

Charlotte and the Seven Frat Brothers |

Chapter 10

Natalia.Cumbler

Is that.....

Ashanti.Anthony

Yeah they are in the library smiling in each other faces.

Natalia.Cumbler

I mean I don't like the bitch because she is out to get my man, but Wolf is not to be trusted in anyway. Ashanti go intervene or something.

Ashanti.Anthony

Uh fuck no! She must stop being so gullible and trusting ppl.

Davina.Gonzales

I am with Ashanti on this one. She must learn the hard way.

Natalia.Cumbler

BRB bitches.

Wolf.Ballard

???

Wolf.Ballard

Got your minions spying on me now?

Natalia.Cumbler

I honestly don't care about you. We are over remember. I chose Chase. Get over yourself.

Wolf.Ballard

So why are u worried? Please enlighten me.

Natalia.Cumbler

Just leave her alone Wolf, you will cause one hell of a ruckus on campus, like you didn't do enough damage at the bonfire already.

Wolf.Ballard

We are just studying in a public place. Don't worry I won't fuck her in the back of the library by the encyclopedias—that's our special spot. I gotta go study buddy just came back to the table. Also, tell Ashanti she has been spotted.

Natalia.Cumbler

Fuck you!

CHARLOTTE

I wait around after my English lit class to get my papers from Professor Graham. I don't want to wait until tomorrow to head over to her lecture room. Standing outside her door, I'm greeted by none other than Mr. Wolf himself.

"Hey." We hug. "How long have you been waiting out here?"

“Umm.” I check the time on my phone. “About twenty minutes, and it’s killing me not knowing what I got.”

“I’m sure you passed. We’ve been working on it for a week. I believe you got this.”

“Thank you so much—”

“Wolf.” Darren walks up patting him on the back a little too hard if you ask me. “And Charlotte.” He pulls me into a hug. “Crazy, how I always see you two together. Are you two dating?” He looks at me.

“No, of course not,” I quickly say.

I get it. I have been ignoring the guys more now that I was hanging out with Raven and Wolf. It’s just that things seem easier to be with them than with the guys.

I wasn’t staying at the frat house anymore, so I guess that makes it much easier as well not to communicate with them. Our school schedules were different, yet they always found me—except Chase.

It was like having six older brothers watch your every move.

“Hey. I got to go, Charles. See you on the field, D.” Wolf walks off. He’s annoyed, and I don’t blame him.

“Are you guys going to do this every day?” I huff, taking my phone out sending Wolf a sorry text, and I will let him know what I got on the papers. They would always interrupt my conversations with Wolf.

I get he is a player, a scumbag, and a guy I shouldn’t be messing with, but that’s the thing, I am not messing with him. I know Wolf isn’t to be trusted, and I’ve known that since freshman year of college.

A girl in my ethics lecture was devastated when she discovered he wanted no relationship with her after they finally hooked up.

That right there was a red flag for every girl on campus to not get emotionally involved with him. I know better. I just hate that they can’t see that.

“Are you going to hang out with that dipshit every day? If so, then yeah, but first since when do you let that dick call you Charles?”

“Darren—”

“Miss Withers,” Professor Graham opens the door. “You may come in now. Oh, nice to see you, Mr. Reed. I haven’t seen you in a week. Is everything alright?”

“Yeah. Everything is great. My sleep pattern is a bit messed up, and I’ve just been super busy.”

“Really? I just thought—”

“Yeah, umm, maybe I should get going.” He scratches the back of his neck. “Charlotte, stop by the frat house tonight. Me and the guys miss you.”

I don’t know if it’s just me, but the way these two are acting seems like a strange encounter one would have with a one-night stand. Professor Graham is in her late thirties, but looks like she is in her mid-twenties.

She is very attractive so I can see why something might happen between her and a student—yet it’s illegal if she did.

However, because of all the romance novels I read, I am sure there is or was something between these two. I clear my throat.

