

The Devil's Love For The Heiress by LiLhyz Chapter 4

Chapter 4: Nine Years Ago

*** FLASHBACK: Nine Years And Eleven Days Ago.***

“Kate, coach is taking me to a junior tennis tournament tomorrow. It’s sponsored by the school. Do you want to come with me?” Carlos walked into Kate’s room while she was trying on a new dress. He whistled at the sight of her, and he flushed, knowing what the dress was for. “Is that for the year-end dance?”

Kate and Carlos were still eighteen at the end of their high school days. They had always gone out together for the year-end school dance as friends throughout high school. Carlos was Kate’s male best friend, and she also had a girl best friend named Lyla.

Carlos was sixteen years old when he became part of the Wright family. This happened after his father and mother died. Because of his father’s debts, Manuel Ronaldo’s house was sold to the highest bidder. Social service was supposed to take Carlos’ custody, but Kate’s parents opened their home for him.

The Wright family was not a stranger to Carlos. After all, they were neighbors. Carlos’ old home was three blocks away from the Wrights. Kate and her siblings had been friends with Carlos since they were kids.

Hearing Carlos ask about the dance, Kate bit her lip, and her eyes tightened. She awkwardly replied, “Carlos, about the dance -”

Before Kate could resume, Carlos’ eyes landed on the new bracelet around her wrist. He asked, “You bought another jade?”

Kate gulped. She looked down at her beaded bracelet and reluctantly replied to Carlos, “This – this was a gift from Tyler.”

Noticing how Carlos fell silent, Kate reminded him, “You know I like jades. I can never say no to Tyler!”

“By the way, he asked me to the year-end dance and.” She pursed her lips before admitting, “I said yes.” With a shrug, she added, “For a change? We will still go home together.”

She tried her best to be careful with her words. When they were seventeen, Carlos had admitted to Kate how he liked her. However, to Kate, she saw him as her best friend and nothing more.

Kate saw how Carlos gulped. His chest heaved, and he folded his arms across his chest. Carlos looked down, appearing to be hurt by her decision. Stuttering, he said, "You've always liked Tyler... You like him because he ranked number two in junior tennis tournaments."

"Hey, you introduced me to him at your practices," Kate said, trying to put the blame on him. "And you would have won tournaments if you had gone to them."

"I don't have the money, Kate. It's not like they pay for the plane tickets or the hotel stay for the tournaments," Carlos reminded her. "The school only sponsored nearby matches."

"Dad can help you -"

"Uncle Ethan has done enough for me. He let me stay here, and he paid for my tuition. I don't want to bother him with my tennis," Carlos cut her off.

"I can talk to dad, and I'm sure -"

"No, don't, Kate. Don't," Carlos replied weakly. "I'll... I'll find my own way."

An awkward silence stretched between them, but soon or later, Carlos asked, "Kate, will you ever... see me more than just a friend?"

Kate's skin crawled. She earnestly cared for Carlos, but she did not know the answer to that. Kate loved being around Carlos. She loved him as a friend. He made her smile and was her constant companion from school to home. Kate felt attached to Carlos, but she did not feel that spark, that tingle in her stomach when their hands touched.

She found herself attracted to Tyler, Carlos' tennis rival at school. Tyler had the looks. He had a well-defined body. He was tall and with dirty-blond hair. Plus, he was really charming and confident.

To Kate, Carlos was just Carlos. He was not a charmer. Carlos did not talk to others the way he did with Kate. He did not dress to impress, and he followed a strict routine. He went to school, to tennis practice, and then he went home. Carlos rarely socialized, and this was because he would instead serve his uncle Ethan and aunt Samantha with whatever they needed at home.

To Kate, Carlos was one of her best friends, and she did not see anything more to it.

It was because Kate did not reply that Carlos answered for her. He said, "Your silence says it all -"

"Carlos-"

"It's okay, Kate. I understand." He turned away without saying more.

In the days that followed, Kate noticed how Carlos avoided her. Once, she saw him speaking with Hailey Mckenzie and her father at school, but when Kate asked about it, he suggested it was nothing.

On the day of the school dance, Kate was expecting him to come with her to school. They spoke in the living room when he snorted and replied, "I will not be your third wheel, Kate. Anyway, Kaleb will be there. Enjoy the dance."

