

ALMOST BY DESIGN

PILOT

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Based on short stories by Roberta M Roy

*Almost By Design
Just No Beyond*

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TEASE

INT. LANG FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

ALYSSA (20s, dirty blond, delicate, stylish, wears jackets over dresses and low heeled sling back shoes) opens a box. Her mother FRAN (50s business woman, greying) looks on. 80's kitchen.

ALYSSA

Felix says that if I leave Iowa for New York City, maybe he'll move there, too.

Fran takes a plastic bottle of water from the fridge, sits, opens it, pours herself a glass and drinks from it. Looks at Alyssa.

FRAN

If he does, will you live together?

ALYSSA

It's too early in our relationship for that.

Alyssa lifts a glass bottle with a stopper from the box, admires it, and hands it to Fran.

FRAN

For me?

She digs out a second bottle and hands both to her mother.

ALYSSA

To take to work.

FRAN

To take to work?

Alyssa, still involved with the contents of the box, nods yes.

ALYSSA

All you need now is a pitcher with a water filter.

Fran shoots a disbelieving look at Alyssa.

FRAN

I need a pitcher with a water filter?

Alyssa, bottle in hand, turns to look at Fran.

ALYSSA

Yes, Mom. No more plastic bottles.

FRAN

But they're convenient.

ALYSSA

And they are conveniently full of nanoplastics that invade the air we breath, the food we eat, the water we drink -- especially in plastic bottles.

FRAN

Sweet environmentalist interior designer that you are.

(laughs)

Really?

ALYSSA

The thinner the plastic bottle, the more plastic it will release.

Fran laughs. Shakes her head, looks upward.

FRAN

Using glass and filtered water means no nanoplastics?

ALYSSA

Fewer. Even filtered tap water has nano plastics in it. But, hey, at least we're no longer using any of those carcinogenic black plastics.

Fran throws her hand outward, palms up.

FRAN

So we give up plastic bottles?

Alyssa nods her head seriously.

ALYSSA

There's really no getting beyond nanoplastics, Mom. Sorry.

TITLE: "ALMOST BY DESIGN"

ACT I

INT. MAXIM'S INTERIOR DESIGN - WORK AREA - DAY
Desks awash with drawings of classroom layouts.

INSERT - COMPUTER-AIDED DESIGN SCREEN

Classroom furniture in various colors.

BACK

Computer stylus in hand, Alyssa daydreams.

CARLIE (20s wears business suits, dark short hair, fair skin), Alyssa's stylish best friend, crosses to her.

CARLIE
'Morning, Alyssa.

Alyssa startles back to the here-and-now.

ALYSSA
Good morning, Carlie.
(laughs)
Caught me.

CARLIE
Any daydream in particular?

Alyssa twists to face Carlie. Her brow furrows.

ALYSSA
Just... my future.

Carlie plops next to Alyssa.

CARLIE
And?

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

CARLIE
Climate aware? Like how?

ALYSSA

Plastic free. Energy efficient.
Water saving devices like smart
sprinklers and faucet aerators.

CARLIE

That's what interests you?

Alyssa spreads her hands, palms up.

ALYSSA

It's a challenge to reduce carbon
impact by redesigning cubicles,
walls and ceiling panels with
current materials.

Carlie laughs, incredulous. Gives Alyssa a hug.

CARLIE

You want to treat the environment
through the selection of wallboard
and paneling?

ALYSSA

That would be the goal.

Carlie raises her shoulders, looks to the ceiling.

ALYSSA

But what I would really enjoy is
guiding homeowners as they decorate
on the importance of reclaiming
used furniture.

Carlie beams a knowing smile and nods.

CARLIE

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

Alyssa becomes animated, enthusiastic. Stands.

ALYSSA

Imagine combing estate sales.
Bidding at Sotheby's. Christies!

CARLIE

But here at Maxim's we design for
schools. You knew that.

Alyssa stops, addresses Carlie directly.

ALYSSA

Given my college loan debt, I went for the money. Maxim's 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 a huge help.

CARLIE

I think you have a tough road ahead of you. And hopefully you'll stay in the area. But I'm with you.

INT./EXT. IOWA - HIGHWAY - ALYSSA'S CAR, MOVING - DAY

Alyssa and boyfriend FELIX RAMIREZ (20s Puerto Rican background, bilingual Spanish-English, black hair, medium height, casual dresser) in older car cruise a highway. She drives.

Felix pauses eating his hamburger and looks at Alyssa. Alyssa keeps her eyes on the road.

FELIX

Estoy triste. Trying to adjust to the fact that you might leave, Lys.

ALYSSA

Well, Felix. I just feel it's something I have to do.

Felix takes another bite of his hamburger. Reaches for his cup in the coffee holder. Thinks.

FELIX

Yeah. I suppose I could also return to New York.

ALYSSA

But you'd need another front office managers position. Yes? Maybe, a lesser hotel spot? But you'd have to find something.

Felix puts the cup back, looks again at Alyssa.

FELIX

Actually, no. My cousin says I'm welcome to stay with him and his family for a while.

ALYSSA

That's a plus.

Felix finishes his hamburger, crumples the paper that was holding it, puts it and the cup in the bag they came in.

FELIX

Would make the job search easier.
And give me time to find some digs.

INT. LANG FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Alyssa and Fran serve dinner and move to sit at the kitchen table. KLAUS LANG (30's) Alyssa's older platinum haired biochemist casually dressed brother, whose hours flex and is home early is already at the table.

KLAUS

They let me out early given
yesterday I had to work a double
shift at the lab.

Fran gives her son a hug, then sits across from her son.
Alyssa sits between them.

FRAN

(laughs)

The only thing reliable about being
a biochemist serving real life
patients is the unpredictability of
the hours.

The conversation pauses as they busy themselves sharing food
then Klaus looks at Alyssa.

KLAUS

So mom tells me you are looking to
move to the big time.

Takes in some food.

ALYSSA

Yes. As I told Felix, there's too
little challenge in having to plan
whether we should put desks and
chairs in circles, lines and
semicircles. But you understand,
too. No?

KLAUS
(mouth full)
Well it's steady? Just not enough
variety, eh?

Alyssa moves the fork in her hand in the air,

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 looks from Klaus to her mother and back again.

ALYSSA
You get it.

Alyssa forks some food into her mouth.

KLAUS
I'm sure there's an interior design
firm nearby that would love to have
you.

FRAN
Hopefully.

Alyssa toys with her fork with the food on her plate.

ALYSSA
I check every day. There are none.
Felix and I see it as a problem.

Alyssa spends some time eating quietly with the others.
Thinkin.

ALYSSA
When I checked the classifieds
today, I read how Iowa ranked first
in the Nation for wind power. Did
you know that?

KLAUS
(laughs)
I thought we were talking about
your future plans?

FRAN
(laughs)
Hooray for Iowa. My little environmentalist.

ALYSSA
(grimaces)
But we can't move fast enough to get rid of the pollution coal-fired power plants spew.

FRAN
It would certainly slow climate change.

ALYSSA
This spring, it's been thunderstorm after thunderstorm. I've never seen anything like it.

FRAN
Weatherman said 50 in three months.

Alyssa places her fork beside her knife on her plate. She's finished eating.

ALYSSA
We need to be greener.

INT. SMALL CAFE - DAY

Alyssa and Carlie over lunch.

ALYSSA
I'd like to design large homes.

CARLIE
Lots of them in the suburbs.

Alyssa forks some salad into her mouth. Thinking.

ALYSSA
More in the center of things.

