

The Devil's Love For The Heiress by LiLhyz Chapter 22

Chapter 22: I'm Back

Carlos had the most tiring three days of his life. From Paris, his team took a special flight to Dubai. Alexander took a separate charter flight to Singapore. They went in and out of a secured hotel, only to change clothes, and then left in another vehicle.

From Dubai, they took another flight to Canada. That was the only time when he and Alexander reunited. While Carlos had an opportunity to rest in Canada, he could not sleep a wink. He was so anxious about his trip to Braeton.

The police's hunt for the members of the Bonnet gang was still in progress. Thus, to keep Carlos and Alexander safe, they were flown out of Paris at the very first opportunity. Their departure was kept a secret, and with the help of the Tennis Association, the complicated flight plans were made possible.

From the very start, the goal was to create confusion as to the exact whereabouts of Carlos and Alexander. After Canada, Alexander flew to his hometown while Carlos and his party left for Braeton.

Carlos arrived at Braeton International Airport at three in the morning, flying via private charter. He had recently repurchased the home that previously belonged to his father and had it renovated. Now, the same home where he lived as a child was back to its original state.

Arriving at the mansion, Carlos was feeling nostalgic. Memories came rushing back of when his parents were alive and when his young self ran around the gardens. Finally, his eyes landed on a particular spot where he first met Kate.

Of course, it wasn't the same. Many years had passed, and the previous owners had changed the plants around the gardens. However, Carlos had the same kind of evergreen shrub transplanted at the center of the driveway, for it was his first memory of Kate.

Standing by the door, Carlos said, "Father, mother. I'm back home." He sensed the heaviness in his chest as he hoped, "I wish you were here with me today to see what I have become and make you proud."

"Sir, I've asked the housekeeper to bring your bags to your room. You should take a rest," Oliver, Carlos's assistant, said.

Carlos merely nodded and went inside the house. He bathed and changed into a pair of comfortable clothes. He meant to go around the house, not feeling drowsy at all from all the emotions engulfing him.

Suddenly, it poured outside. It started with light rain until he heard thunder rumbling in the skies. The thought of Kate waking up at this time filled his thoughts. He went to the garage and found a sports car. Then, he drove off three blocks away.

For minutes, Carlos watched from outside the gates of the Wright mansion. His eyes were glued to the location of Kate's room. He was so fixed on observing the home's west wing that he failed to notice a man approach his vehicle.

Carlos heard a knock on the window of his car, and after rolling it down, the man said, "Mister Wright would like to see you, sir."

With a sigh, Carlos answered, "Okay." The fact that Ethan Wright knew precisely where he was did not surprise Carlos at all. His uncle, the man whom he considered his second father, probably had him tailed all along. He was that powerful, part of the reason why Carlos worked so hard to be at par with the Wrights.

"How long were you going to wait out there?" Ethan asked, seeing Carlos walk into the dining area of their home.

Carlos smiled. He greeted, "Good morning, uncle Ethan." He scratched his head and replied, "I was going to wait for the sun to come up. I did not want to wake you both, including Kate." "Nonsense," Samantha walked in, carrying a cup of hot chocolate for Carlos. "We have been waiting for you since two in the morning."

Samantha gave Carlos the cup of hot chocolate and said, "I placed three mini marshmallows. Just like you used to like it."

After finding his place in the dining area, Carlos smiled at his drink. He wasn't a kid anymore, but the thought of his aunt recalling how he used to love this hot chocolate drink as a child thoroughly warmed his heart. He stirred it well, melting the marshmallows, and drank it all down.

The three of them chatted a while longer, but soon the rain became heavier, and the thunder became stronger. Each of them looked in every direction, assessing the strength of the winds.

"The storm was supposed to arrive in the afternoon. The winds must have pushed it early," Ethan remarked.

"Kate will be down here soon. She sometimes finds herself awake when the thunder gets too loud. She would normally drink milk and wait for the rain to calm down. There are also nights when she just sleeps it off," Samantha explained.