“I will have to take a rain check on that. I made plans with Wolf and Raven tonight.”

“Sure, you did. We’ll see you tonight.” He kisses my cheek and walks off.

“Sorry about that,” I say to Professor Graham and she gives me a tight smile before ushering me into her room. Hands down, Darren Reed slept with Professor Graham. I know that look from anywhere.

I’ve read about it and seen it on TV. She is smitten with him. Why, oh, why? It’s like I get pulled into their mess, whether I like it or not.

“No worries—so you are here for your paper?”

“That would be correct.”

I passed.

I want to see Wolf and Raven right away, but I owe it to the guys to see them first. It’s been weeks since I’ve been at the frat house, let alone seen the guys.

Standing in front of the house door, I’m second-guessing everything. Like why am I here? What will I say to them? Even more, how are they going to react to seeing me here?

Before I can knock, the door opens and a giggling black-haired girl stands in front of me. I take in her appearance, and I know she’s one of the guys’ flavor of the day.

Her hair is tousled, her shirt is inside out and she has that look on her face. She finally notices me and smiles.

“Charlotte, right?”

“Uh, yeah. I’m sorry—who are you?”

“Juju. Everett’s new girlfriend.” As on cue Everett walks up behind her, kissing her neck. “Everett, we have company.” She giggles again, stepping forward.

He looks up. “Charlotte, what a pleasant surprise.” He moves to the side of Juju. “No luggage?”

“Umm, I am not moving back. I just came to stop by. Darren insisted, and I thought I owe you guys that much. Is everyone home or is it just you and,” I look over at his girlfriend, “Juju.”

“Everyone is here. Are you sure you want to come in?”

“Everett, I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t want to come in.”

Juju smiles at me, moving aside. Hmm, she might come in handy one day. I watch as Everett stares at her, but says nothing. Aw, looks like someone has finally met their match, so to speak.

Entering the house feels like déjà vu. I hear talking coming from the living room and walk in that general direction. It was like the first day here, only they aren’t studying but lounging around.

“Guys, look who has made an appearance,” Everett announces, standing beside me. They all face us slowly. See, I was thinking they would be overly excited to see me, but they aren’t. It’s so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

“Charles, you’re here,” Austin says. “Didn’t think you would actually show. We have been trying to get you here for almost two weeks or so.”

“I know.” I roll my eyes at his tone. “I thought all of your pestering would come to an end, but seeing that I made a new friend, so to speak, you guys weren’t going to leave me alone.”

“You know if you would move back in, our pestering would come to a complete stop.” Everett places his arm around my shoulder.

“Not happening.” I shrug his arm off.

I walk into the living room, contemplating where to sit. The only seat available was next to Chase, who was perched on the edge of the couch, holding his cell phone and scrolling down his screen.

I decide against it and sit on the armrest of the couch next to Vincent. I stay silent as I watch the guys figure out if they want to continue the conversation or just want to talk about something else.

As the seconds pass by, it's getting more awkward. My laptop pings in the bag. That sound means I've received an email from the school.

"Hey, I'm going to check my email in my old room." I could have just checked it here or in the kitchen, but I want to see what they did with my room. Was it still the same or not?

"Sure, you know the way." Vincent pats my thigh. "We are heading for a jog anyway."

"Yeah," Darren stands up. "Just put the slam lock on the door."

"If you still have your key, just lock up." Miguel stands up next, followed by everyone else.

"Will do." I clutch my laptop bag and head upstairs. Upon entering the room, I notice male clothes scattered around the floor.

A few opened condom wrappers in and near the wastebasket. They have officially turned my old room into their personal shag pad. I debate whether to sit on the bed or the computer chair.

I take the chair and slide my laptop out of the bag.

"Uhm...you should take the bed."

"Why?" I look up, surprised to see Chase in the doorway.

"That chair has been through a lot." He taps the doorframe walking away to his room.

