

# Charlotte and the Seven Frat Brothers

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### CHARLOTTE

The knock on the door startles Skyla and me. It is around seven in the evening, and I know the guys are probably still out with Creepo.

I look through the peephole and see Chase. Oh no. I can't have him here and Skyla.

I don't trust her just yet with a secret like this. She slept with Jasper. She probably has fallen for his charm or whatever.

I open the door slightly, and just as I expect, he bursts through the door—not only him but the whole gang—carrying lots of pizza boxes.

"Did you guys not eat?" I ask, taking a huge step back from Chase. He looks at me funny, and I look over towards the living area. "I have company."

"Hi," Skyla walks into view. "I'm Skyla Savage." She gives a short wave and smiles.

"Hello." Darren is the first to speak. "Darren Reed at your service."

"Nice to meet you, Darren."

"Umm Charles...can I talk to you and Chase in private?" Everett clears his throat, and my stomach drops. I don't know why, but my heart is beating at a rapid pace.

All I can think about is the whole Chase-cheating-on-me thing. I want to get to the bottom of it, but right now with Skyla here doesn't seem right.

"Umm...can it wait? I have company."

"No, I think you guys should talk. I can keep her company." Darren waves his hand in a shoo motion.

"Which one of you is Tristan?" Skyla asks.

"That will be me." He winks. "What have you told her, Charles? All good things, I hope?"

"This is Skyla, your boss." I elaborate before he makes an ass out of himself. Which isn't hard, but I want to make it clear to all the guys who she is.

“Boss?” He whistles. “I don’t think I’ll be able to work with you around.”

“Dude, she isn’t a piece of meat,” Austin chimes.

“How about we take these pizzas to the living room and eat? Also, get to know Ms. Savage.” Miguel doesn’t wait for anyone to answer and walks off. He must be starving.

Everett heads towards the back, where my bedroom is. Chase and I follow behind him, and my heart is beating so fast, I think I’m about to pass out. Whatever they are about to tell me, I know I am not going to like it.

We get into the bedroom, and I close the door behind me. Turning around and facing these two made my heart ache. They look like children who just lost a puppy or something.

“What’s going on you two?” I manage to ask, despite the lump in my throat.

Chase exhales profoundly and looks over to Everett, who just did the same thing. I’m shaking at this point. My palms are getting sweaty, and my heart is damn near beating a hundred miles a second.

“Guys?”

“Charles, I don’t want you to think I don’t care for you or have little to no respect for you because I do,” Everett stutters. “I was upset, and that’s no excuse for what was going through my head.”

He runs his hand down his face.

“What Everett is trying to say is that...” Chase can’t even get his words out.

“Did you cheat on me, and Everett is covering for you?” That’s the only thing that comes to mind. “Are all the guys covering for you?”

“Cupcake, I would never cheat on you, but I lied.”

“About?” I fidget with the hem of my shirt, trying to relax my nerves.

“About—please don’t run away or tell me you don’t lov—”

“Just spit it out, Chase!” I inhale and exhale. Nothing is helping to calm my nerves right now.

“I caught him sleeping with Juju,” Everett rushes out, and my heart feels like it’s shattering.

“You what?” my voice cracks.

“I didn’t have sex with her. I don’t know how I ended up in bed with her in the first place. I swear, Cupcake—”

“You lied to me, both of you! I asked you Everett...I—I asked you, and said nothing. You—you couldn’t...”

“Please don’t cry, Cupcake.”

“You don’t tell me what to do.” My lip trembles. “You are supposed to be my husband one day, and you do—do this? Do you like to see me cry...do you all like to see me cry?”

“Charles...” Everett pauses, and I can’t believe there is still more. “I came up here intending to sleep with you. To get back at Chase for—”

I slapped him hard and didn’t miss a beat, hitting Chase too.

I promised myself on the plane ride to New York that I wouldn’t keep running away from my problems, and I would stand my ground, but this right here is so hard.