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

ALYSSA
Chicago. San Francisco. New York.

Carlie taken aback.

CARLIE

Really? Leave Iowa and Felix?

Alyssa plays with her salad with her fork

ALYSSA

Probably not Chicago. Illinois is not a great state for climate conservation. California is second only to Arizona in air pollution. New York is one of the top ten greenest states in the nation.

CARLIE

(taken aback)

Then you're thinking New York?

ALYSSA

Probably. And Felix has relatives there.

CARLIE

New York City?

ALYSSA

(does a two fisted thumbs up vibe)

New York, New York.

(pauses)

But if I were to move, the question is would Felix join me?

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

Stylus in hand, Alyssa on phone call.

INSERT - COMPUTER AIDED DESIGN SCREEN

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

BACK

ALYSSA

You serve families of 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.

(MORE)

ALYSSA (CONT'D)
I've learned space planning,
lighting design, materials and
systems.

(listens, begins to
doodle)

I never considered how much a
school board president or principal
impacts a school design. In talking
with them, I learned to consider
and respond to concerns.

(pause, continues to
doodle)

Thank you. Talk to you soon.

Alyssa puts down pencil and rises, smiling.

INT. LANG FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Alyssa and Fran over coffee.

FRAN
Maxim's will recommend you?

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

Fran puts down her coffee. Looks at Alyssa.

FRAN
And they accepted it.

ALYSSA
They asked if there was anything to
encourage me to stay. Like a raise.
I told them they're very generous
but it's not the money.

FRAN
What then?

Alyssa gestures with her cup in hand.

ALYSSA
The need to follow a different
path: communicate with homeowners
about needs and preferences and how
to satisfy them. Design that
involves a range - couches,
hassocks, window dressings, color.
Negotiate with carpenters and
painters re cost and style.

FRAN
They're okay with that?

Alyssa smiles. Puts down her cup.

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

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

Alyssa and Carlie together. Alyssa opens an email and her face lights up.

ALYSSA
I can't believe it. This New York home interior design firm would like to interview me for a Junior Designer position.

CARLIE
Fantastic.

No stopping jubilant Alyssa. She holds Carlie's hands and dances her around in a circle.

ALYSSA
Can't wait to tell Felix.

INT./EXT. IOWA - HIGHWAY - FELIX'S CAR, MOVING - DAY

Alyssa and Felix cruise down a highway. Felix drives.

FELIX
Sure. What's happening with the apartment search?

ALYSSA
Going great! A soon to be NYC coworker is getting married. Her lease is up in a month at which time I will assume it. And if I arrive before the end of the month, she has a spare bedroom I can use.

FELIX
What then?

ALYSSA
I hope to find a housemate, and just assume the lease.

FELIX

Nice. And I suppose you also still have options in case a better deal comes along.

ALYSSA

How about you? Been looking? Still interested in making the change?

FELIX

Yeah. I like both the thought of returning to New York and of being close to you.

ALYSSA

Does it depend on finding work first?

FELIX

Actually, no. I told you about staying with my cousin. Yes?

ALYSSA

Definitely a plus.

FELIX

Makes the job search easier. And gives me time to search out reasonably priced digs.

INT. SMALL CAFE - DAY

Klaus eats hungrily. Alyssa and Carlie pick at lunch.

ALYSSA

Felix supports my dream and while he's still not sure what he's going to do but he's open to it.

KLAUS

Where will you live?

ALYSSA

I'm looking for a roommate to share an apartment on the Upper East Side. A little scary.

CARLIE

Think you'll find one?

ALYSSA

Looking for one. Found a possibility. The question is rent.

(MORE)

ALYSSA (CONT'D)
About \$2500. I could handle that if
I share it.

KLAUS
Isn't New York dangerous?

ALYSSA
One of the top 14 safest cities in
the world.

CARLIE
(stops moving fork to her
mouth, gives a look.)
I didn't know that.
(laughs)
Bad rep, I guess.

Alyssa LAUGHS.

ALYSSA
The Upper East Side is much safer
than other neighborhoods. And I
won't need a car.

KLAUS
(laughs)
No car, no parking tickets.

ALYSSA
The Upper East Side is near the
Museum Mile and Philharmonic.
(chuckles)
A real plus as Felix bait.

CARLIE
The perfect place for music and art
lovers like you and Felix.

ALYSSA
The Met's there, too.

INT. LANG FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Alyssa and Fran share post-dinner cleanup chores.

ALYSSA
It's likely I'll hire contractors
and vendors to carry out designs.

FRAN
Painters and carpenters?

ALYSSA

It'll be a challenge! Plumbers,
electricians. Artists.

FRAN

Sounds complicated.

ALYSSA

That's why I love it.

FRAN

You've always been up for a
challenge, and love shopping.

ALYSSA

Working with the clients will be
the most fun. Also, shopping,
negotiating, calculating and the
balance.

FRAN

Balance?

ALYSSA

Between my tastes and the client's.
Budgeting construction costs. Can't
wait.

FRAN

It's almost by design.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL CAFE - DAY

Alyssa and Felix relish lunch.

ALYSSA

Can you believe it, Felix? New
York, New York?

FELIX

Delighted for you, Lys. Looking
forward to sharing in the
adventure.

ALYSSA

Anything definite.

FELIX

Gave my two weeks notice. My cousin confirmed I can room with them while I go job hunting. For my kind of work, in person interviews work best.

INT. LANG FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Living room with dated furniture. An air of sadness around them, Alyssa and Fran hold hands.

ALYSSA

Mom, don't fret. With this job, I'll be fine. I scoped out the area. And Felix is open to joining me and thinks he might follow me.

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 kitchen buddy? My source of fun stories.

ALYSSA

I'll be home for holidays. You and dad or bro can come to visit me, too, right?

Alyssa pulls her mom into a hug.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A New York City two bedroom. Small kitchen with a low bank of windows and a counter lined with six bar stools, three to a side. Large unfurnished, living room with one window.

Alyssa directs two Movers who deliver her belongings.

Felix hangs in the background.

ALYSSA

Could you bring them into this bedroom, please.

The Movers slide a box spring and mattress into the bedroom.

ALYSSA

Thank you so much.

The Mover's job done, Alyssa signs for the delivery and ushers them out.

ALYSSA
Officially furnished.

Felix takes Alyssa's hand, pulls her toward the bedroom. On the way, he picks up a shopping bag.

FELIX
Whattaya say, we break out these new sheets?

ALYSSA
(laughs)
And break'em in.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The adjacent living room unfurnished, Alyssa sits on a kitchen stool near the kitchen counter talking on her cellphone to her mother.

ALYSSA
Mom! Would you believe it? I've found an apartment mate!
(pause)
Just bumped into her. At Saks Fifth Avenue.
(pause)
She works there. Been there for more than a year.
(pause)
No. Commutes from New Jersey.
(pause)
Talks different from us. Really dressed up for work! But friendly.
(pause)
Told her I was new in town. Looking for an apartment mate.
(pause)
She's tired of the commute. Said she might be interested.
(pause)
We've been emailing one another.
(pause)
She writes well. She has a stable job.
(laughs)
Definitely taller than me. Italian.
(MORE)

ALYSSA (CONT'D)
(pause)
Gianna Leonetti

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alyssa strokes an antique couch and matching coffee table. They are set in the living room in the area nearer the kitchen leaving a large space for other chairs and an area against the wall near the door in which a dining table might fit.

FELIX
(re: furnishings)
New, eh. Well, so to speak. Nice.

ALYSSA
Picked them up at a second hand store at a price so low I couldn't believe it.