Kate thought her best friend was still upset, but as soon as she turned her heel to the mansion's doorway, he felt Carlos embrace her. The hug was tight and warm. Something in his hold made Kate's heart skip a beat.

Carlos said, "Take care, Kate. I want you to be happy, always. Goodbye."

In the end, Kate attended the dance with Tyler but did not enjoy his company. His jokes weren't amusing, and just when she thought she could relate to Tyler more, he was so arrogant that she became irritated by his presence.

When Kate returned to the mansion, Carlos was gone. Since he was already eighteen, he was free to leave without the consent of Ethan and Samantha. He merely left a note, saying he wanted to pursue his career in tennis. He thanked the Wright family for their love and support. Carlos promised one day to return the favor.

Days later, Kate and her parents found out that Carlos left with the Mckenzies that same night at the dance. They fled to another state where he would train to be a professional tennis player.

At first, Kate was just angry, and her entire family was, but soon, Carlos' absence became so felt that Kate acknowledged how she missed him. The pain kicked in, and Kate went in and out of a state of woe. She regretted losing her best friend.

Over time, Kate conceded how much she felt for him and that perhaps her constant need for Carlos' presence was not merely because of friendship but love. Sadly, her realization arrived too late.

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

After narrating it all to her parents, Kate sniffed her tears away. She softly said, "He loved me."

"We knew," her parents expressed in unison.

"We all knew, sweetie," Samantha stated while embracing Kate. "You also loved Carlos, but you were too young to recognize it."

“You thought so?” Kate asked, leaning back.

“Tell me, Kate. How can we correct this?” Kate’s father spoke. He suggested, “I can rig his next match to catch his attention. I can have him kidnapped if you want to.”

Kate’s mouth fell open. She chuckled as she replied, “No, dad. Don’t. That’s terrible.”

She took a deep breath and told them about her recent trip to the big apple. In the end, she said, “I think he is happy now.” She rolled her eyes at the mention of the name. “With Hailey Mckenzie.”

“After that trip to New York, I have decided to let it go,” Kate said. “I’m done. After nine years, I am done.”

Samantha embraced her tighter. Her mother suggested, “Don’t worry, sweetie. There is a reason for everything. You’ll find your one true love soon. When the time comes, we will just laugh about this part of your past.”

At that moment, Kate told her father about her plans to leave the company. Ethan and Kate had a back-and-forth exchange, but she insisted on what she wanted in the end. Kate argued, “I need this. I need this change, and I really like fashion. The Wright Diamond Corporation had not invested in such a field, dad. This new job is more me.”

“Then let’s start an apparel company,” Ethan suggested.

“But dad, I need experience.” Turning to her father, she pleaded, “Please, dad. Besides, we both know it takes time to start a new business. At least, through this company, I will gain the needed experience. And when I am ready, we can start a clothing company or maybe a jewelry company.”

With a sigh, Ethan surrendered. He responded, “I hope this will make you happy, Kate. You can give your brother your resignation. I’ll tell him to approve it.”

Continents away, a man was standing at the glass window of his hotel room, thinking of someone. He received word from his assistant, “Sir, she accepted the job offer. I shall draft the contract. For how long do you want the contract to be?”

The man smiled at the thought of this person. He answered, “The contract is forever.”

“Eh, pardon, sir?”

Chapter 5: New Job

Two months passed.

Kate was driving herself. She took a left turn from their mansion and went past an estate dear to her. It stunned her to see workers around the property when she perfectly recalled how a family of four lived there.

A frown formed on her face. She found herself parking right in front of the gates. Rolling down her window, she asked, "Are the Smiths having a renovation?"

The two workers carrying materials to the gates looked at each other, puzzled. One replied, "We don't know the Smiths, miss. We were employed by a certain." The worker pondered and replied, "Someone named Donald. Yeah. Donald."

"The house is empty. I think this Donald is the new owner," said the worker before he and his colleague excused themselves.

Kate stared at the home that formerly belonged to Manuel Ronaldo, Carlos' father. She sucked in a breath, recalling how Carlos had always wanted to buy the house back, but then again, maybe his plans had changed.