I trusted them, I believed them. I would have, and I am doing anything in my power to help them out...

“I’m sorry, Charles. When I got here, and I saw you I knew you didn’t deserve this. You didn’t deserve to be in the middle of my anger towards Chase. I fucked up, and I know it—”

“You two are the worst—just like Raven. Just get out.”

“Cupcake...I didn’t sleep with her, I swear. We were fully clothed when I woke up. I wouldn’t do that to you...I love you.” His voice cracks and so does my heart.

“Then why lie on the phone with me? I know what I heard, and you still lied to me when I brought it up. You tell me you fell asleep to some fucking chick flick. I know I heard a female say your name, and you still lied to me.”

My vision is getting blurrier by the second. “And of all people, Juju. The girl can barely keep her legs closed to a guy. And Everett, how could you? You destroy our friendship over Juju as well. I can’t believe you two.”

They both reach out to me, and I quickly step back, wiping away my tears. “Please, just leave.” I walk to the other side of the room. I feel his arms wrap around my waist.

“Cupcake...”

“Don’t touch me! Just get out, Chase!” I scream.

Next thing you know, they are all in my bedroom. I don’t want to look at any of them. I don’t want them to see me cry. I wasn’t a crybaby. I wasn’t this weak anymore, and now look at me.

I should’ve stuck to my rule of no guys. I wouldn’t be in any of this. I wouldn’t have my heart torn to pieces over and over again. It’s like they want to hurt me.

“What the hell is going on?” Austin looks at me and then Chase. “You guys told her?”

Oh God, I think I am going to vomit. “You all knew?” I look at them, and their faces say it all. I don’t fight back any tears any longer. “You all knew, and no one thought to tell me.”

“Charles, it wasn’t that easy,” Vincent speaks up.

“Well, this isn’t going to be easy either.” I keep wiping my eyes. “I don’t want to speak to any of you—for a while at least. Just leave me alone...please.”

“Charles, I can say this for everyone when I say we are very sorry,” Tristan says.

“No...I don’t want your sorries, leave!”

My voice is louder and stronger this time, and they get it. There is nothing they can say that will make me want to sit and look at their faces knowing what they hid from me.

I love all of them dearly, but this is going to take some time. They say their goodnights and leave my room, and the only person left standing there is Skyla, with the look of pity or sympathy on her face.

No need to hide it now. If she was here to spy on me, then she got all the information she needs to go back to Jasper, Ember, or whoever sent it.

“You can leave too,” I whimper, lips still trembling.

“Sweetie,” she walks towards me pulling me into a hug. “I don’t need to know.” She pats my back as I cry on her shoulder. “I’ve been in your shoes before.”

“Why are you so nice to me? Are you here to spy on me? Did they send you?” I step out of her arms.” Breathing heavy. “Just tell me the truth.”

“Spy on you? Sweetie, I am twenty-eight years old. Single and have a two-year-old sister now in my custody—I don’t have time to be childish.

“I genuinely wanted to know you, and of course Tristan, but I am not here to spy on you. Are you in trouble?” She looks at me with concern now.

"I'm fine...thanks for tonight. I'd rather be alone, and I'll see you on Monday."

"Charlotte..."

"I'll be fine...thank you for caring, but I need to be alone," I say, wiping my face.

"Okay." She looks around the room, grabbing the pen and paper from the nightstand.  
"Here is my number, and you call me if anything, okay?"

I nod my head, walking to the front of the penthouse with her. She gathers her things and hugs me tightly.

"Whatever you are going through, you will overcome it. You are such a strong woman from what I can see, and very much loved by those seven guys. I've never seen men run so fast before until you screamed.

"You don't have to forgive them right away, but don't do or say anything while you're mad.

"Trust me you can destroy a lot of relationships that way, and the words you say you can't take back. I'll see you Monday. Remember to call me if you need me."

Once I close the door, I feel empty and alone. My vision gets blurry again as I make my way to the bedroom. Turning off the light, I crawl into bed, and for the first time, I cry myself to sleep.