Felix plops on the couch.

FELIX
Comfortable.

ALYSSA
Seller said people prefer new cloth-covered furniture. He was happy to get rid of them.

Felix pats the seat. Alyssa joins him.

FELIX
(laughs)
And you're happy to make him happy.

ALYSSA
Oh, Felix. I love them. Wish he had a chair to go with them.
(laughs)
Not that I could have afforded it.

Felix puts his arm around Alyssa, pulls her close to himself.

FELIX
Have you heard from your roommate-to-be?

ALYSSA
Gianna arrives from New Jersey this weekend with her own furniture -- chair with ottoman and other stuff.

FELIX
Is she also interested in saving
the environment?

ALYSSA
Why do you ask?

Felix laughs.

FELIX
Wondering if her chair will match
this couch?

Alyssa shrugs her shoulders: don't know.

Felix answers his cellphone.

FELIX
Yes. This is he.
(listens)
Yes. Previously managed a hotel in
Ames, Iowa.
(listens)
A year and a half.
(listens)
Locally owned. Small. Twenty rooms.
(listens)
No. No need for a hospitality tech
due to its size.
(listens)
Oh. I understand. Yes. Thank you.

Felix, gives a disappointed sideways nod.

FELIX
They wanted someone experienced in
working with a hospitality tech.

ALYSSA
Sorry, Felix.

Alyssa approaches Felix. Gives him a hug. Felix holds her in front of him and speaks seriously.

FELIX
Well there are a few front desk non
managerial positions I'm applying
for.

ALYSSA
You're going to have to find
something, right? You can't live
with your cousin forever.

Felix looks Alyssa in the eyes.

FELIX

Even with a job, it'll take me a bit to scrounge up security for an apartment.

ALYSSA

Well, fingers crossed. Something will come along. Meanwhile, you're safe.

They sit together on the couch.

FELIX

So what else do you know about your new apartment mate?

ALYSSA

Gianna says she has dishes, silverware, pots and pans. Her father and his friend are helping her move.

FELIX

Hope she can cook. Can't have me around to do it all the time.

Alyssa cuddles close to Felix, laughs.

ALYSSA

Let's hope she can't.

ACT II

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

GIANNA LEONETTI (30s, Italian background, styled black hair, tall, elegantly dressed, heels, low-cut neckline) arrives with her Father (70s) and a Neighbor (60s).

They all speak with a North New Jersey spin. Alyssa and Gianna hug.

ALYSSA

Oh, Gianna. So happy you are here.

GIANNA

Thank you, Alyssa. I'm Gianna. This is my dad and our neighbor.

Alyssa reaches out her hand to each and they all shake.

ALYSSA

Nice to meet you. Gianna's room is this way.

She gives Gianna a 50 cent tour of the apartment.

LIVING ROOM

ALYSSA

The living room. Like my new couch and coffee table?

GIANNA

Nice. My furniture is modern and simple.

KITCHEN

ALYSSA

The kitchen.

GIANNA

Nice window.

Gianna's Father and Neighbor deliver a modern chair and ottoman. Gianna gestures where to place them.

LATER

The apartment now mixes vintage and modern furnishings. A large central and wall area of the living room remains empty.

Felix enters and gifts Alyssa three pots.

ALYSSA
Oh, Felix. They're perfect.

Alyssa gives Felix a little hug but when she pulls away he reaches to return it. Disappointment tracks on Felix' face.

Alyssa heads to the kitchen counter area where she shakes three packages of seeds for Felix.

FELIX
Parsley. What are the others?

Alyssa has a number of small pots in which she is prepared to plant the seeds.

ALYSSA
Basil and oregano.

FELIX
Bonito. How would you like me to prepare chicken? Pollo con tomate? Pollo ai ajillo?

Alyssa knits her brows, touches Felix's arm.

ALYSSA
What was the second one?

FELIX
Ajillo? Garlic.

Alyssa nods with understanding.

ALYSSA
I have to buy some. But, yes. I'd like to try it. Just write out the list of things I need to pick up.

FELIX
I can do that.

Felix opens a kitchen drawer, takes out a pad and pencil and prepares to hand it to Alyssa.

ALYSSA
When will you cook? Tomorrow night? Or maybe wait until the weekend?

FELIX
Tomorrow night'd be fine.

A KNOCK.

Alyssa opens the door to PIPER MURPHY (20s, Irish, red haired, petite, speaks with an Irish brogue, has foreign student exchange status here on a student visa, permitted to do optional practical paid studies related training in interior design; dresses casually in pants suits or jackets, blouses, and short skirts, comfortable shoes). Carries a small flower pot and bags of seeds. She is given to quick movements and frequent hand gestures.

ALYSSA

Piper. Come in. Come in. Just in time to meet Felix. Felix, this is Piper Murphy. She studying interior design. Works with me as a volunteer at Sanders Design. Very talented. I invited her over for tea and to keep me company while I'm planting.

Felix shakes Piper's hand.

FELIX

Nice to meet you.

Piper speaks with an Irish lilt.

PIPER

Nice to meet you, Felix. Alyssa has told me what a great cook you are.

KITCHEN

Piper sets the pot and the seeds on the kitchen counter and hangs her bag over the back of chair.

ALYSSA

I'm counting on him to prepare meals.

(pokes Felix' ribs)
He's between jobs.

FELIX

Come on, Alyssa. Not easy to find a position in hotel management.

Alyssa hugs Felix.

FELIX

Any time, any day. Me gusta cocinar. ¿Mañana por la noche? Like tomorrow night?

Alyssa's focused on Piper who offers her a bag of seeds.

ALYSSA

Oh, Piper, how nice of you to bring something to plant. Mint?

Felix notes ingredients on a pad.

PIPER

When you told me you were going to plant cooking herbs, I thought maybe mint for cool drinks.

Ignored, Felix leaves the pad on the counter and watches as Alyssa and Piper plant herbs and set them on the windowsill.

PIPER

The living room is very eclectic.

ALYSSA

My apartment mate, Gianna, has definite ideas about interior decorating.

PIPER

(laughs)

I see that.

INT. MAIN DESK IN HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Felix is talking with the hotel owner, HUDSON YOUNG (50s) tall, receding blond hair, blue eyes, as JAMES GOLLARD (30s), an African American who went to school on the G.I. Bill. Served in the Air Force as part of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, as is typical, in suit and tie, stands near.

HUDSON

Well, Felix, I like your manner. Also you're not new to the New York scene. But you have worked the front desk here. And you do have some management experience.

FELIX

(grits his teeth and nods his head)

Just haven't worked with a hospitality tech.

HUDSON

James is great. It's a pretty big operation. We need the technology. And James will orient you to it. Right James?

James offers Felix his hand and they shake.

JAMES

Here full time. It'd be a pleasure
to coach you in it's use.

HUDSON

So Mondays you'll be off. And
Wednesdays. The other days, your
hours will vary. Fridays and
Saturdays will be split shift. Will
that work for you?

FELIX

Sounds perfect.

Hudson offers Felix his hand. They shake. Then James and
Felix shake a second time.

LATER

Felix heads out of the hotel, talks on his cellphone.

FELIX

Yes, Alyssa. They want me!
(listens)
Start Tuesday.
(listens)
Monday and Wednesdays off.
Weekends, split shift.
(listens, laughs)
Yup. Still can do Meatless Mondays.
(listens)
And Sunday dinners.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

After a meatless Monday meal, Alyssa, jacket removed, wearing a dress, and Piper, in a flowered jacket that brings out the color of her hair and a short, straight skirt, and low heels, clean off the kitchen counter as Felix relaxes on a bar stool.