Giving the property one last look, Kate muttered, "I guess it was never meant to be."

She drove away, heading to her new workplace, the CSK Apparel. It was her first day on the job.

Kate's new office was humbling compared to the Wright Diamond Corporation, but she understood. It was a new company that was still at the stage of designing its products. The entire company occupied two building floors from one of Braeton's highest skysrise buildings.

She settled in at her new desk, looking at the designation on the glass door. It read Kate Wright, Marketing Director.

Yes, her role was to put the products out there. Today, she was going to get a complete orientation of the different products that will soon be available in the market, and from there, she and her team would map out the marketing plan.

"Miss Wright?" A female attendant came knocking at her door, calling her attention. "You are needed in the main conference room. You, the directors, and the design team will be there to discuss the first line of products."

"Certainly, lead the way," Kate answered with a smile.

Kate was introduced to all directors, including the CEO of the company. The Human Resource Director, Arman, earlier explained that the company was shared by three owners. The lady, Catrina Ross, who introduced herself as a CEO, was only a stand-in.

“Directors, today, marks the completion of our team of executives, ending with Kate Wright, and it is because of this that two of the company’s major shareholders would like to see everyone today. I believe their flight will arrive any minute now in Braeton City,” Catrina announced.

Learning that she would meet the owners of the company made Kate smile. She wanted transparency in her new workplace. Although she was told that the owners had planned to reveal themselves eventually, meeting them sooner boosted her decision to work for CSK Apparel.

Catrina continued to express how everyone was vital to the company’s success. After thanking everybody for their presence, the design team presented the first set of products.

“Today’s generation of wrist watches are different,” Raffa, the design director, said. “They are sporty, and for women, they spelled of luxury.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, introducing to you our first product line. We have jade wristwatches for men and women in various designs. They are made of combined stainless steel, pure nephrite jade, and some pieces with gold in it, too.”

Hearing her favorite gemstone, Kate’s eyes were already rounding. She may very well be her new company’s avid customer. She could not help but remark, “God, I love jade.”

“And the brand?” Raffa said, “will say much of one of the owners. Introducing, RonaldoPlus.”

Kate was drinking from her bottle of water when Raffa revealed the brand. She choked on her drink and repeatedly coughed, catching the attention of many. After clearing her throat, she asked, “ex – excuse me? The brand is RonaldoPlus?”

“Yes, Miss Wright. All the watches will have RonaldoPlus as the brand. We will also introduce men’s sports apparel, and it will have RonaldoPlus as a brand too,” confirmed Raffa.

“Ronaldo.” Kate coughed. “Sounds familiar.” She faked a chuckle and sought, “That would not be... the one we all know of, right?”

She caught the CEO and Raffa grinning. Raffa stated, “I guess Miss Wright is not yet aware of the company’s owners.”

“I believe only three of the directors are aware.” Catrina smiled at everyone before disclosing, “Well, as long as we can keep it inside these doors, we will reveal the company’s shareholders. And! No one must know that they will come to see us today. This was their specific request.”

“The first shareholder of the company is Alexander Jenkins. Yes, Mister Carlos Ronaldo’s practice partner,” Catrina revealed, and at that very moment, Kate was already feeling her heart race.

‘If Carlos’ practice partner is a shareholder of this company, then -’ Kate could not finish her train of thought, for Catrina gave away the answer.

“And the biggest shareholder of the company is none other than Carlos Ronaldo, also known as, The Devil in court,” Catrina grinned at every executive, suggesting, “Isn’t it exciting? It’s not every day that we get to work under superstars.”

“And Carlos and Alexander are coming here today to welcome everyone!”

While Catrina was pumping everyone’s excitement, Kate’s face paled. She was in her seat, repeatedly swallowing air down her throat. Kate had already given up on Carlos. How was it she got employed in a company that he started? What will she do now?

“An – and what about the third shareholder?” Kate unknowingly asked.

Catrina turned to Arman, the Human Resource Director, seeking the answer, but when he shook his head, the stand-in CEO said, “That name has yet to be revealed. I don’t know her yet, but from what I heard, she is Carlos’ girlfriend.”

Kate’s face turned white. She was this close to wanting to puke! If she would see Hailey Mckenzie soon, there was a need to cancel this employment ASAP!

