

Alex: Hey Zo. It's about... 4 am. I, uh, well, as you probably know, I left the last letter in kind of a bad place. Anyway, when you hung up, I couldn't get back to sleep and then Elisabeth started crying, and since I was up already, I offered to sit up with her. It's weird, as long as I'm talking, she's quiet. So, if I'm gonna talk anyway, I figure I might as well... add to the last letter, so you don't get too worried.

I'm fine, I just, uh, punched the wall. The doctors say it should be fine, but it means a new cast and I have to keep it on an extra two weeks. Oh joy.

I know you're going to be mad at me for that. Or... not mad. Disappointed. I just got so frustrated because I know I can't help you, and...and you don't really want me to. I hate that I'm the one you have to call, when you'd rather call him. I know he's got his own stuff to be dealing with, with moving and dealing with a death in his family, but... I just don't understand how he can so completely abandon you right now. And I don't understand how you can I-love him when he isn't there for you when you need him most.

[Pause]

Actually, I can, I think, because I did. But... that's not a way to live, Zoe.

I think Emma's starting to figure out, figure out what I've known for, *Dios*, forever now. Ever... ever since he showed up, and by then it was too late. You asked me how to deal with a... an unreciprocated crush, and I gave you some advice, but I think I was wrong. Because what I felt for Emma... it was nothing like this. Hiding that was... was fucking easy compared to this. It didn't invade every corner of my life until I couldn't function, until I couldn't even step outside my door without being reminded... I wish on a daily basis that you had never met him, Zoe, because of what he did to you, and then I

hate myself for wishing it, because I know he's what you want... And that's what we agreed, isn't it? Wanting you to be happy is what should get me through this. But *Dios* it's hard.

I don't know how much longer I can do this, how long I can pretend that I don't live for every single one of your letters. Hearing your voice just made it that much worse, and when you started to cry, I... I nearly broke down and told you right then and there, and damn that idiot, and damn the consequences. But if I did that, then... you don't need that on top of all the rest. You just don't... And do you know what the worst part of all this is? I can never *ever* tell you, because you'll think I'm exactly like... whatever his name was that you told me about in one of your early letters. You always hated this about me, and— and now I've gone and done it to you. *Payaso*...

[Pause]

And I'm never going to send this, am I? *Dios*, what am I doing? I'm recording you a letter that I can never send... and yet I'll never be able to delete it, because a tiny corner of my mind is wearing a tin-foil hat, hoping someday, maybe, I can play it for you and maybe you'll understand, even though I know you never will.

[Long pause]

Huh. Note to self: Never record Zoe's letters at 4 am. Because apparently you have no sense of decency at that hour.