PIPER

You can heat this Pyrex bowl and
lid in the microwave?

ALYSSA

Or in the oven. They handle high
temperatures well.

Piper puts the lid on one she holds up to consider.

PIPER

I like them. Maybe I'll get a few.

FELIX

They double the impact of these
Meatless Mondays.

PIPER

What do you mean?

Felix gives a nod toward Alyssa. Smiles.

FELIX

Alyssa would like us to not only
eat less meat, like tonight with
her Meatless Monday, but also to
eat less nanoplastics.

Alyssa opens the refrigerator door, places the Pyrex bowl
within.

PIPER

Oh, I see.

FELIX

Pyrex, no?

PIPER

Deadly. Just deadly. And I think I
need to get some glass water
bottles.

Gianna, dressed to the nines, arrives late. Typical for
meatless Mondays.

GIANNA

Sorry to be so late. Had to pick up
stuff for supper.

ALYSSA

We'll leave you to it.

Piper, Alyssa, and Felix head for the living room.

Still formally dressed and in high heels. Gianna prepares a
steak dinner with veggies in plastic bags which she pops into
the microwave.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alyssa shows Piper vintage 1920's Flapper style dresses.

PIPER

Are they originals? I mean more
than a hundred years old?

Just as Alyssa nods in confirmation, Gianna walks from her bedroom to the kitchen.

GIANNA

You buy things second hand?

PIPER

Deadly!
(holds dress up)
I really like it.

Gianna passes through and catches sight of the dresses.

GIANNA

Not bad.
(moves on)
Just not my style.

Piper and Alyssa shrug their shoulders.

ALYSSA

(voice loud enough for
Gianna to hear in her
bedroom)

Piper, did I tell you? Gianna loves
the idea of fresh herbs to use with
our meals.

PIPER

(more loudly than is
typical)

So it's all set to enjoy the
meatless Monday meal Felix is going
to prepare?

ALYSSA

Arroz y frijoles españoles...
Spanish rice and beans.

GIANNA (O.S.)

Alyssa, I forgot to tell you I was
invited to dinner at a steakhouse
Monday night.

Dressed for an evening out, Gianna crosses the living room to leave. She waves.

GIANNA

So I guess you can count me out. Ci
vediamo dopo cena. After dinner.

Piper and Alyssa shrug and laugh.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Felix preps vegan Spanish Rice and Beans. Alyssa, jacket off, in dress and sling back low shoes, helps. Plates line the counter.

FELIX

Gracias, mi amor. Too bad Gianna
isn't joining us. I think she'd
like Matteo.

KNOCK.

At the door, Alyssa lets in MATTEO GARCIA (30s-40s) tall, dark haired, elegantly attired, Cuban born, bilingual Spanish English, speaks with a Spanish accent.

MATTEO

Buenas noches. I'm Matteo. Matteo
Garcia. You were expecting me.

ALYSSA

Welcome, Matteo. Felix told me all
about you and what a good friend
you are to him.

Felix joins them, shakes Matteo's hand and pulls him to the --

KITCHEN

FELIX

Just in time to add the frijoles
rojos.

(offers a glass)
Vino?

MATTEO

(laughs)
Si, claro.

They toast.

FELIX

Salud.

MATTEO

Salud.

ALYSSA

Felix is fixing Spanish rice with beans. Do you like them?

MATTEO

Definitely.

LATER

The meal ended, Matteo, Piper, Alyssa and Felix chat.

Gianna, returning from dinner out, dressed to the nines and carrying a large purse, enters. Felix and Matteo rise to greet her.

FELIX

Gianna, this is my good friend Matteo.

Gianna eyes him with interest and extends her hand.

GIANNA

Pleased to meet you.

They shake hands.

ALYSSA

Would you like to join us, Gianna?
A glass of wine?

GIANNA

Yes. Just let me put my purse in my room and wash up.

LATER

Gianna returns to the table, sits at an angle near Matteo. Matteo offers her wine and pours her a glass.

GIANNA

Thank you, Matteo. Matteo, eh? I like that name.

MATTEO

Gracias. I'm an old friend of Felix from when he was a hotel manager at the Luxe. Before he decided to travel the world.

(laughs)

If you call Iowa the world.

Alyssa laughs. The others smile and nod.

ALYSSA

It was certainly my world for a long time. Matteo, Gianna's from across the Hudson in New Jersey.

MATTEO

I love New Jersey, Gianna. Is that where you grew up?

GIANNA

My dad owns restaurants all over the state. But me, I thought I'd shoot for the big time in New York.

MATTEO

That's great. Bueno!

Gianna reaches out her hand to Matteo.

GIANNA

A pleasure!

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Felix asleep in front of the TV which is on, but silent.

In robe and pajamas, Gianna wanders into the --

KITCHEN

Alyssa washes the dishes. Gianna sits on one of the high stools.

ALYSSA

Glad you got the chance to meet Matteo. Good looking guy, huh?

GIANNA

Will he be coming again next Monday?

ALYSSA

We could ask him. Interested?

GIANNA

Might be.

ALYSSA

It would be meatless. Still interested?

Gianna laughs.

GIANNA

Oh, why not?

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Felix and Matteo install a low-flow shower head.

Over dressed as usual, Gianna looks on from the doorway.

GIANNA

Being tall is a gift. Nice you can
reach it so easily, Matteo.

Matteo climbs out of the tub, turns on the shower and holds
his hand under it.

FELIX

This will save on water, thanks to
your super plumbing skills. Matteo,
we should be the first to try it.

GIANNA

So now you're going to shower here.
(laughs)
I get it, Felix.

FELIX

What do you think?

MATTEO

Good for the environment.

Alyssa enters to inspect. She is wearing a jacket over her
dress.

Felix puts his hand under the jacket and around her waist.

FELIX

Just as you wanted, mi amor.

ALYSSA

Oh, Matteo. Thank you so much. It's
so much better.

GIANNA

I'll miss the force of the old one,
but did you know Felix likes it so
much, he'd like to try it out.

Gianna and Matteo exchange looks.

Felix squeezes Alyssa.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Dressed for the day, Gianna eats breakfast as messy Felix wanders from Alyssa's bedroom to the bathroom.

Alyssa wanders out, grabs coffee and joins Gianna.

GIANNA

I see you're not alone.

ALYSSA

We got in late last night, and we're going to the farmer's market first thing. We decided it best if Felix slept over.

Felix leaves the bathroom all put together. He smiles.

FELIX

Gianna. Alyssa is going to purchase us some bamboo toothbrushes. She says they're great and environment friendly.

Gianna forks a bit of breakfast to her mouth. Attends to what is on her plate.

GIANNA

Plastic is fine with me.

ALYSSA

You prefer the plastic one?

Still attending to what is on her plate.

GIANNA

I like the color: red and gold.

Felix pours coffee and joins them at the counter.

ALYSSA

Gianna, Piper is coming over to joins us at the farmer's market. Want to come?

Gianna, stops, thinks, and then looks at Alyssa.

GIANNA

It's such a nice day. I'd like that.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - OPEN-AIR MARKET - DAY

As usual, in high heels, Gianna stumbles along.

Alyssa and Felix hold hands, walking comfortably.

Nearby, Piper, in pants suit, charts her own course.

Gianna buys grapes then approaches Alyssa and Felix.

GIANNA

My feet are killing me. I'll wait
for you on that bench.

ALYSSA

You'll be okay by yourself?

GIANNA

I'll be fine. See you in a bit.