She was planning in her head, deciding what to do. When her senses returned, Kate clarified, “Do – do they know us? The new directors?”

“Not yet, Kate. That is why they had made the rash decision to fly to Braeton and meet all the directors.” Catrina giggled. She suggested, “I can tell you are star-struck, but leave that kind of reaction for later, Kate. We still have work to do.”

“And... only Carlos and Alexander will be coming?” She sought. Kate was not ready to see Hailey at all. She probably could bear to see Carlos, but to see the two of them being lovey-dovey might make her lose her cool.

“Yes, Miss Wright.” Catrina’s acknowledgment gave her a bit of relief. Maybe, just maybe, she could pull through that day.

‘Maybe this was better. I could finally get my closure.’ Kate’s mind wandered to the thought of seeing Carlos for the rest of that afternoon’s meeting. Will her questions finally be answered? Was this even real? Or will this be another fail?

The following product line was sports apparel. Those did not come as a surprise to Kate anymore. Sportswears reflected so much of Alexander and Carlos, and with the latter

marking it with his name, Kate was confident the products would hit it off. Everybody loved Carlos.

'Especially Hailey Mckenzie,' Kate reminded herself. It was her way of not getting her hopes up for the near meeting of Carlos Ronaldo.

Hours passed, and Catrina said, "Oh, I think they are finally here. I have a miss call from Mister Jenkins."

Catrina's assistant left the conference room with the task of receiving the two major shareholders of the company. While the assistant was gone, everyone in the same room waited impatiently. Kate, for one, was feeling her heart drumming against her ribcage. Her gaze remained fixed on the door, bracing herself.

The double doors of the conference room opened, and two tall and gorgeous men walked in, making everyone gasp. Kate was about ready to faint.

Chapter 6: In Front Of Carlos

Kate's hands turned cold and sweaty. Everyone was standing up, waiting for the doors to the conference room to open. Again and again, she swallowed her own spew. She did it so many times; that she felt her tongue become paper dry.

How the doors opened played in slow motion in Kate's view. The first person to enter was a tall man with pale skin. He had long and curly blond hair, and he had beautiful green eyes. Alexander smiled at everyone, greeting, "Hello, everybody. It's nice to see you."

The next thing Kate heard was the sound of another man's heels against the tiled floor. She gathered air into her lungs profusely as the door to the conference room further opened. Finally, Carlos walked in. He wore a business suit that stretched nicely against his broad shoulders and chest. He had one of his hands tucked inside his trouser pocket, and his grey eyes scanned the room.

Kate could not deny how he looked breathtaking. Carlo's hair was fringed up. A few strands fell into his eyes. His skin had that tan, healthy glow that she always loved. After ogling at him, their eyes met. They remained to stare at each other a second longer, with Kate especially held captive by his grey eyes.

"Mister Ronaldo, this is our newest Marketing Director, Miss Kate Wright." Catrina turned to Kate, introducing the tennis superstars. "Kate, this is Carlos Ronaldo and Alexander Jenkins."

Half a second passed before Kate managed to speak. She said, "It's nice to meet you, Mister Jenkins and Mister Ronaldo."

Kate quickly averted Carlos' gaze while Catrina introduced the other new director. She did not know how Carlos would react, and she was not ready to see it, either. Aside from Arman and Raffa, there was Molly, the store director. Once the products were reproduced, it was Molly's job to operate the upcoming boutiques.

"And that completes the team of executives," Catrina said. "We also have the design team with us today because they were the ones who presented the first line of products."

"It's nice to meet everyone," Carlos spoke. "Starting an apparel company was part of my dream, and each of you will be a vessel for CSK Apparel's success..."

'Was it? Or was it mine?' Kate thought, but then again, if the products mostly catered to men, then perhaps, it was also his.

She listened attentively to Carlos welcoming all the executives while she maintained to look elsewhere. The following person to speak was Alexander. Whatever he was saying, it wasn't sinking into Kate's head. All she could hear was the wild beating of her heart.

After all the welcome talks were over, Carlos invited everyone to another gathering. "Shall we all have dinner as a team? Somewhere private?"

