

from APHRODISIAC

(A Korean restaurant. A man and a woman sit in a booth. ALMA is 24 and looks her age. AVERY is 33 but stress has aged him badly.)

ALMA

It's not that it's not fair, technically it IS fair, I was supposed to have a six-month internship, until I got my degree, but it's not like they weren't happy to have me working for free after that, but now with this, it's like they don't care how it looks on my résumé, they don't care that it looks irregular, like I was doing something irregular, and I would still be there, I would still be there working for free if I hadn't mentioned something in casual conversation about my graduation in December, that's what's not fair, I would still be there if it were not for pure chance, that's what's not fair.

AVERY

You want me to call her again?

ALMA

No, no. I understand it puts her in a funny position. I want to be there, but she doesn't want to look like she's taking advantage of me. Everything is always about appearances.

(Pause.)

I'm just thrown for a loop.

AVERY

Of course you are.

ALMA

It's just like, all these things, boom.

AVERY

Right.

ALMA

And I haven't been able to get ahold of you.

AVERY

I told you, my wife is flying in tomorrow.

ALMA

I thought she was too sick to travel.

AVERY

It's the first time in I don't know how many years. She really wanted to go to that dinner this year. They're giving some award to someone.

ALMA

Jessye Norman?

AVERY

Is he the guy who was a hostage in Iran? Anyway, I guess she wants to stay for a few weeks.

(Pause.)

Sorry it's a bad time. Is there anyone you want me to call?

ALMA

Like who?

AVERY

I don't know. Another internship? Maybe a job?

ALMA

With who?

AVERY

I don't know. What do you want to do?

ALMA

I want to be a senator.

AVERY

OK, but I meant have you thought about your immediate plans?

ALMA

I've given them some thought, yes.

AVERY

Is it anything I can help you with?

(ALMA looks at him a moment, and then begins to laugh.)

AVERY

What?

(Her laughter goes on and on.)

AVERY

What's so funny?

(He's been trying to share the joke, but now he becomes concerned: people are looking at them.)

AVERY

Could you stop already?

(She is laughing and wiping her eyes.)

AVERY

Ilona, come on.

(She stops and catches her breath. She wipes her eyes.)

ALMA

I'm pregnant and I've decided to move to New York and have the baby and wait.

AVERY

What do you mean wait?

ALMA

I'm just going to wait. I'll go to museums. New York is a good place to wait. You can drink coffee – if you're pregnant you can drink herbal tea – and watch the world go by. Very fast.

AVERY

That's ridiculous.

ALMA

Fuck you.

AVERY

Hey!

ALMA

You called me ridiculous.

AVERY

I said you're BEING ridiculous. I meant you're BEING ridiculous.

ALMA

Fuck you.

AVERY

Will you stop saying that.

ALMA

You used to like when I —

AVERY

Now STOP. What's gotten into you?

(She begins to laugh again.)

AVERY

OK, I get that.

(She calms down.)

AVERY

I'm trying to say, listen to yourself. Watching the world go by? You're young. You're full of life.

ALMA

You're pretty lively yourself.

AVERY

Will you listen?

ALMA

This is much more fun than I imagined.

AVERY

You can't put a stop on your life. You can't call everything off, you can't let this — this — random — fluke — of luck —

ALMA

Careful.

AVERY

(continuous)

determine how you're going to spend the next 18 years of your life.

ALMA

How are you going to spend the next 18 years of YOUR life?

AVERY

(continuous)

Are you thinking about that? Listen to me. You have an amazing life ahead of you. You're smart.

ALMA

Oh, thank you.

AVERY

(continuous)

You're one of the smartest young people I've ever met.

ALMA

Funny how my age is suddenly a big subject.

AVERY

(continuous)

You could be anything you want in this town. You don't want to leave Washington.

ALMA

Would you miss me?

AVERY

I'm thinking about you.

ALMA

Would you miss me?

AVERY

This is going to determine your whole future.

ALMA

Would you miss me?

AVERY

That's not something to throw away out of petulance.

ALMA

Would you miss me?

(Pause.)

But enough about me. How have you been?