Piper talks with an Older Woman at a vegetable stand. She selects an assortment the Woman bags.

She waves to the Woman.

PIPER

Thank you so much. Nice talking to
you.

Piper meets up with Alyssa and Felix.

PIPER

Guess what I'm making for meatless
Monday? Vegetarian Irish stew!

FELIX

What? I'm out of a job?

PIPER

The woman who runs the stand used
to run one at the The Milk Market
in Limerick, Ireland. I asked for a
suggestion for a vegetarian dish.
Silly me. Of course. Irish stew!

FELIX

Sounds interesting.

PIPER

I've got all the ingredients except
lentils.

ALYSSA

You've made it before?

PIPER

No. But my mom made it all the time. The vendor reminded me. So, what do say? Vegetarian Irish stew?

Felix turns his lips down in a pout.

FELIX

If Matteo and I are also welcome.

Piper gives him a wave of the hand.

PIPER

Of course you're both welcome.

ALYSSA

Wait 'til I tell Gianna. Wonder what she'll say.

Piper raises her hands palm upward. Smiles.

PIPER

I think that as long as you invite Matteo, she'll be there and loving it. The menu doesn't matter.

They laugh and join up with Gianna who, seeing them approach, puts on her shoes for the trip home.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gianna touches up a broken nail with polish.

Alyssa, jacket over her mid calf length dress and sling back heels, and Piper, in pants suit and flats, return from shopping.

PIPER

Wait until you see what Alyssa has for us. And Felix.

Alyssa digs into a bag. She hands a smaller bag to Piper.

GIANNA

(laughs)

Sugarfree gum?

Piper passes a bamboo toothbrush to Gianna. She turns it over, not quite sure what it is.

GIANNA

What's this for? Cleaning crevices?

PIPER
No more plastic toothbrushes.
Bamboo! To save the environment.

Gianna hands the toothbrush back to Piper.

GIANNA
I think I'll keep my red and gold.

Gianna returns attention to her nails.

PIPER
Alyssa, mind if I try mine out?

Alyssa: a whatever shrug.

Piper crosses to the bathroom.

KNOCK. Felix enters with an overnight bag.

ALYSSA
Just in time for our improvements.

Felix sets the overnight bag down inside Alyssa's bedroom then hugs her. Gianna notes the overnight bag, but remains silent.

FELIX
What do we have here?

ALYSSA
Bamboo toothbrush for each of us.
Gianna prefers her plastic one.

Gianna concentrates on her nails.

FELIX
Very "now." Just what I need.

Piper exits the bathroom, toothbrush in hand.

PIPER
Your turn, Felix. Gonna love it.

Felix heads for the bathroom.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - ANTIQUE STORE - DAY

Gianna watches passersby.

Alyssa peers through the window.

ALYSSA

What I'm looking for is a sideboard
for our living room.

Gianna, disinterested.

ALYSSA

Since we're here, let's look.

GIANNA

That's okay. I'll wait.

ALYSSA

Oh. Come on.

GIANNA

I'll wait.

Alyssa enters, speaks with the Proprietor. They haggle over a dark piece of furniture against the wall.

The Proprietor nods, hands Alyssa a receipt she signs.

He runs Alyssa's credit card, and the piece is hers.

ACT III

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alyssa and Piper consider the distressed Victorian sideboard.

PIPER

My nana had one of those. Very handy.

ALYSSA

I thought I'd paint it white to match Gianna's chair. Maybe a color from the couch around the edges.

PIPER

Change the pulls?

ALYSSA

Yes. To brass.

PIPER

Grand!

They sit.

ALYSSA

Sometimes I really miss my mom. And my friend, Carlie.

PIPER

I'm sure you do.

ALYSSA

Calling them helps, but it's not the same. So glad I met you.

Piper and Alyssa hug.

ALYSSA

Heard anything from the U-S Student Exchange program? Will you be able to start the practical training?

PIPER

I finish the semester at the School of Interior Design this month. So I can start in the summer.

ALYSSA

Full time? At least for the summer?

PIPER

During the school year, the school only permits 20 hours of work per week. Except I would like to get a Green Work Card and immigrate.

ALYSSA

Full time with us this summer, part time during the school year?

PIPER

Hopeful. Just need to find out how that will work with my Green Card application. Still, can't wait!

ALYSSA

Me either.

Piper and Alyssa 'High Five'.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

In jeans and a sweatshirt, paint-speckled, Alyssa paints the sideboard.

KNOCK. Felix. He enters and inspects her handiwork.

FELIX

So, mi amor, doing some interior decorating, eh? Looks good.

ALYSSA

Thank you.

FELIX

(ironic)

Gianna's going to love it.

ALYSSA

I hope so. The white goes with her chair and the edging color coordinates with my couch.

FELIX

Pretty eclectic, I'd say. What can I do?

ALYSSA

Install the brass pulls.

Felix goes to work with a screwdriver.

LATER

Gianna arrives to a finished sideboard done.

Felix and Alyssa, still in painter's clothes, sit on the couch and drink coffee.

GIANNA

Whew! Smells terrible! Painting?

ALYSSA

Oh, Gianna. I'm so sorry.

KITCHEN

Gianna opens the window, returns to the --

LIVING ROOM

and notices the sideboard.

GIANNA

Well. Something new.

(laughs)

I might even like it. Except for the smell.

FELIX

Matches your chair.

GIANNA

Hadn't thought of that. But I suppose it does.

Gianna considers chair and sideboard to couch.

GIANNA

And your couch.

She laughs.

GIANNA

I like it. Yes. I like it.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

In pajamas, Felix and Alyssa enjoy breakfast together.

In bathrobe and a little disheveled, Gianna joins them and pours a cup of coffee.

GIANNA

Nothing like the smell of coffee.

FELIX
The sideboard will be useful.

Gianna pours herself a cup of coffee and joins them at the counter.

GIANNA
Nice for hors d'oeuvres.

FELIX
And storage.

Gianna puts her coffee down and looks directly at Felix and Alyssa.

GIANNA
Non cucino molto but I make a great antipasto.

ALYSSA
Really?

GIANNA
Sliced pepperoni, ripe olives, fresh tomatoes, yellow pepperoncini, provolone, garbanzo beans...

ALYSSA
Impressive! Maybe next Thursday night? Matteo usually stops by then. Yes?

Gianna considers the proposal and responds.

GIANNA
Okay. . . If we can do the food shopping together.

ALYSSA
Sure. Whattya say, Felix? We all go together. Wednesday after work?

FELIX
Wednesday it is.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alyssa, with a sweater over her dress, and Gianna, dressed to the nines, and casually dressed Felix, enter the apartment with arms full grocery bags

KNOCK. Piper with a grocery bag.

PIPER
Slan!

Piper pulls out a six-pack of bottled beer.

PIPER
Cheers!

FELIX
Top o the marnin' te ye! Salud!

ALYSSA
Great, Piper. Tomorrow night we're having antipasto that Gianna is going to make.

Gianna eyes the beer. Considers. Speaks.

GIANNA
And Chianti!

PIPER
I never had Chianti. A red?
Italian?

GIANNA
Yes. Goes well with antipasto.

PIPER
Oh. Antipasto. Peppers? Salami?

GIANNA
The works.

Piper gives a nod of understanding, heads for the kitchen to refrigerate the beer. Speaks over her shoulder.

PIPER
Beer is not a good match, then.

When Piper returns, Gianna addresses her.

GIANNA
I think Matteo would prefer Chianti.

Piper smiles, gives a wave of her hand.