"Wait. What?" I take a second to process his words before jumping up like my ass is on fire. "But the bed!" I run into the hallway.

He stops his body halfway in his room. "What kind of guys do you take us for? Your bed is your bed. No one would dare fuck on someone else's bed, which is a golden rule. Also, it's just fucking gross."

He walks into his room, closing the door.

“Oh,” is all I can say, and head back into the room. I wonder why he is being so distant. It’s like one minute he is this cool guy I can see myself hanging with and falling for and then the next he can be a real fucking brute.

My laptop pings, dragging me from my thoughts.

To: Charlotte.Withers@walsh.edu

From: Dean.Grey@walsh.edu

Date: Tuesday, September 26, 1:50 pm

Subject: RCA

Dear Charlotte Withers,

I have set a meeting with you and Professor Duggan to meet me today at three o’clock this afternoon. If you can’t make it, please contact me ASAP to reschedule.

However, I hope you can make it, as this is regarding your application status with RCA.

Best Regards,

Dean Grey

Frowning at the email, I shut my laptop and look at the time.

1:56 pm.

I call my mother, hoping she hasn’t made it to the restaurant yet. The call goes straight to voicemail. Damn it. Raven is in class for sure, so I can’t talk to her.

The guys left for a jog and talking to Wolf about this was a no-go. Why couldn’t I have more friends?

I hear the water in the bathroom turn on.

Right! Chase is still here. I could just talk to him.

Absolutely not. He doesn’t want to hear my problems.

I should just try, maybe he would understand. Before my nerves and mind get the best of me, I knock lightly on the bathroom door, laptop in hand. No response, so I knock again.

There is no way he jumped into the shower that quickly. I knock again this time louder. The door opens and a shirtless Chase wrapped only in a towel, stares at me.

Oh, mama.

“Yes?” He looks at me, with a raised eyebrow.

“I-I-I need someone to talk to. I got an email from the Dean—never mind.” What the hell was I thinking? “Sor—”

“Give me a minute.” He closes the door in my face, and I hear the shower turn off. A few seconds later he opens the door, still shirtless, but now wearing basketball shorts riding dangerously low on his...

Up! Look up, Char! A knowing look flashes across his face as he stares back at me.

“Shall we?” He’s trying to hide a smile.

“Right?” I turn around blushing. We take a seat on my bed, and I show him the email.

“What does it mean? Did they decide not to take applicants this year? Ohmigod, what if they don’t want me?” I am a rambling mess right now.

Chase takes my chin and lifts my head so his blue, blue eyes are looking into mine. I hate that I can’t figure him out. I don’t know what to say, do or think with him looking at me like this.

He leans in towards me, and his eyes move to my lips—he is about to kiss me. My ovaries can’t take this.

“You have nothing to worry about. You are an amazing cook and you come from two well-known chefs. RCA would be stupid not to let you in.

“Not only for your last name but the talents, brains, and beauty you have. Just go see what’s up, and then let me know, or not.”

He speaks slowly and his voice is barely above a whisper. I can’t break eye contact. I’m not sure what my face looks like but I’m sure it’s torn between embarrassed and/or mesmerized.

He stands up quickly, walks into the bathroom door, and the shower turns back on.

Did that just happen?

Sweet baby Jesus.

Upon entering the dean's office, I text Raven, telling her to meet me on the great lawn in an hour.

I'm not sure how long this will take, but I want to at least give myself some time alone if I hear the news that will put a damper on things.

Dean Grey opens the door, stepping aside. Professor Duggan is already here, sipping on a cup of what seems like coffee. She sends me a warm smile.

"So, ladies, I have summoned you both regarding RCA. Since last school year, Professor Duggan and I knew by a landslide that you were the only student who was going to the academy next year.

"However, someone has submitted their application this morning. I was just as shocked as you are right now, Ms. Withers."

This can't be happening. Someone waited this long to turn in their application. What kind of shit is that?