"Yes, we are just two blocks away from the First Diamond Hotel. They have the best restaurant in the city," Catrina suggested.

Kate noticed an awkward pause from Carlos. The said hotel belonged to her father's company, after all. However, ultimately, he replied, "That would be great. I expect everyone to be there. No exceptions and no excuses."

Just as Carlos said that, Kate swore she felt his burning gaze on her. She was about to confirm this when Catrina proposed, "Great! I'm sure Miss Wright can secure us the best space at the restaurant."

Raising her chin, Kate nodded and replied, "I'll arrange it."

Everybody was preparing to leave the room and prepare for their special dinner with Carlos and Alexander when the door suddenly swung open. A woman with long and wavy honey hair entered the conference room. It was Hailey Mckenzie. She was chasing her breath as she said, "Oh, good! I made it!"

At that very moment, Kate felt her chest tightening. At the sight of Hailey, she clenched her jaws. She thought, 'Of course, she would be here. She must really be Carlos' girlfriend.'

In that very few seconds, she connected the dots. Carlos' girlfriend was the third owner of the company, and she must have come to welcome everybody too.

"Hailey, what are you doing here?" She heard Carlos ask the woman next to him.

"Yeah, how did you get here?" Alexander also asked.

"Well, Kendra mentioned you would be here, so I came! I flew all the way from New York!" Hailey replied. "The security knows me, so they let me in. The other staff knows me too, so here I am."

As the three exchanged words, Kate looked away the entire time. She heard Carlos excusing himself, and he exited the room with Alexander, Hailey, and Catrina.

Knowing that they were gone, Kate slammed back into her seat. She exhaled deeply and covered her face with her palms. She knew she had to think this through, and thus, she shifted her gaze to the HR director, saying, "Arman, I'll arrange the dinner at the hotel, but I don't think I can come. I'm not feeling well."

"Ah, but Miss Wright. I think you should come with us. I don't-"

"Excuse me, Arman. I'm really not feeling well," Kate said, without waiting for another objection. She rose from her seat and went to her office.

After fetching all her belongings, she clocked out and left the building. While driving, she called the First Diamond Hotel and made reservations. She concluded the dinner would have to go on without her. Kate wasn't prepared to see Carlos and Hailey having sweet moments during that gathering. She would rather not get the chance to speak to Carlos at all.

For half an hour, Kate drove aimlessly around the city. She just wanted time to think. Eventually, she made it home, and as soon as she entered the living room of their mansion, Kate screamed, "Ahhh! I can't believe what I had gotten myself into!"

She regretted not letting her older brother dig deep about the company's owners. Kate was satisfied with the company profile, its financial statement, and all the legal documents. Not to mention, they had begun operation six months before her arrival. When she came for the formal interviews, she felt right at home. Arman, the HR manager, made her feel incredibly welcome.

"Ahhh!" She nearly pulled her hair out of frustration, but before letting out another scream, she saw her mother, Samantha, walking out from the direction of the library. Kate said, "Mom! You can't believe what just happened to me today. I met -"

"Carlos is here," her mother interrupted.

“What?” Kate froze in her stance.

“Carlos is here,” Samantha repeated. “He is talking to your father inside his study. He arrived looking for you around twenty minutes ago. He seemed... very concerned for you.”

“Say that again, mom,” Kate requested.

“You know, Carlos Ronaldo? The man you have been trying to get over with? The same boy who used to be your best friend? The reason for your tears two months ago -”

“I get it, I get it, mom,” Kate cut off her mother.

“Well, he is here, and it looks like you two will finally be able to talk,” Samantha revealed. Her eyes shifted toward the stairs, and then she suggested, “Fix yourself. Dry those tears. Re-apply your make-up and wear something a little sexy.”

“Mom!” Kate reacted.

Samantha shrugged and said, “It might help with the conversation later. Who knows! Go!”

Kate dashed to the stairs, but when she thought her mother was done, she heard Samantha say, “And when you talk? Show a little of your cleavage!”

“Mom!” Kate opposed.

“Just a suggestion!” Samantha said back.

Moments later, Kate was finally standing in front of Carlos Ronaldo. He was leaning against the frame of her bedroom door, his grey eyes looking straight into her blue orbs.