Wishing for better days to come and the heartache to fade away.

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My feet hit the pavement over and over as I run. I push myself to go faster and harder. Kanye West's "POWER" fills my ears, and I continue to run the path.

I look down at my watch. It's 8:40 in the morning, I've been running for almost an hour.

November mornings in New York City should be a crime, but the freezing cold weather, I know, pushes me to run my best.

Last night still feels like a dream to me. I don't want to believe it. My trust with the guys is all I had if anything, after the whole Raven debacle.

When I was younger, it was only Raven and me. I wasn't a fan of getting to know other people, opening yourself up to others just to get hurt wasn't how I wanted to live my life.

The less people knew, the fewer chances of me getting hurt. So I thought.

Raven was the ultimate snake. I didn't think someone I was so close to would have it in them to do such a thing. I guess at the end of the day people will befriend you and lie just for their personal gain or benefit.

I don't think Raven became my friend with ill intentions, I do, however, believe that throughout us growing up she gained them and just wanted to use me.

I forgive her in some strange way, but I'll never forget the damage and pain she caused me.

As the song comes to an end, I take a breather. I lean against a tree and watch as other Central Park runners pass by. Morning jogs here won't be so bad, but the travel is a pain.

I didn't know whether I wanted to take the train or an Uber. Seeing how early it was, I opt for the Uber and most likely will be taking one back. I take my phone out scrolling for a new playlist.

Going for Top 40 Hits, I begin to jog for a few before picking up the pace. Justin Bieber's "Sorry" song plays next, and as if fate wanted this to happen, I spot Chase the same moment he spots me.

I look forward and keep running, pretending I didn't see him. Stupid JB song. I don't look to my right...I refuse to look.

He has fallen into step with me. I am the type of person who believes music is the key to the soul.

Music has always been an escape for me at times. While cooking, I've always played music because it just does it for me. So, running beside Chase with this song playing is a sign. In my world.

He doesn't attempt to talk to me and vice versa. We run listening to our own music. I push myself a little harder, and he catches up with ease.

I jog off the path once more to take a breather, and Chase continues to run a little more before jogging off the trail as well, bending down to tie his sneaker.

The song comes to an end, and my head snaps to a voice.

"...how long is she going to be running for?"

I look to see the other six frat brothers off the trail, catching their breaths too. Everett elbows Miguel when he sees that I spotted them as well. Miguel looks at Everett and then follows his eyes.

“Hey, Charles,” he waves. “Beautiful morning for a jog.”

I roll my eyes. “Are you guys spying on me?”

“Umm, no. We like jogging, too.” Tristan responds in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Right...” I’m not buying it, and they know it too. “You don’t have to watch over me. I am fine.”

Vincent scoffs, and I raise my right eyebrow at him. Rolling my eyes at him, I flip him off. Turning around to jog off, I collide with Chase’s rock-solid chest.

His scent surrounds me like a security blanket, and I can feel myself being pulled down under. I take a step back, and his hand instantly wraps around my wrist. Goosebumps immediately cover my entire body.

“Are we done?” he asks, and I don’t know how to answer this.

“Chase. Now isn’t the time nor place to talk about us. I told you I need time.” I sigh.

“I’m talking about running. Are we done running?” He clears his throat.

I look to the ground. “Oh,” I need to make a smooth recovery, but there is nothing. I jumped to conclusions...something I should work on.

“Yes, I’m done running.”

“Guys, we’re done,” he says, and I can hear them rejoicing. For a bunch of guys who are supposedly athletic, they sure don’t act like it at times. It was an hour run. “What are you doing?”

“Uber.”

He takes my phone, saying cars are waiting for them, two park exits back. I don’t argue this time because I would rather not spend my money, and I know he would put up a fight if I did so.

Chase and I quietly walk behind the guys as we make our way back. Finally, three all-black SUVs come into view, and the guys fill into two of them. Chase leads me to the empty one.

