

Chapter 221 What Is This

"Alana, open the door. Listen to me! Just listen to me for a sec, okay?"

As soon as Janessa returned to her room and found the small box open and lying on the floor, she immediately knew that Alana had discovered what was hidden inside.

There were postcards that Eric gave her...

Though it might seem to everyone that Alana no longer cared about Eric, the truth was the exact opposite. She had kept him in her heart all this time. Case in point, Alana had never changed her phone's ringtone. It was still the song that Eric had always loved to sing.

Janessa knocked on the door incessantly, but she could hear no sound coming from the other side. Her guilt doubled.

A myriad of scenes flashed before her eyes, horrifying thoughts of Alana possibly hurting herself.

"Alana, please open the door. If you have anything to say, then say it to my face. Don't lock yourself in there. Besides, it's not what you think at all! Just please, open the door and let me explain!" Janessa's knocks turned into pounding, until she was practically slamming her weight against the door.

Just when she was contemplating kicking it down, there was a click, and the door suddenly opened.

"Alana! Finally... Listen to me. The thing is..." She reached out to take Alana's hand as she spoke, and that was when Janessa noticed the suitcase the other woman was lugging behind her.

Alana's eyes were still misty, and her cheeks sported the unmistakable tracks of dried tears.

"You don't have to explain anything. I already know." Her face blank, Alana peeled Janessa's hand off her arm and walked past her.

Janessa had never seen her friend act this way, let alone understand why. She rushed over and dragged Alana's suitcase back to keep her from leaving.

"What are you up to now? Don't do this. The thing is... The thing is, I've wanted to tell you from a while now, but I wasn't sure when he'll be back. I don't even know if he is coming back. I don't want to get you hope up but only to be disappointed in the end."

Janessa wanted for these two to get together, too, but the obstacles were just too great.

"I'm not blaming you for anything. The reason why I come here is because I was hoping he would make contact with you. I never expected that he would do so much more than that. He really can't forget you, huh?" Alana's tone was dead and cold, as if all the soul had been sucked out of her body.

Janessa didn't know this person. This wasn't the Alana she knew and loved. She acknowledged that Eric was Alana's priority, but surely she had other reasons for staying in Janessa's apartment?

Nevertheless, Alana's words hurt her.

"I know you don't mean any of this. I am at fault for keeping my correspondence with Eric a secret. Please, just vent out your anger, scream and curse at me! But don't walk away like this."

Janessa pleaded with all she had. She had done this for Alana's sake to begin with, and she had foolishly hoped that her friend would readily understand her good intentions.

Alana let out a derisive laugh. "And what do you want me to say to you, exactly?" She let go of her suitcase, and it fell on the floor with a heavy thud. Then she inched close and began poking Janessa's chest with her forefinger.

"The man I love with all my heart is in love with another woman. And not just another woman, either, but my one and only best friend. After we broke up—no, we weren't even an official couple in the first place. After Eric left, he entrusted everything he left behind to you. He sent you a box of postcards. A whole goddamn box! But what about me? What about me?! I got nothing. Are you happy to see me wallow in misery after losing him? You are, aren't you?

Do you think I'm stupid? Did you really expect us to remain friends after your deception?" Alana bit her lips to keep her tears from falling.

"I told you, it's not like that at all! Eric doesn't want you to waste the best years of your life waiting for him. If you are truly destined to be together, then you will meet again in the future."

Despite her words, Janessa had the nagging feeling that everything she said was utterly useless now. She made up a lie by herself. Now she faced the consequences directly, and she couldn't bear such pain.

"But you know how I feel about him! How can you claim that you're doing the right thing by lying to me? How dare you make decisions on my behalf, and what makes you think you're right all the time? My parents neglected my feelings and asked me to marry a man I only met once... The man I love pushed me away with his own hands... And now I learn that my best friend has been helping him behind my back all this time. Did you ever think, for one second, about what it is that I really want? Force me to accept what you feel good. How could you do this to me?"

Alana was bawling at this point. All her life, no one had bothered to ask her what she thought, what she wanted, what she dreamed of. Everyone around her just acted however they wanted, under the pretense that they were doing it for her own good.

But why should her life be decided by other people?

This was also why she was determined to set off in pursuit of the boys she had liked in her earlier year. She had only wanted to experience what it was like to choose for herself, and follow it through to fruition.

In the end, those experiences amounted to nothing. When she finally met the man she wanted to spend the rest of her life with, everyone still dismissed her and just did whatever they wanted.

"Alana, I..."

Janessa was lost for words. She was only now comprehending the extent of the pain and suffering one went through when their life was decided by others.

"I'm sorry. Please wait here for a moment." She quickly wiped her tears and dashed back into her room. She plucked something from her shelf, then hurried back outside.

"Alana, I know you won't be able to forgive me right now, but I really... No, forget it. There's no sense in saying anything now. The box of postcards you found were indeed sent to me. And these... These are for you. I don't know if you and Eric will end up with each other someday, but I hope that I'll still be able to see the lovely and cheerful Alana I know." Janessa placed another box in Alana's hands.

"What? What is this?" It was almost identical to the one she had found earlier, and it was full of postcards as well. There weren't a lot of words scribbled on them, but Alana could feel the sincerity of Eric's thoughts when he had sent them.

At the very bottom were three record books, which detailed a regular consumption rate of electricity, water, and gas. And then there was a single, small key.

"What's this?"

"That's the key to Eric's house. I'm giving it to you. From today onwards, I won't clean his place anymore. If... I mean, you can do whatever you like with it. And if one day you decide to forget all about him, you can just return the box to me."

Alana held up the key and stared at it, her distress finally easing. Seeing that her friend had finally calmed down, Janessa quietly turned on her heel and went back to her room.

She hadn't expected for things to turn out this way.

Leona had left, and now Alana was about to abandon her, too. She would be left all alone again.

'This is probably for the best, ' Janessa soothed herself. This way, no one else would be directly affected by what she had done, and by what she was about to do.

This was also the reason why Janessa was so determined.