PIPER
No need for a givin' out. Maybe Monday would be better for Irish vegetarian stew.

Alyssa claps her hands together.

ALYSSA
Perfect! An international week.
(laughs)
Italian on Thursday. Irish on
Monday. Felix, what's for dinner
Sunday?

Felix laughs.

FELIX
Paella. Better pick up some Rioja.

Piper laughs.

PIPER
Spanish red wine... for balance.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Plates, the Antipasto and Chianti are set out on the sideboard.

Jacketless Alyssa in a dress; Piper in sweater and slacks, and Felix, tieless but in dress shirt, chat on the couch.

Dressed to the nines, Gianna prepares food in the kitchen.

A KNOCK. Gianna hurries through from the kitchen to answer.

GIANNA
I've got it.

At the door, Matteo, as usual, in suit and tie.

MATTEO
Buenas noches, querida.

GIANNA
Buenas noches, Matteo.

ALYSSA
Hello, Matteo.

PIPER
Evening, Matteo.

Felix welcomes Matteo.

Gianna moves to the sideboard and picks up the Chianti.

GIANNA
Matteo, care for some Chianti?

MATTEO
Por favor.

Matteo helps himself to a glass which Gianna fills after which she pours herself some. They toast,

MATTEO
A ton sante!

GIANNA
A ton sante!

and sip.

GIANNA
How do you like our new sideboard?

MATTEO
Elegante!

GIANNA
It was originally a dark wood, but Alyssa and Felix refinished it.

MATTEO
Matches the furniture.

Gianna looks for something. She opens the cubby door nearest her. Inside: pair of Felix's sneakers, socks and toiletries.

She slams the door tight then glares at Alyssa.

Gianna points to the closed cubby door. Glares at Alyssa.

GIANNA
What? What's this?

ALYSSA
I thought we'd split it. That side is ours.

Gianna is enraged.

GIANNA
Ours... ours?

ALYSSA
Well, mine.

GIANNA
Yours?

ALYSSA
Yes. And the other side is yours.

GIANNA

Mine? The sneakers? Whose are they?
And shaving kit?

FELIX

They're mine.

GIANNA

Yours?

(to Matteo)

I can't believe it. Now he takes
space in our living room.

MATTEO

No es un problema.

He opens the other cubby door.

MATTEO

See, mi amor. All this is yours.

Gianna steams out of the room, wine glass in hand.

The Others look at each other for a beat.

GIANNA

returns from the kitchen with the antipasto which she places
on the sideboard near a pile of small dishes and some
silverware. Gianna has calmed.

Everyone helps themself. Piper, Alyssa, and Felix sit on the
couch. Matteo and Gianna remain standing near the sideboard.

MATTEO

Deliciosa, mi dulce.

GIANNA

Niente. Antipasto is a favorite of
mine.

PIPER

I love black olives.

GIANNA

Ripe is how I like them.

ALYSSA

For me, fresh tomatoes and
provolone.

FELIX
(laughs)
Something for everyone. Molto
gustoso!

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alyssa and Piper wait for...

A KNOCK.

A Young Deliveryman (30s) and OLDER DELIVERYMAN (60s) heft a dark vintage display cabinet.

OLDER MAN
Top of the morning to you. Alyssa
Lang?

ALYSSA
You have it. Great!

OLDER DELIVERYMAN
Where would you like it?

Alyssa point to the far wall.

The Deliverymen place the cabinet as directed.

ALYSSA
Perfect. Thank you so much!

The Older Deliveryman holds a clipboard with a receipt for Alyssa to sign.

The Deliverymen exit.

Alyssa and Piper admire the cabinet.

PIPER
Nice lines.

ALYSSA
I thought so, too.

Alyssa strokes the dark wood.

ALYSSA
Now to paint it. Gianna's going home for the weekend. I'll paint it then.

PIPER
Maybe I can help?

ALYSSA
That'd be great!

LATER

Alyssa and Piper paint the cabinet.

FELIX

enters with a pizza box.

FELIX
Happy lunch time. Pizza for you
interior designers who might be up
for some nourishment.

PIPER
Yum!

ALYSSA
Almost done.

FELIX
I'll set us up in the kitchen.

KITCHEN

FELIX
Went for Pacific Veggie. You'll
like it, Lys?

He hugs Alyssa then pecks her cheek.

FELIX
Specially for you, love. Lindo?
Sound good?

Alyssa looks into his eyes and smiles.

ALYSSA
Marvillosa, mi querido.

They all fall quiet for a bit.

FELIX
Alyssa, will you be replacing the
pulls on the display cupboard?

ALYSSA
They're all in there.
(laughs)
Just waiting for your magic touch.

PIPER

How will you share the display case
with Gianna?

ALYSSA

Good question.

Piper motions them to the cabinet.

PIPER

Suppose you were to share the upper
display area and you take one
drawer, Gianna takes the other?

FELIX

Sounds like a plan.

ALYSSA

She can put her wine glasses in the
display area and choose which
drawer she wants.

Piper pours herself a cup of coffee.

PIPER

Grand. Funny, how I've come to
prefer coffee for lunch and in the
morning.

(holds out cup)

Afternoons, though, not so much.
Tea. Good old Irish tea.

ALYSSA

(to Felix)

I was bit taken aback by how upset
Gianna became when she found your
things in the sideboard cubby.

FELIX

(chuckles)

Not to worry. Her turn'll come.

ALYSSA

I don't think so.

Piper laughs and paws the air.

PIPER

She's so bent on marrying a rich
man. Certainly not near 40 year old
Matteo who still lives at home.

ALYSSA

She likes to flirt with Matteo.
I don't think he's asked her out.

Felix offers the last piece of pizza. No takers.

ALYSSA

Felix, when we're done, would you
install the cabinet brassware while
Piper and I clean up?

FELIX

Sounds like a plan.

ACT IV

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Felix screws on the last of the display cabinet's pulls.

ALYSSA
Looks great. Thank you so much.

FELIX
I'll put the screwdriver away.

Felix leaves just as Gianna opens the apartment door.

GIANNA
(crinkles nose)
Painting again?

ALYSSA
Oh, yes.
(calls out)
Felix. Please open the kitchen
window?

FELIX (O.S.)
Is Gianna back?

Alyssa gestures toward the display cabinet.

ALYSSA
So, Gianna. How do you like the new
piece.

GIANNA
Nice work! Matches.

Alyssa opens an upper door to the cabinet.

PIPER
Alyssa and I refinished it. Felix
added the pulls.

ALYSSA
How about you and I share the upper
display area. You take a drawer and
I take the other.

GIANNA
The display area is perfect for my
wine glasses.

On the way to her room.

GIANNA

Very nice.

Piper and Alyssa look at one another. Alyssa pulls the corners of her mouth down, addresses Gianna as she heads for her bedroom.

ALYSSA

Which drawer would you prefer?

GIANNA

Doesn't matter. My things fit fine in my room.

(considers)

Come to think of it, I'll take the upper. Never know what the future might bring.

Piper and Alyssa shrug.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alyssa, Felix, Gianna, Piper, and Matteo sit together.

MATTEO

The place is really shaping up. The new display cabinet is charming.

Gianna nods in agreement.

GIANNA

Showcases my wine stems nicely.

A thought occurs to Felix.

MATTEO

Alyssa, is this is the kind of work you do for your employer? Decorate?

ALYSSA

That's the easy part.

MATTEO

What's the hard part?

ALYSSA

Getting everyone on the same page.

MATTEO

Like how.

Gianna rises and heads to the kitchen.