He opens the back door, and I slide in. He looks like he is contemplating getting in or not.

“Cupcake, I know you’re pissed off with the guys and me, and we are going to give you the space you want to figure out your next move. But don’t think that we will ever fail to be around to protect you.

“If you want to jog alone, choose an afternoon jog or the building’s fitness center. Your safety and happiness are my main concern.” He looks me straight in my eyes, and the pull is there again.

I want—no, I need him, but all can’t be forgiven just yet.

“Have a good weekend, Cupcake.” He closes the door, and I watch him walk to the SUV behind mine.

The rest of my day I stay in and read. Jasper surprisingly has some good reads. Snuggling deeper into the plush couch, a knock on the door stops me from flipping the page.

Searching around for something to bookmark my page, I grab the remote placing it inside. I stand up, slipping the robe back on, tying it around the waist.

“Miguel?” I look through the peephole.

“The one and only, now open up.” He taps on the door again.

“I said I don’t want to see any of you for a while.” Slowly I open the door and then try to close it. “Are you alone?”

He pushes at the door. “Yes, I am alone.”

I let the door go, and he strolls in like he owns the place.

“Why are you here? Did Chase or Everett send you?” I walk back to the couch. I miss its warmth already.

“Charles.” He plops down on the couch next to me. “I might be Chase’s right-hand man, but I would catch a grenade for ya, jump in front of a p—”

“No...a solid no from me.” I pick the book, tossing the remote at him. “What’s your deal?”

“Can your favorite brown man not stop by and chitchat?” He looks over at me.

“No, he can’t. You lied to me, just like the rest of them.” I tell him.



“No, I didn’t. I didn’t even know the whole situation until last night at the restaurant. I just can’t go running my mouth if I don’t know the full story—that would have caused bigger problems.

“So technically I should be forgiven, if anything. Chase and I almost fought after that little stunt you pulled.” He smiles. “Not saying what just happened to you isn’t serious. It is.”

“I am sorry about that. I didn’t know what came over me. I was going to do one thing with the information and the next thing you know I was responding to emails and booking a flight.

“You know I would never do anything to intentionally hurt you or the guys.”

“And you know we would never do anything to hurt you.” He takes the book from my hand. I protest, but he just shakes his head no. He dog-ears one of the pages, and I think I just died.

Placing the book on the coffee table, he turns back to me. “Let me ask you something, Charles. Do you love Chase? Like, are you in love with him or love the thought of being in love with your childhood crush?”

“How do you know he is my childhood—”

“I know almost everything when it comes to Chase. We tell each other a lot. So, which one is it?”

“I’m in love with him.” My voice cracks, and I know if we stay on this topic long enough, I’m going to cry.

“How do you feel about Everett?” he asks next.

“Umm...I care for him just like the rest of you guys. You all are like family to me. I love you guys,” I tell him, not really sure where this conversation is going.

“Okay, so I need you to do something.”

“Miguel, I’m not going to talk to them right now. I need my space,” I snap. Of course, they must have sent him to get me to talk to them.

“Whoa, there spitfire. I wasn’t going to say that—well not today, anyway. I was just going to say, can you cook us dinner and I’ll take it back to our apartment? Since you don’t have—”

“Miguel! I know you didn’t come up here for dinner?” I toss my head back in laughter. “Why are you always hungry?”

"I just didn't come up for dinner... I actually wanted to check in on you too. Stop laughing... Charles, seriously, stop laughing." He tosses a throw pillow at me.

"Okay, okay." I smile at him. "The answer to your dinner question is a strong no as well."

"Charles, seriously?"

"Yes. I'm not rewarding Chase or Everett. If you guys give me my space as I ask for the rest of the weekend, I'll consider having a sit-down with Chase and Everett on Monday."

During my morning jog, I came to the conclusion that I would speak to the guys on Monday.

"Are you expecting somebody?" Miguel asks.

"Huh?"

