots of them in the suburbs.

ALYSSA
Be in the center of things.

CARLIE
What does that mean? "In the center
of things?"

ALYSSA

A big city. Chicago. San Francisco.
New York.

Carlie, bit taken aback.

CARLIE

Really? Leave Iowa? Leave Felix?

Alyssa contemplates the question.

ALYSSA

Probably not for Chicago. Illinois
is not a great state for climate
conservation. California is second
only to Arizona in air pollution.
But New York State, the is among
the top ten greenest state in the
nation.

CARLIE

Then you're thinking New York?

ALYSSA

Probably.

CARLIE

The city?

ALYSSA

Yes. New York, New York. But the
problem is if I were to move, would
Felix also be willing to move?

INT. MAXIM'S INTERIOR DESIGN - WORK AREA - DAY

Pen in hand, Alyssa on phone call.

COMPUTER SCREEN

A picture of a luxurious room with plush furnishings. The New
York City night skyline sparkles outside the bay windows.

ALYSSA

You serve families with significant
means all over the city but
primarily the Upper East Side?

(listens)

Bachelors in Interior Design from
the University of Iowa, and a year
at Maxim's. They've been wonderful.
I've learned space planning,
materials and systems.

(MORE)

ALYSSA (CONT'D)

Lighting design.

(pause)

I never considered how much a school board president or principal impacts a school's design. So in talking to them, I learned how to consider and respond to concerns.

(pause)

All right. Talk to you soon.

INT. ALYSSA'S FAMILY'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Alyssa and Fran over coffee.

FRAN

Maxim's will recommend you?

ALYSSA

Yes. I told them the staff and the camaraderie and support has been wonderful.

FRAN

And they accepted it.

ALYSSA

They asked if there was anything to encourage me to stay. Like a raise.

FRAN

How'd you answer?

ALYSSA

I told them they're very generous but it's not the money. It's my need to follow a different path: Communicate with homeowners about needs and preferences and how to satisfy them. Design that involves a wider range -- couches, hassocks, window dressings, color.

FRAN

They were happy with that?

ALYSSA

They understood, and said, "One must follow one's heart."

FRAN

And Felix?

ALYSSA

Aye. There's the rub.

INT. ALYSSA'S FAMILY'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

With an air of sadness around them, Alyssa and Fran stand close, hold hands and face each other.

ALYSSA

Mom, don't be concerned. Assuming I get the job, I'll be fine. I've scoped out the area for safety and greenness. It's safer and greener than living here. And Felix is open to joining me there. Thinks he might follow me to New York.

She has an empathetic look for her mom's long face.

FRAN

We'll miss you. I'll miss you.
Who's going to be my cooking buddy?
My source of fun stories.

ALYSSA

I'll be home for holidays. You and dad or bro can come to visit me, too, can't you?

Alyssa pulls her mom into a hug.

INT. SMALL CAFE - DAY

Alyssa and Carlie again lunch together.

ALYSSA

Felix says I should follow my desires but he is still not sure of what he's going to do but he is going to look into it. And as for me, I'm looking for a roommate to share an apartment on the Upper East Side.

CARLIE

Think you'll find one?

ALYSSA

The question is rent. About \$2000. I could handle that if I share it with another woman.

CARLIE
I've heard New York is dangerous.

ALYSSA
It's one of the top 14 safest
cities in the world.

CARLIE
Really?

Alyssa LAUGHS.

ALYSSA
The Upper East Side is 64 percent
safer than other neighborhoods.

CARLIE
That's encouraging.

ALYSSA
Won't need a car.

CARLIE
No car?

ALYSSA
Subways, busses, cabs, Uber.
Wherever I need to go.

CARLIE
(laughs)
No car, no parking tickets.

ALYSSA
If I can find a place on the Upper
East Side, I'll be near the Museum
Mile and New York Philharmonic.
(chuckles)
And a real plus as Felix bait.

CARLIE
What better place for a music and
art lovers.

ALYSSA
The Met's nearby, too.

INT. MAXIM'S INTERIOR DESIGN - WORK AREA - DAY

Alyssa and Carlie together. Alyssa's face, light up.

ALYSSA

I can't believe it. They offered me a Junior Designer position at \$28.85 an hour. That's \$60,000 a year. If I pay under \$24,000 a year in rent, I should be able to afford my own place.

CARLIE

Whoa! Easy girl.

No stopping the jubilant Alyssa. She holds both of Carlie's hands and pulls her around in a circle.

Carlie joins in the dance. LAUGHS.

ALYSSA

Can't wait to tell Felix!

INT. ALYSSA'S FAMILY'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Alyssa and Fran share post-dinner cleanup chores.

ALYSSA

I'm more likely to hire contractors and vendors to carry out designs.

FRAN

Painters and carpenters?

ALYSSA

Plumbers, electricians. Artists.

FRAN

Sounds complicated.

ALYSSA

It is. It's what I love about it.

FRAN

(laughs)

You were up for a challenge.

ALYSSA

What I'll love best is working with the clients. Just think of the fun.

FRAN

You always loved shopping.

ALYSSA

That's what I mean. Shopping, negotiating, figuring, balancing.

FRAN
Balancing?

ALYSSA
My tastes with the client's tastes.
Construction costs within budget.
I just can't wait.

FRAN
It's almost by design.

FADE OUT.

THE END