ALYSSA

Well, money is not the question.
The challenge is agreement on the
decoration style.

MATTEO

Easy?

Alyssa shoots Felix a skeptical look.

ALYSSA

Question is always will the
furnishings and style be new, old
or a mix?

PIPER

Goodness. So I'll have to learn
about antiques?

Alyssa nods to Piper.

ALYSSA

Most never consider old. Usually,
it's a mix of old and new.

MATTEO

Why not just buy new?

ALYSSA

New is kind of boring. You go to a
catalogue, scan a few pages, find
coordinated groups of furnishings.

MATTEO

Doesn't that make you job easier?

ALYSSA

Maybe. But it creates more new
waste. Not good for climate change.
Also much more costly.

PIPER

Hadn't thought of that.

MATTEO

Oh. Cost. Yes. And climate change.

Gianna returns.

GIANNA

(to Matteo)

Alyssa is very concerned about our
health. Our environment.

MATTEO
So I gather.

Gianna seats herself and speaks seriously.

GIANNA
Alyssa would like us all to prevent
waste and lower pollution.

FELIX
I thought all the environmental
talk passed by you, Gianna.

GIANNA
(laughs)
Imagine if I were one of Alyssa
clients.

MATTEO
Gianna...
(indicates the ottoman)
Sit with me, mi amor.

Gianna sits between Matteo's legs.

ALYSSA
Looks like I am going to be
assigned my first clients this
week. To date, I just have been
pairing with another interior
designer as she provides client
guidance. A little intimidating.

FELIX
You'll be fine, Lys. Not to worry.

Piper rises. Picks up and puts on her small shoulder bag.

PIPER
Listen, guys. Time for me to leave.
No need to rise. I'll let myself
out. It's been great.

LATER

Alyssa and Felix stand to leave for Alyssa's room.

ALYSSA
We're going to bed. It's been nice
but it's late.

MATTEO
And I have to go.

Gianna follows Matteo to the door.

MATTEO
Buenas noches, Felix. Sleep well,
Alyssa.

FELIX
G'night, Gianna.

Alyssa and Felix enter her bedroom, close the door.

Matteo extends his hand to Gianna. She takes it.

They stand silent, rapt on each other. Something passes between them. Matteo pulls Gianna in. Face to face.

A deep kiss follows.

Matteo pulls away yet holds Gianna's hands.

MATTEO
Buenos noches, Gianna. Sleep well.

GIANNA
Buenos noches, Matteo.

When Matteo leaves, Gianna leans against the door, laughs to herself.

GIANNA
Glad I have that upper drawer. One never knows.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

In nightclothes and bathrobes, Alyssa, Gianna and Felix eat breakfast.

ALYSSA
Work really tired me out yesterday. Negotiate. Negotiate. Negotiate. By the time I hit the sack it was straight to sleep. Right, Felix.

FELIX
If you snored, I never heard you. This hospitality tech learning is a bit more complicated than I thought it would be. Just appreciate James' patience with me.

ALYSSA

Matteo is more relaxed and
comfortable around you, Gianna. Do
you notice it?

GIANNA

Kinda.

Gianna sips coffee.

FELIX

I think Matteo has developed a
crush on you.

GIANNA

Given the goodbye kiss last night,
it seems he has.

ALYSSA

Aren't you looking for a man with
money?

GIANNA

Whatever that means.

FELIX

Well, money isn't everything.

Silence. They all drink coffee.

GIANNA

Alyssa, I've been thinking. I'd
like the upper drawer in the
cupboard.

(chuckle)

Just in case.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Felix cooks. Matteo hangs.

MATTEO

You cook most nights?

FELIX

Helps earn my keep.

MATTEO

How's your new job going.

FELIX

Bit of a challenge. And a major
wedding celebration this weekend.

MATTEO
Full house?

FELIX
Definitely has me on my toes.

MATTEO
What's your role?

FELIX
The usual. Front office manager.

MATTEO
Where?

FELIX
Hotel on 125th street. In El
Barrio.

MATTEO
Que bueno. Ellos hablen espanol.

FELIX
Si. Lys and I shop together. She's
learning to cook. Plus her hours.
We split meal costs. What about
Gianna?

MATTEO
Not a cook.

FELIX
Worries too much about her
appearance and nails.

MATTEO
So they both like for you to cook?

FELIX
Not sure how any swing shifts at
the hotel will affect that.

MATTEO
Suppose I were to cook sometimes.
I like eating with you.

FELIX
Gianna would like that, but we have
to talk with Lys.

MATTEO
(chef's kiss)
Mi fricasé de pollo está delicioso.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Felix, Alyssa and Gianna at breakfast.

GIANNA

Felix, you met Matteo in the hotel business.

FELIX

I was the front office manager and he was the head waiter.

GIANNA

Hmm. I see.

FELIX

Your dad is restauranteur?

GIANNA

Owns a bunch.

FELIX

A match made in heaven.

GIANNA

You say Matteo's going to prepare chicken fricassee?

ALYSSA

Felix has to work Thursday and I won't be in until late. Piper is coming over. Felix will cook. We'll eat when I get home. Seven-ish.

GIANNA

Maybe I can help.

ALYSSA

Forgot. Good news! Piper's approval to do her Optional Practical Training for F-1 students with Sanders Design came through. We'll be working together this summer. She'll be full time.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Piper and Gianna look over a magazine together.

PIPER

I like the way they use these muted colors. I'm going to try them when I get to do home designs.

GIANNA

I prefer bold colors: red, orange.

PIPER

Your chair is white.

GIANNA

I also prefer modern.

PIPER

You were looking for sharp
contrast.

GIANNA

Yes. But modern.

KNOCK.

GIANNA

I'll get it.

Gianna opens the door to Matteo who carries a shopping bag.

GIANNA

Bienvenido, Matteo.

MATTEO

Bienvenido, Gianna. Hello, Piper.

Matteo tracks for the kitchen with Gianna on his tail.

Piper returns to the magazine.

KITCHEN

Matteo transfers food from shopping bag to counter.

Gianna, in heels a usual, ties on her new apron.

GIANNA

Matteo, this is so nice of you.

MATTEO

Thank you. Have a heavyweight
frying pan I might use?

Unfamiliar with the kitchen, Gianna searches as Matteo preps.

They both reach for a large frying pan. Matteo takes Gianna's hand and pulls her in.

They kiss and smile affectionately. When they break, Matteo hands Gianna vegetables.

MATTEO
Would you cut these?

Gianna washes the veggies in the sink.

GIANNA
I'm new to this. How do you cut
them?

Matteo demonstrates how to cut tomatoes and peppers.

GIANNA
I've got it.

Gianna starts with the peppers. He attends to the chicken.

LATER - LIVING ROOM

Gianna, Matteo, Piper and Alyssa relish the chicken dish.
Gianna has removed her apron.

PIPER
Delicious, Matteo. And Gianna.

Gianna puts her hand over Matteo's

GIANNA
Oh, Matteo did it all.

MATTEO
Fricasé de pollo; a Cuban favorite.
Glad you like it, Piper.

ALYSSA
Very nice of you to cover for
Felix. Yes. Delicious.

Gianna straightens her napkin, looks downward.

GIANNA
Happy I could help.

Matteo looks at Alyssa.

MATTEO
How was your day, Alyssa?

ALYSSA
Interesting. Working with a young
couple, John and Phyllis. They've
bought a condo on 72nd Street.

Piper stops with knife in hand, fork tines down, food midway
to her mouth.

PIPER

Have any thoughts on the design?