"Someone just knocked on the door." He stands.

"Oh no, you don't. I didn't hear the door, and you are not about to let the rest of them in here. No dinner tonight or tomorrow." I rush to the door before he lets them in. They think they're so smart.

"What are you talking about? The only person who knows I'm here is Darren, and someone did knock," he says.

I don't believe him and open the door. I wasn't expecting it to be Jasper on the other side. Holding red roses and a box of pizza. He smiles when he sees me, but it doesn't stay like that for long when he sees Miguel.

"Jasper, what are you doing here?" I ask.

"I thought you would like to celebrate your first week of work."

Miguel steps behind me, and his voice gets much more profound and stern. "Thoughtful of you, but she's good. But I'll take that."

He reaches out and takes the pizza. "I don't have any use for the flowers, so you can toss them. Have a blessed day."

Miguel is usually respectable and whatnot, but not today. He does the unthinkable next and closes the door in Jasper's face.

"Miguel, you just can't do that! Move out of the way. He is my boss." I place my hands on my hips.

“Exactly, your boss. Yet he is here trying to weasel his way into your panties. No boss stops by to celebrate a person working for a week. And you didn’t even work a week.” He pauses, inhaling the pizza.

“Let’s go back to the couch.”

“Miguel,” I push him out of the way and open the door. “I’m sorry—” Jasper was gone, but the roses were left in front of the door. “Miguel, look what you did.”

I pick up the roses and close the door. “I am going to get in trouble for sure.”

“I’ll take these too.” He takes the roses and walks into the living room, placing the pizza on the coffee table. “This guy is a real piece of work.” He says, walking into the kitchen now with the roses, tossing them into the trash.

“Hey! What is your problem?!”

“You seriously can’t be this naïve, Charles. You lived with seven guys for months...you should know the game when you see it. He wants to fuck or something of that nature.

“And he’s Chase’s brother. Don’t get mixed into that shit.” He takes a seat back on the couch.

I follow behind him, taking my seat. Miguel isn’t usually like this—I don’t think I’ve ever seen him this way. He is often laid back and chill about everything.

So maybe what he is saying has some truth in it, or he is just a very overprotective friend.

“Fine.” I grab a slice of pizza as he turns on the TV.

“Don’t believe you, Charles. It’s never that easy with you.” He bites down on his slice. “Jasper is crossing the line already with you.

“I get that you resemble Lily, but that’s not an excuse for him to be doing this. If it’s not work, you stay away from him?”

There goes that name again. “Lily. I’ve heard her name before. What’s the story there?” I sit straight up.

“Not my story to tell, but she passed away in a car accident. Jasper and Chase’s relationship basically ended around that time.

“I think Chase only talks to his family about his trust fund and Autumn. Just promise me you will stay out of this—whatever it may be.” He shifts his body towards me.

“Autumn? Who’s that?”

“You should have gone to school to be a lawyer or at least a detective...you got a question for everything. Stop being so nosy. I’m not answering any more questions.

“If you want to know so bad, kiss and make up with Chase, and you will get all your answers.”

Of course. “Fine. I will stay out of it.” I pout.

“Sadly, I don’t believe it, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.” He leans back against the couch and watches TV. “Another mess you will need us to help you clean.” He says as if I always need their help. I do, but I don’t.

“Are you leaving anytime soon?”

“Not a chance, Charles,” he looks over at me and smiles. “I’ll be out of your hair when you go to bed for the night. I share my apartment with Darren and Austin. Need I say more?”

He rolls his eyes. “And I still don’t feel comfortable with Jasper’s pop-up.”

“Figures. However, don’t you pop up here tomorrow, because I’m not letting you in,” I joke.

“If you say so, Charles. You love my company—everyone loves my company. I’m lovable like that.” He turns back to the TV.

Miguel is right—I do enjoy his company out of all the guys. He is so relaxed and chill, but also someone I can confide in. He is like the brother I wished I had from the start.

Next Chapter

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