Immediately peering at Carlos, Samantha suggested, "Why don't you go to her room and give her some comfort? You used to do that when you were younger. Go on, now. She would be happy to see you then."

"Um." Carlos did not know what to say. While the Wrights had always made him feel he was part of their family, this was beyond what he expected. 'Don't they remember how I had feelings for Kate? Or, they don't mind?'

He cleared his throat and suggested, "I don't want to scare Kate off -"

Ethan and Samantha laughed. Samantha reported, "Kate was worried sick about you. In fact, the reason we were awake at two in the morning was because she was trying to leave."

"She meant to take the five AM flight to Paris, wanting to see you," Samantha explained how Kate saw the news of Carlos' supposed hospitalization. At the end of her tale, Samantha suggested, "Go on, Carlos. Go see Kate. Give her comfort."

Carlos glanced at Ethan, silently seeking his approval. His uncle gave a nod, saying, "Go ahead. I know you would never do anything to hurt Kate. Right, Carlos?"

"I would never, uncle," Carlos quickly answered. "Then, go. Look after her, and we will return to get some rest knowing that you are watching over Kate," Ethan suggested.

Kate flinched in her sleep after a loud thunder blasted from the sky. Seeing how Kate reacted, Carlos walked across the room. He checked if all windows were closed. He also closed the curtains, hoping it would reduce the sound from coming into the same space. After doing so, he retired to Kate's side, studying her for a moment. He lay beside her in bed, his face turned to her. He reached for her cheek and caressed it with his knuckles. He whispered, "God, you are so beautiful. I'm here now, Kate. I'm back." Carlos meant to stay awake and simply watch Kate to sleep, but he was equally dog-tired. His anxiousness died the moment he was right next to Kate. Ultimately, his exhaustion kicked in. He dozed off to the comfort of Kate's scent and the confidence of knowing she was right there, next to him.

Four hours later.

Carlos shifted to the other side, his arm unwittingly stretching out to the slender frame supposedly next to him. To his surprise, his arm landed on a pillow. His eyes opened, and his head panned from side to side. He came back to lie on his back when he realized he was alone. 'Damn, I fell asleep all this time. When did Kate get up? I hope I did not scare her,' he inwardly thought. Just then, he heard footsteps rushing in, and

because he wasn't sure how Kate felt about him sleeping next to her, he acted to be asleep.

When they were in high school, sometimes he watched over Kate during stormy nights. There were also instances when they fell asleep on Kate's bed after long hours of studying together. However, things were different now.

In Carlos' view, Kate was not a young bud anymore. She bloomed into a beautiful flower, and she probably had reservations about him, considering how they had not seen each other for so long.

Much to his surprise, Kate crawled back to the bed and carefully lay her body next to him. His heart skipped a beat when Kate's arm rested on his chest; her long and slender leg made a pillow out of his thigh.

Shit.' His insides were cursing. 'How am I going to survive this?'

Carlos felt his manhood swelling. He knew he had to change his position and hide the bulge in his groin area. 'Wait, she isn't mad. Which means she isn't objecting to me being here.'

He gulped and asked, "Where did you go?"

His eyes were half closed. Hazily, he could see her face and saw how she appeared to be ashamed, blushing at the realization that he was awake.

When Kate asked, "Can you pretend to be asleep, please?"

Happiness swelled in Carlos' heart, knowing that Kate remained in his hold. He adjusted his body to face Kate. His arm tightened around her waist. At the same time, his left thigh concealed the growing erection beneath his pants. Carlos suggested, "Shhh... I'm so drained, Kate... Don't wake me up. Just stay here and be my sleeping pill." That was truthfully the case. It was just a few hours, but it was probably Carlos's best sleep in weeks.

Two hours later.

Carlos's eyes opened, the sun kissing his skin. He groaned as he made a sense of his surroundings, but soon he caught a glimpse of a beautiful girl with brown hair, studying his necklace.