"Who is it?" I ask, seeing red.

"I am not at liberty to say. I do apologize for this, but with a new competitor in the mix, RCA is having a bake-off next month." He shuffles around on his desk, looking for something.

"Charlotte, darling. Look at me," Professor Duggan coos at me.

"I know how much this means to you, and I want you to know if you need my help perfecting any dishes, you let me know. If you need advice you can come to me. I'm here to help you, you know that?" She squeezes my hand gently.

"Thank you, Professor."

Dean Grey finally finds the paper and hands it to me.

"CONGRATULATIONS!"

"You've made it to The Ultimate Bake Off! On behalf of the organizing committee for RCA, we want to welcome you to the 2016 event! We look forward to seeing you in San Diego, CA, November 9-15!"

"COMPETITOR PACKET: This document is the official competitor packet with your category-specific Appendix for the RCA Bake Off."

“Please read this document thoroughly as it contains important rules, regulations, and information about your upcoming competition. While the entire competitor packet is important, the following is among the most crucial...”

My eyes become blurry as I continue to read on. Everyone on campus who’s in the culinary major knows how much this means. And maybe that’s the problem. Someone wants to take my dream away from me.

I wipe the tears from my eyes. You got this, Withers! Like Chase said, it’s in my blood!

“COMPETITION STRUCTURE

“The RCA Bake Off is a live-event, fast-paced food competition where invited culinary students compete in a culinary challenge against the elements, each other, and the clock.

“To be eligible to compete, a student must receive an invitation from RCA or one of its official sponsors.

“Our competition is a three-day event with 21 students in a battle for the best recipe development, hand skills, and execution.”

“Charlotte?” Dean Grey draws my attention. “I know this is hard for you, and I’m truly sorry. It happened so suddenly, but if it’s meant to be, it will happen.”

I look over to see Professor Duggan nodding her head.

“Thank you for such kind words. I think I should be going now. I want to read this entire packet carefully before calling my parents. Thank you again.” I stand and exit. I text Raven.

Charlotte

Hey, change of plans. I’ll catch you later on this week. Something came up.

I don’t wait for a response. I quickly make my way behind one of the big oak trees surrounding the building and cry. This isn’t fair.

An hour later, I walk back to the frat house with puffy red swollen eyes. I see no cars out front, which means I’m here alone, and I need that right now.

I couldn’t drive home under these conditions and every now and then my eyes would blur from unshed tears.

My mother finally called me back and told me everything would be just fine. I had to do my best, and that's all that matters.

In her words, RCA is just a school and that school was just a label to land a job anywhere, but I had the Withers last name and that held more weight than RCA.

Sitting on the living room couch, I open the carton of Blue Bell's Homemade Vanilla Ice Cream and watch my go-to pick-me-up movie, *The Backup Plan*. Halfway through the movie, I'm literally in tears.

"Nothing ever goes according to plan, right, JLo?" I say to the television. "Guys are just so stupid and cooking, cooking is just as stupid!" Tossing my head back, I let out a cry again.

"Bad news, huh?"

I sit up straight looking at all the guys in the doorway. Wiping the tears quickly I stand. I try to hold on to a neutral face, but seeing all the guys staring at me, I know I will fail miserably.

"Someone else put their application in." I bite my bottom lip, fighting back the tears.

Vincent moves first, quickly wrapping me in his arms. I don't know who was more shocked, me or his friends. This was new.

His sweaty scent fills my nostrils and for the second time today, I feel like I belong here. He pulls back slightly and looks down at me.

"Chase told us. We came bearing our best techniques and whatnot to cheer you up."

"No girls, please." I groan, leaning my head onto his chest.

The guys laugh, and I can't help but join in.

"Alright, you two, break it up!" Darren cuts between us, taking my hand. "I want to go first..."

Next Chapter

Continue to the next chapter of Charlotte and the Seven Frat Brothers