ALYSSA

They're open to suggestions. I explained that second hand furniture not only offers a beautiful living space but stretches their budget.

Piper places fork over her knife in a 'v' on her plate.

PIPER

What did you decide on?

ALYSSA

Tomorrow we are going to meet at an antique furnishing store and see if we can find something they like.

Gianna smiles, blinks her lashes at Matteo.

GIANNA

Matteo, do you think you're likely to cook for us again?

Matteo laughs.

MATTEO

Only if invited.

Gianna places her hand over his.

GIANNA

Oh, we'll invite you.
(looks to Alyssa)
Won't we, Alyssa?

Alyssa wipes her mouth with her napkin, nods positively.

ALYSSA

Of course. Next week. When Felix works late? And only if Gianna is willing to help.

Smiling, Gianna gives Matteo's hand a squeeze and then removes it.

GIANNA

Of course I am.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Alyssa and Felix in night clothes and robes at breakfast.

FELIX

Sorry I missed Matteo last night.

ALYSSA

And a great meal.

Alyssa sips her coffee.

FELIX

Did Piper join you?

Alyssa puts her coffee down, looks incredulously at Felix.

ALYSSA

Yes. Can you believe it? Gianna
tried to help Matteo in the
kitchen!

FELIX

And Piper?

ALYSSA

Relaxed. Enjoyed getting together.
Interested in how my day went.

FELIX

Interested in Matteo?

ALYSSA

Not that I noticed. But definitely
a spark between Matteo and Gianna.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - ANTIQUE FURNITURE STORE - DAY

Alyssa and a Young Couple, JOHN and PHYLLIS (20s), stroll
through an antique furniture store.

They stop to consider a chair.

ALYSSA

This is what I suggest. Instead of
coordinated pieces with matching
colors, consider design first. We
can refinish or reupholster a piece
to coordinate with other pieces.

PHYLLIS

What do you think? Look comfortable
to you?

JOHN
Nothing beats the sit test.
(tries it)
Comfy. Good fit.

PHYLLIS
How about the color?

JOHN
Like it.

PHYLLIS
I really like it. Let's start with
this chair and go on from there.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alyssa and Gianna supervise two Deliverymen who move a second hand table and six chairs into the living room.

Alyssa signs for it and the Deliverymen leave.

GIANNA
We can now dine at a table. Lovely.

ALYSSA
It might also be nice for game
nights.

GIANNA
Game nights, no less.

LATER

Alyssa and Felix sit at the living room table. It's surface is clear of any objects.

ALYSSA
How's the hotel managing going?

FELIX
Complicated. But going along.

ALYSSA
I can imagine. Supervising the
front desk, guest services and the
concierge.

FELIX
Gotta buddy helping. Also an N-Y-U
grad. Takes care of the hospitality
tech side. His name's James Gollard

ALYSSA

Hadn't thought of the tech side.

FELIX

Went to school on the G-I Bill.
Served in the Air Force. Part of
the U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

ALYSSA

We still have forces there?

FELIX

USAFE for short. Ramstein. Southern
Germany.

ALYSSA

Would you like to invite him for
our first game night?

FELIX

I could do that.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Game night.

Alyssa, Gianna, and Piper prep snacks.

When he KNOCKS, Gianna lets in Matteo.

GIANNA

Good evening, Matteo. Welcome.

MATTEO

Good evening, Gianna. Good evening,
Alyssa. Piper.

Another KNOCK.

Piper opens the door for Felix and James.

PIPER

You must be James. Felix speaks
highly of you. I'm Piper. Piper
Murphy.

They shake.

JAMES

Pleasure to meet you, Piper.

PIPER

Me too.

Piper turns toward others.

PIPER
Everyone, this is James.

LATER

The Group around the living room table.

Alyssa reads a card.

ALYSSA
Gianna, would you rather always
wake up late or always go to bed
early?

Gianna gives a lift to her hand.

GIANNA
Easy. Love night life. Socializing.
Dancing. Much rather wake up late.

Alyssa selects another card.

ALYSSA
Piper, would you rather always be
slightly overdressed or slightly
underdressed?

PIPER
Love beauty all around me.

Piper waves her hands downward to indicate her clothes.

PIPER
But as you see, slightly
underdressed.

Gianna takes in Piper's appearance, raises her left hand
closes her eyes, and looks to the right.

GIANNA
I love dressing up. If I could wear
a tiara to work, I would.

Alyssa selects another card.

ALYSSA
James, would you rather have a job
you love but work long hours or a
job you hate but work short hours?

JAMES

Just as I am. Work I love, hours
not a problem.

PIPER

Me too, James.

ALYSSA

Me, three.

FELIX

Not me. But who's to choose?

Alyssa takes another card.

ALYSSA

Felix, I think I know the answer to
this. Would you rather eat out or
always cook at home?

Felix laughs.

FELIX

Home cooking is the best cooking.
Home it is.

Gianna gives Felix a look of disbelief.

GIANNA

You'd rather not eat in an elegant
restaurant? Five courses? Violins
playing?

Alyssa selects another card.

ALYSSA

Matteo, would you rather go on
fancy dinner dates or casual
adventure dates?

MATTEO

Depends on who I'm with. With
Piper, I'd prefer a casual
adventure date.

GIANNA

With me?

He reaches out and touches her cheek and laughs.

MATTEO

You pick the restaurant.

LATER - GAME NIGHT OVER

Alyssa, Piper and Gianna clean up.

PIPER
James seems very nice. Calm.
Affable. Handsome.

GIANNA
For me, it's, Matteo. Handsome.
Tall. Enjoys comfort.

Piper laughs.

PIPER
Not news, Gianna. Not news.

GIANNA
Appreciates fine dining.

Piper speaks more seriously.

PIPER
I find James interesting. An Air
Force pilot. Worldly. Educated.
Motivated.

Alyssa puts her hand on Piper's.

ALYSSA
Not to worry. I think we can expect
to see more of James. Felix calls
him 'my buddy'.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alyssa and Felix snack in pajamas and robes.

ALYSSA
What did James think of game night?

FELIX
Got a kick out of it. Liked the
crew.

Silence.

ALYSSA
Piper seemed to enjoy James'
company.

FELIX
He's likeable. Reliable, relaxed
and communicative too.

ALYSSA

Do you think he'd like to come to
the next game night?

FELIX

We'll have to find a night when we
both finish early.

ALYSSA

Any night would be fine. Just let
me know when you think might work.

Silence.

FELIX

You think Gianna is okay with him?

ALYSSA

As long as Matteo's also invited.

They put their arms around each other.

INT. ALYSSA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Clearly upset, Alyssa enters the apartment, flops down in a chair, purse still on her arm. Piper follows her.

PIPER

You'll figure it out Alyssa.

ALYSSA

Can't believe it!

Piper heads for the kitchen.

PIPER

Let me fix us some coffee.

Alyssa remains frozen in her position, arms clasped across her chest.

ALYSSA

Not for me.

Piper turns back, sits near Alyssa.

PIPER

So they want you to steer your
clients to a furniture store owned
by a friend.

ALYSSA

Seems they get a kick back when I
do.

PIPER

So no antique furniture?

Alyssa squeezes her bent arms closer to her chest.

ALYSSA

Not unless they can't find anything
they like there.

PIPER

Doesn't that leave you wiggle room?

Alyssa remains silent.

ALYSSA

Tomorrow we go and visit the place.
See what they have.

PIPER

Yes. Let's do that! And say, Lys,
not everyone is going to like what
they have.

ALYSSA

And maybe if they don't . . .

Alyssa thinks.

THE END