He gulped, recognizing how Kate was attempting to unlock his compartment pendant. Very quickly, he seized it with his hand, and he sat erect. "I'm sorry," Kate said. "I was... I was curious. Because you always kiss that before your games. And On TV, you said that it was your mother's, but we both know you don't have your mother's ruby, right?" "What's inside, Carlos? Can you tell me?" Carlos did not reply. He combed his hair with

his fingers. Soon, his grey eyes were clear, and he was fully awake. He teased, "If I tell you, you'd have to marry me. Can you handle that, Kate?"

He saw Kate turning bright red at his suggestion. He chuckled and was about to relieve her of the awkward situation he had just created when Kate replied, "Then, tell me." "How did you -" He paused, feeling his heart race. His brows met as he wondered, 'Wait, did she just agree to marry me?'

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Chapter 23: Kate's Questions (1)

"If I tell you, you'd have to marry me. Can you handle that, Kate?" The idea of marrying Carlos for a simple answer would seem like the most sweeping solution to Kate's growing desire. She thought about it and hinted, "Then, tell me." "How did you - Wait. What did you say?" Carlos asked, his grey eyes intensely looking at her. Kate gulped and repeated, "I insist you tell me what is inside that chamber pendant." Carlos did not look away. A slight grin formed on his face, and he clarified, "Kate if I tell you, you'd have to marry me."

Kate's cheeks burned, and the butterflies in her stomach were partying. How she wanted this to be the end of her longing. She opened her mouth, prepared to accept the unusual proposal, regardless of whether he was joking. "I -"

Her stomach growled, and both Carlos and Kate stilled. "It's - it's nothing -" Kate's stomach growled again, this time louder than the last. Carlos wound up laughing. His eyes thinned, all while his grey orbs gleamed. By how he beamed at her, Kate was sent into dreamland. She could not get enough of how gorgeous he looked when he smiled.

"Let's get some food into your stomach," he suggested.

'You are... food enough,' she silently protested, but who was she to go against the loud rumbling of her stomach? It was at it again, the second when Carlos offered his hand. "You really are hungry," Carlos remarked. After Kate took his hand, he revealed, "Come on. Get changed, and I'll take you to my new home." "Your new home?" Kate asked in bewilderment. "Where?"

Standing in the foyer of the old Ronaldo mansion, Kate's eyes easily welled with tears. It looked exactly the same as it was before the bank seized the house. Kate wandered on her own until she came face to face with a portrait of Carlos' family. Manuel Ronaldo had that vibrant smile on his face as he held young Carlos in his hand. The same could be said with Agnes Ronaldo's sparkling eyes. "It isn't the original, but it's good enough," Carlos said, also looking at the picture with a smile.

Wiping the corner of her eyes, she smiled. Her head turned from one direction to another, and then she said, "I – I hate to admit it, Carlos, but maybe... maybe, you leaving was meant to be." She shifted her attention to him and declared, "I'm happy that you got this house back and that you kept your parent's memory alive." Carlos inched closer to Kate and pushed a strand of her hair behind her ear. He said, "Kate, I'm

really sorry. There is so much that I want to tell you, and I promise you, we'll get to that soon

"Mister Ronaldo, Sir. Food is ready," a young man in his early twenties said. Seeing Kate, he smiled at her. "Good afternoon, Miss Wright. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"This is Oliver, my assistant," Carlos introduced. "Oliver, this is Kate." While Kate speculated how the man knew her name, she answered politely, "It's nice to meet you, Oliver."

"You look so beautiful in person, Miss Wright. No wonder Mister Ronaldo worked so hard," Oliver remarked, making Kate all focused. "Let's go, Kate. Let's eat." Kate turned to Carlos, but he simply dismissed his assistant's comment, leading her to where their brunch was set up. With Carlos' cradling her hand, Kate completely forgot about Oliver. She was yet again on cloud nine. She remembered how Carlos used to hold her hand in high school, but this one felt more exciting. Voltage of electricity ran through her body, and her knees turned weak. Kate sighed, knowing this was exactly how she had imagined and hoped it would feel. As they walked hand in hand, she earnestly did not want her day to end. They ate by the patio of Carlos' home. The cook prepared some of Kate's favorite dishes, including spicy pork ribs and her most cherished spicy calamari. She genuinely loved her meal, and at the end of her late brunch, she said, "I loved the food! It was great!" She eagerly drank her fresh juice, and as she did, Carlos remarked, "I wish I was the food." "What?" Kate asked, missing Carlos' suggestion. A chuckle escaped Carlos' lips, and he said, "It's nothing, Kate. I said I wish I had more of the same food to offer you now."

