

Chapter 222 A Friend

Janessa lay on her bed in a daze, and eventually drifted off to sleep. By the time she woke up, it was already dark outside.

She reached out and checked the time on her phone—two o'clock in the morning.

So this was how A City was at the early hours of dawn.

She had never experienced being up and about at such a time of the day. Janessa wondered if she would be able to see the sunrise later.

Her unit was located on the twenty-fifth floor, and the bedroom window happened to be facing the east.

It would be nice to watch the sunrise from the comfort of one's home.

Janessa opened her bedroom window and leaned over to gaze down the dark neighborhood. A handful of homes still had their lights on—the owners had probably forgotten to turn them off when they retired for the night.

Suddenly, a faint rumbling came from her stomach. She had been asleep for so long that she missed dinner.

Janessa tightened her pajamas and walked out of her room. The apartment was just as dark as the night outside.

It was very quiet, too. She peeked into the living room.

"Is Alana really gone?" Janessa walked over to the counter and poured herself a glass of water. She stared at the door to the guest room as she took a sip, debating whether to check if her friend had truly gone or not.

"Forget it. Let's eat first." She rummaged through the kitchen cabinet and finally found some instant noodles.

She prepared it according to instruction, then sprinkled some chopped green onion on top. Now it looked like a presentable meal.

Janessa's thoughts drifted to the past, when all three of them would have dinner together at this very table. They would never run out of conversation, and the mood in the apartment had always been bright and cheerful. Now she was left all alone, and her home was nothing more than an empty vessel.

In the end, she barely even finished half of her bowl of noodles.

And by the time she finished tidying up the kitchen, it was already three in the morning.

Janessa approached the guest room with some trepidation. She lingered in the hall for a good while before finally mustering the courage to open the door.

It was neat and tidy inside. The quilt was folded and placed at the head of the bed, and everything else were exactly as they had been when Janessa had first prepared the guest room.

As she stood in the middle of it now, a surreal feeling washed over her.

It was as though all the time she had spent with Leona and Alana were but mere illusions.

Janessa trudged over to the bed and threw herself on the mattress. Before she knew it, she was fast asleep again.

It was already eight o'clock when she woke up again.

Janessa got up and washed herself, her actions simple and methodical. She wasn't feeling quite herself just yet, but she was confident she could still take on another day at work.

As soon as she came downstairs, however, she spotted someone she had no business seeing that time of the day.

"On your way to work? I happened to be in the neighborhood for my morning exercise. Let me drive you to your office." Rylan smiled at her, looking all dapper in his svelte suit. How could he possibly be exercising in this attire?

His excuse was paltry, and they both knew it.

Nevertheless, Janessa opted not to call him out on it. Her attitude had always been like this. If Rylan could understand it earlier, he would be able to free himself from the thought of get together with her earlier.

While it was true that she didn't reciprocate his feelings, she couldn't very well deprive him of the choice to like whomever he wanted.

"I suppose this is an ideal place for a jog. I did some laps earlier myself. How come I didn't run into you?" It was a roundabout way of telling him that she recognized his white lie.

"Well, yes. I actually picked this place after hearing that you like to run. I thought I might meet you at some point. Alas, I have yet to get lucky on that front." Rylan scratched his head sheepishly. It wasn't always a good thing when a woman was too smart.

Especially if one was using underhanded tricks to woo her.

How could one hope to win someone who was always one step ahead?

It seemed that Rylan needed to double his efforts from now on.

"Okay. So don't you drive now?" Janessa found herself mulling things over. Though her two closest friends had already left her, this one person still remained by her side. He wasn't so bad to have around, even though he was a man.

Rylan walked around his car and opened the passenger door for her, and then they were off.

Janessa was focused on her phone for most of the drive, waiting for Alana to contact her. However, not a single message arrive. 'Is she still mad even after she left?

Why didn't she leave a message or something?"

With a sigh and a frown, she put away her phone and looked out the window. Rylan noticed her expression, and stifled the urge to reach out and hug her.

But he knew he had to keep himself in check. Janessa might look weak on the outside, but she was more than capable of carrying her share of burdens.

After all, she was juggling her job at Lu Group along with the affairs back at Qiu Group, and he was sure there were also personal matters she was going through at the same time.

Rylan also knew that Janessa could easily rely on someone to ease some of her hardships. Someone who was totally devoted to her, who was willing to do anything for her. And that someone was right in front of her. Even so, she still chose to keep everything to herself.

As it was, the stronger a woman was, the weaker her suitors became. They would usually falter in the face of her strength and courage, by the force of her tenacity. And oftentimes, they would drop their pursuit and flee with their tails between their legs.

But Rylan was neither weak nor a coward. No matter how tough Janessa's walls were, he was certain he could break through them eventually. He just needed more time, so he could ease in bit by bit.

And so, he pretended to be unaware of her glum mood and kept his attention on the road.

Neither spoke the entire way, until they finally screeched to a halt in front of the Lu Group building.

Rylan cut off the engine, but Janessa made no move to get out of the car.

"Did you miss me already that you want to stay with me a little longer?" he drawled, leaning against the driver's seat and grinning cheekily at her.

"What? Oh, we're already here? That was quick. Thank you so much for the ride!" Once she was back to her senses, Janessa deftly ignored his teasing and turned to open the passenger door.

"Hey, hang on a sec. There's no need to rush. Office hours begin at nine o'clock, right? It's only eight fifty-five. You still have minutes to spare."

"You sound like you know a lot about Lu Group, but you're forgetting the fact that I need to clock in at the top floor of the bulding. I only have four and a half minutes now. I'm going to be late!" Janessa inwardly huffed in frustration. 'I've been working here for so long, I already know how long it would take me to get to my desk!'

And Rylan was definitely wasting her precious time.

"I just wanted to give you one last thing. Here you go." He reached out to the backseat and produced a bouquet of flowers.

They looked so fresh that she was sure he had bought them just this morning.

So this was the reason why Rylan had appeared in front of her so early in the day.

"Oh, thank you for the flowers. I'm definitely going to be in a good mood for the rest of the day." Janessa took the bouquet and turned to leave again, but Rylan grabbed her hand and held her back.

"Janessa, I know you're feeling down. I won't ask anything, but I hope you would come to me for help if you're having a really bad time. I'll always be there for you. It wouldn't change anything between us; you can just treat me as a friend." As he finished speaking, he let go of her, and she finally stepped out of the car.

Janessa looked back and nodded in understanding. "I know. You should head back now."

And then she was trotting over to the entrance of the building. Rylan watched until she disappeared through the doors before looking away.

"I just wanted to ask you about the promise you made last time," he muttered, then sighed. "You said you would cook for me. I'm still waiting, you know." But of course, he would never be able to say that to Janessa's face. With another long sigh, he started the engine and drove away.