"Oh, but I'm so full." She glared at the half-empty serving of pork and squid, saying, "There is still so much left."

Finally, when both of them had filled their stomachs, Kate and Carlos talked about his daily routine in Paris before the operation went down. At the end of Carlos' narration, he revealed, "For sure, I'll be needed in Paris again, but I don't know when. We are being careful when connecting with the French authorities. For now, all information is being relayed to the New York investigators."

"So, you'll still leave," Kate sadly implied.

Carlos nodded. He looked straight into Kate's eyes, saying, "But it's different now, Kate. The trickiest part is over, and I can have my life back."

“And I’m not yet done with my tennis career, so there is still so much traveling I’ll be doing, but this time. This time, Kate, I’ll be in touch. I won’t leave you wondering where I am and what I am doing. The old Carlos is back, I promise,” Carlos swore. Hearing his vow, Kate sucked in a breath. This was finally the time that she would ask her long list of questions. As her eyes looked down at the table, she said, “I get that you were upset with me, Carlos, and I hated how I hurt you, but did you really have to lose contact with us?”

“I’m sorry, Kate. It’s like what I said before.” Carlos massaged the back of his neck and lazily answered, “It was too painful for me to look back.”

“Did you not at least want to see if anything had changed in me? Or miss me at all? I’m sorry, but I just don’t understand how you bore it all without wanting to see me – even if you did not want to see me what about my parents?” Kate sought. “Why didn’t you return? Why did it have to take nine long years for you to come back, Carlos? Why?”

There was a moment of silence before Carlos weakly replied. He said, “I did.”

“What?” Kate sought. “I came back in the middle of my training.”

When Kate frowned, Carlos narrated, “I – I missed home so badly. It was months of feeling depressed about my decision to leave and my inability to speak with you and your parents. I was getting features games wild cards, and I realized how I could work it out – keep my contract and still see you and your parents, maybe even come home to your family every break”

“I never saw you –

“That was because that same day I landed in Braeton, I went back to New York again,” Carlos admitted

“1.” He gulped and added, “I saw you with Tyler and got so upset.”

“What do you mean I was with Tyler?” Kate asked, her voice raising as she begged for answers. “The dance was the last time I was with Tyler. You must have seen someone else –

“The Red Brick restaurant?” Carlos mentioned. “You were with Tyler on the day of your nineteenth birthday, and it appeared to me that you were... on a date.”

“Nineteenth birthday.” Kate fished through her head, trying to recall Her eyes widened in horror as she screamed the name, “Lyla! It was Lyla!”

*** FLASHBACK: On Kate’s Nineteenth Birthday (Kate’s Version) ***

“Are you sure that Tyler would connect me with Carlos?” Kate asked her girl best friend, Lyla Swan. They were on the road, with Kate’s driver taking them to The Red Brick restaurant. “I can’t stay long, you know. I have a birthday party to show up to.”

“Trust me You’ll finally speak to Carlos with Tyler’s help. Tyler’s actively playing tennis. He is already playing at a professional level. Tyler has met Carlos multiple times,” Lyla suggested

After half an hour, they arrived, and Kate entered the restaurant with a shocking surprise She found Tyler dressed up in a suit. He had flowers in one art, and he was holding up a velvet box on the other

“What what’s going on?” Kate asked, bemused

“Kate, I want to greet you with a happy birthday,” Tyler said. “Put on a smile, will you?”

“But, but I thought you came to meet me because you would help me speak to Carlos?” Kate asked

“Yes, yes. About Carlos. We’ll get to that. I just want to greet you for old time’s sake,” Tyler said, winking at her. He moved closer and offered the flowers and jewelry box to Kate, saying,

“If you don’t take it, I won’t tell you about Carlos.” Kate awkwardly received the flowers and the gift. Tyler even appealed for a selfie with the two of them, to which Kate reluctantly complied, hoping to connect with Carlos. However, after getting what he wanted, Tyler said, “Kate, you should really forget about Carlos.” “What do you mean?” Kate asked in anger. “Do you know his new number? Are you really here to help me?” “All I know is that he and Hailey... may be a thing. You should just... forget about him,” Tyler said.

“This isn’t about him having a girlfriend or not. It’s about us. We are his family. He should at least talk to us!” Kate returned. She wound up in an argument with Tyler.

In the end, Tyler left, equally agitated by Kate. It was a fruitless meeting that only made Kate upset.

That night, on her nineteenth birthday, Kate had an argument with Lyla, all because she brought her to an empty lead. Kate barely enjoyed her and her twin brother’s birthday party at the First Diamond Hotel.

In the middle of the party, Lyla bid goodbye to Kate prematurely. She said, “Kate, I’m really sorry that Tyler turned out to be a fake. I’ll talk to you when you have cooled down, okay? We are still good, right? Kate ignored her, and Lyla left.

That time, what Kate did not know was how Lyla was scheming behind her back. After making her way to the lobby of the First Diamond Hotel, Lyla took a call.

"I transferred five thousand dollars to your account. Thank you for your cooperation," said a female voice.

"No sweat. I don't like that loser, Carlos, ever talking to Kate. She deserves someone better," Lyla said back "What about you? What do you get in all of this?" "I – I want Carlos all to myself," the woman said in the other line.

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Chapter 24: Kate's Questions (2)

*** FLASHBACK On Kate's Nineteenth Birthday (Carlos' Version)

"Are you sure about this, Hailey?" Carlos asked on the other line. He was signaling a taxi, hoping to get to the Red Brick restaurant and see Kate again

On the phone, Hailey answered, "Yes. Lyla told me that Kate would be there alone I don't know why though, and I did not ask I don't want to warn Kate that you'll be there

It did not matter to Carlos, perhaps it was better that he speak to Kate alone if she wasn't at the said restaurant, he would simply go to the Wright mansion and beg for everyone's forgiveness

"Okay, Hailey. Thank you for the help. Carlos said before bidding goodbye

When Carlos expressed to Hailey how he wanted to see Kate, at first, she was reluctant. After a few more convincing, Hailey offered her help she gave Carlos some cash to add to his plane fare and contacted a few of their high school friends. That was how Hailey found out where Kate was

Carlos, at that time, was very excited to see Kate. Yet again, he was ready to profess his love for her, but as soon as he arrived at The Red Brick restaurant, his heart was crushed all over again

From where he stood outside the establishment, he saw how Tyler gave flowers and gifts to Kate through the glass windows He still felt when Kate appeared to be smiling and accepting Tyler's present

Dozens of needles seemed to have pricked into his heart that he dug against his chest. For Carlos, it was hurtful to see everything All that time, while he was away and hoping that Kate would realize his importance, Tyler was still pursuing her, and by how it looked to him, he SLICTded at it

His jaws clenched, seeing the way Tyler and Kate were taking a picture of each other. He was about to storm inside the restaurant and defend his value in Kate's life when Lyla called him

"Carlos! What are you doing here?" Lyla asked. "Are you going to disturb Kate on her date?"

Lyla scoffed and added, "Why? Are you still in love with Kate? Haha How pathetic "

"When will you learn that you are never good enough for her Look at you? And look at Kate? Look at Tyler Carlos, Kate is an heiress to one of the biggest corporations in the country She is rich highly maintained, and deserves more than what you can offer

"Tyler is better suited for Kate He is rich, and he can give Kate all her favorite jade collections What about you? What can you offer her, Carlos Tender love and care Lyla mocked him She stated, "Newsflash, that will never be good enough for someone who is as pampered as Kate Wright

"Kate isn't that kind of person," Carlos defended.

Sure, she isn't now, but the time will come when she will realize how she is used to a life of luxury What will happen if you guys elope? You'll only give her promises and dreams, never

the comforts in life that she is used to."

"You should just leave. Kate is happy with Tyler. Don't bother messing up her life."

Carlos did not know for how long he stayed there, listening to Lyla belittling him. When it all ended, he simply stormed away and took a taxi to the airport.

With a heavy heart, Carlos left Braeton City again. He was more determined to make a name

for himself. He swore to return, no longer a man unfit for Kate's social standing.

When Carlos arrived in New York, he went straight to the tennis court by his dormitory. For hours, he practiced his ball toss, not minding the time or how cold it was outside. After completely tiring himself, he screamed at the top of his lungs, all while looking out at the skies.

Carlos remembered Lyla's words and recognized that she was partly right. He could not even afford to buy Kate her favorite jades. He wanted to love and pamper Kate. However, how could he do that when he had nothing, absolutely nothing?

He swallowed down his pride, the feeling of envy and pain. From then on, claimed, “I will be... number one.”

*** END OF FLASHBACK: Back To The Present ***

“From then on, I never stopped. I only wanted to get more matches and lift my ranking,” Carlos revealed. “Every match counted. Every penny I earned was meant for something greater.”

Silence engulfed Kate. She listened to Carlos’ tale and then testified, “Carlos, I swear. I did not know Tyler would be there. And by the way, Lyla is no longer my friend. She made sure of that when she demanded to be Kyle’s wife.”

“And before that, we started to break apart as friends because she did not like how I told her she had no chance with my older brother.” With a sigh, she added, “I have realized how she was never a real friend to me!”

Kate reached for Carlos’ hand and begged, “Please believe me -” “I do, Kate. I do,” Carlos said.

Stunned, Kate leaned back. She asked, “You believe me? Then why did you not speak to me at least?”

“Back then, I honestly thought that was the truth – that you and Tyler were together,” Carlos said. “I only learned that everything was a set-up when I was given wild cards to the Professional Tours.”

“I ranked around two hundred when I was matched with Tyler.” Carlos proudly added, “I made sure he lost.”

“Sponsors requested us to be in another tournament because of our heated game. Tyler begged me to give him a chance to win. In the locker rooms, he admitted that everything back then was just for show and that it was all part of Hailey’s plan.”

“Hailey?” Kate repeated. Her face turned red in anger.

“After learning how Hailey was involved, I never trusted her again,” Carlos revealed. “Never trusted her again?” Kate frowned. She thought back about their stage kissing and said, “Well, it did not look that way when you locked lips during your birthday party months ago, Carlos?”

Realizing how she had spilled the beans, Kate covered her mouth with her hand. She looked away, weakly saying, “I um. I happen to be there and figured I try to talk to you. Then I saw Hailey, and you kissed on stage.” “That, too, was a set-up, Kate,” Carlos disclosed. “It was Hailey who kissed me. I never kissed her back.”

“I realize you were there, and that was Hailey’s objective – to push you away and make you think we were in a relationship, but we aren’t, Kate. That was a show that Hailey orchestrated.”

Carlos explained how he was just bearing Hailey, including William, back then. He reminded her about the contract he prematurely ended with his former manager. Then, he supplemented, “I was already involved with the police and the tennis association’s covert operation, so I had to minimize personal contacts. That and... I was working hard to be number one. I would not stop at nothing to be number one, and I want to remain on top for at least two years.” “Why are you so obsessed with being number one?” Kate weakly asked. “You have already achieved so much.”

“Because... Because I want to make my parents proud. Especially after learning how my father died while trying to make a stand in tennis. I want him to be remembered all over again. Even if it was through me. Then, of course, I wanted to make uncle Ethan and aunt Sam proud of me too... Lastly, I wanted to be the man that is well-suited for you, Kate.”

“I want you to be proud of me. I want to be that man who can provide for you and give you the luxury and comfort that you are used to. For not being comparable to Tyler, I hated myself. Kate, back then, if I was to end up working for uncle Ethan, I would merely be a shadow under your family.”

“I did not want that, Kate. I wanted a name for myself, and I wanted to earn millions of dollars, be famous, be respected and looked up to so I can be good enough to stand alongside

you.”

Kate gasped. From where she sat, she struggled to open her mouth, her head adding it all up. When her lips parted, she clarified, “So, partly, you did this for me?” Her eyes landed on Carlos, waiting for a confirmation. She asked, “Why?” Of course, she had an inkling, but she would rather hear it from Carlos. Her heart was beating so fast at that point, but she patiently waited for the answer she longed to hear.

Carlos rose from his seat. He stood in front of Kate before going down on one knee. Turning her chair to face him, he finally said, “Because I love you, Kate... I always have, and I always will. I never stopped loving you.”

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Chapter 25: Finally, My Kate

“Because I love you, Kate... I always have, and I always will. I never stopped loving you,” Carlos said, his grey eyes looking straight into her blue ones. Everything around Kate stilled. She could not believe her ears. Silence engulfed her, and all she could hear

was her heart beating. 'He loves me. All this time, he still loves me?' Kate lazily stood up. She gasped, all while following Carlos' gaze. "Kate," softly Carlos said. "Say something."

Seeing the worried look on his expression, Kate leaned closer, her hands crawling up to his chest. She said, "Carlos, I." A heavy sigh left her lips before she clutched her hands against his shirt.

Then, abruptly, she tipped her toes and pulled Carlos down, her eyes closed unwittingly, and her lips crashed into his. She felt the tenderness of his lips, but just as she kissed him, she noticed how Carlos froze in his stance. She looked at him for half a second, studying his reaction. Before she knew it, however, Carlos captured her lips, his arms wrapped around her waist.

Kate felt chills down her spine, tasting Carlos' lips for the very first time. It started with small and gentle pecks, with Carlos biting on her upper lip. She welcomed the warmth of his breath and the way his lips moistened her own.

With Carlos' arms tightening around Kate's waist, he lifted her from the floor and settled her to sit on the table. He did so, breaking off the kiss for only a second. Swiftly and with dreamy eyes, he returned to savor her lips, and Kate willingly accepted.

Kate's hands slid to his neck, hinting how she equally wanted him. Carlos' tongue easily slid inside her mouth, and their tongues danced. When Carlos' kiss became demanding, she kissed back with the same passion. She did not care about her amateur kisses. Kate simply wanted Carlos and nothing more.

Finally, out of breath, Carlos pulled away, his forehead resting on Kate's, his hand behind her neck. He repeatedly gathered air into his lungs before asking, "Do you want to... go inside?"

Kate nodded. She watched as Carlos heaved, his face turned a shade darker. Carlos helped her to the floor, and in the next, they walked briskly in silence, going past the living room and the mansion staircase until ultimately entering Carlos' bedroom. When Carlos slammed the door shut, Kate walked up to him first, kissing him with the same fever as they did on the patio.

This time around, being within the four corners of Carlos' bedroom, their kisses became louder. They took small steps while their lips remained locked and landed their bodies on the enormous bed, their frames bouncing as they fell. On the bed, Carlos took the lead, kissing Kate while on top of her. Kate merely kept him secured, her arms around him tightly. The couple did not know for how long they kissed, but when it was over, their lips numbed, and they swelled from all the lip biting they had done.

Carrying his weight, Carlos pulled back. He watched Kate blush beneath him, her eyes only manifesting adoration for him. Warmth spread through his chest, still in disbelief at

how he was there, having kissed Kate. Plus, because it was Kate who kissed him first, Carlos was over the moon. He whispered, "Kate."

Kate's chest was huffing. Hearing him call her name, she went for another peck. Her eyes closed while she was at it.

"Kate," Carlos called again. "Please tell me you feel the same. I have wanted you so long and badly; I don't know if this is all real."

Hearing his words, tears stung Kate's eyes. She caressed his cheek and said, "I love you, Carlos. I realized when you left how much I miss you. Every day, I longed for your return. You have no idea how this – "

Carlos captured her lips again, not caring that they had just ended a very intense make-out session. From then on, moans left their lips. Again and again, their heads carelessly turned from side to side. Their bodies rolled for Kate to take over.

The couple was laughing as they entered the Wright mansion, hand in hand, already past midnight. Kate was red as a tomato, while Carlos reminded her of how they met when they were kids. "You used to hate me."

"That was because you threw a tennis ball at me," Kate reminded.

"You walked in the middle of my practice. You just came out of nowhere!" Carlos pointed out.

"And then you made it up to me by gifting your father's David's Cup trophy!" Kate laughed, recalling how shocked Manuel Ronaldo was, seeing Carlos walking out of their home, carrying his supposed peace offering. "Well, you wanted something shiny," Carlos shrugged as he pointed out. "Your dad's face turned white ghost back then," Kate described. "But you still got to keep the trophy," Carlos reminded. Kate smiled at that. She admitted, "I did. Didn't I? Uncle Manuel was just so kind." "Well, you two are getting comfortable." Their giggles died down when they saw Samantha standing in front of them, her arms crossed against her chest.

Samantha's eyes easily wandered to their hands, and she beamed seeing Carlos' and Kate's fingers intertwined. With her hand over her mouth, she acted to be emotional, faking a cry. "Oh, my god."

She turned to the staircase and called for her husband, "Ethan! Ethan! I have great news!" "Kate and Carlos are together!" Samantha revealed.

The truth was, the couple had not covered their status just yet, but Carlos meant to put a name to their relationship, especially after making out from afternoon till night. Carlos tried to explain, "Ah, aunt -"

"They are getting married soon!" Samantha suggested. Kate wound up turning bloody red at her mother's assumptions. "She's probably pregnant too!" Kate's mother added. 3
Carlos gulped.

"Mom!" Kate's flushing face easily paled.

At Kate's bedroom door, the couple was still laughing at Samantha's assumptions. Naturally, Kate clarified that there wasn't any baby, which greatly disappointed Samantha. Kate said to Carlos, "It's just that... mom is set on making you a son-in-law."

"You know how she tends to be so excited when wanting something," Kate added.

Carlos became silent. He just studied Kate closely. Caressing her cheek with his knuckles, he asked, "What about you, Kate? Don't think about what aunt Sam wants. What do you want?"

Kate could not help it. Her face burned at Carlos' probing. She averted his gaze, looking down for a moment. Eventually, she faintly replied, "I." Returning her attention to him, she clarified, "I want to be with you, Carlos." "I love you," she confessed. Carlos gasped. He smiled, nearly teary-eyed. Embracing her tight, he said, "I have loved you for so long. I'd never imagined your admission would come out this easy." He pecked her cheek and said, "I love you, Kate."

"And I love you too, Carlos," Kate repeated.

Carlos reached for her hand and pecked on her palm. He asked, "Then... Will you, Sarah Kate Wright, be my girlfriend?" At that point, the butterflies in Kate's stomach had a disco. Like Carlos, Kate could not believe this was finally happening. After all the years they had been apart and longing for his return, he was certainly back, and he was right there, in front of her, asking her to be his girlfriend.

A tear escaped the corner of Kate's eye as she answered, "I'd love to, Carlos."

Carlos embraced Kate tight. He kissed her head, her face, before decisively letting go. He said, "I better go. Otherwise, I won't be able to leave. We still have to go out tomorrow. I'll pick you up at six?"

After Kate nodded, he kissed her lips again and pinched lightly on her chin. He said, "Goodnight, my Kate. Finally, you are mine." That night, after seeing Carlos go, Kate excitedly dug up her box of memories. When she found her "Carlos" diary, she made

another entry. (Dear Carlos, I thought I lost you forever, but now you are back, and still, you love me. I am glad beyond

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I love you. I love you. I love you. And now that you are mine, I will forever make up for the times I made you leave my side. I still have to marry you, though. Oops! You still don't know that, but from now on, I promise never to let you go.

And when we say our "I Dos," then, finally, I could say that dreams do come true.

Love,

Kate]

The next day, Kate and Carlos went out on an official date.