

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 56

Since she was already here, she deserved a fair shot.

When Eleanor glanced over, Charlotte lifted her chin and met her gaze with cool confidence. There wasn't a hint of fear in her eyes.

Shirley was practically holding her breath, terrified that Charlotte's homeroom teacher might also want her gone.

Everyone seemed on edge, waiting for the next blow, when Eleanor finally spoke up.

"We need to know what really happened. She should at least get the chance to explain herself. If she did something wrong, she'll be punished, but if she didn't, it's not right to blame her."

As soon as Charlotte heard that, a subtle smile played at the corners of her mouth. There's no point explaining yourself if nobody cares what you have to say. But if someone actually listens, maybe it's worth it.

"Ms. Adams!" Bald Lee, used to getting his way, couldn't believe a new teacher would stand up to him like this. His face went dark. "Do you even know what you're doing?"

The threat hung there, unspoken. Did she want to keep her job at this school, or not?

Eleanor understood exactly what he meant. She knew he'd make things hard for her. But she wouldn't just stand by and let a student get expelled for something she might not have done.

"Charlotte, can you tell us what happened with the snake?" Eleanor's voice was gentle as she turned to her. "Just tell the truth. If you weren't involved, I'll take care of it."

Charlotte straightened her back and answered calmly, "When I came back from lunch, the snake was already in my desk. I was worried it would bite someone, so I put it in a bag and threw it in the trash. I didn't think it would get out and bite someone."

"That's not true!" Winnie shot up, her anger barely contained. "If it wasn't you, then why was the snake in your desk? And why did it bite me and not you?"

No matter if Charlotte brought the snake herself or if someone else put it there, Winnie was convinced it was her, fault Mr. Lee had already told her to leave. How could a girl like her go after Olivia? She must be out of her mind.

Charlotte just laughed, a hint of sarcasm in her smile. "If you want to know

why the snake was in my desk, maybe you should ask the snake she said, totally unfazed. And as for why it bit you and not me... maybe that's something you should be asking yourself."

Winnie froze, clearly thrown off. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"There are so many people in this class. Why did the snake only go after you?" Charlotte raised an eyebrow, her cool, pretty face lighting up with a confident smile.

The whole class turned to look at Winnie. She'd been the farthest from the trash can, yet somehow the snake had come straight for her.

"I heard snakes are super intuitive. They don't hurt people unless they feel threatened," someone whispered.

"Maybe Winnie has some weird energy that set it off? Why else would it only bite her?"

"Have you been reading too many fantasy novels? That's creepy." A couple of kids shuffled away from Winnie, leaving a gap around her like she was contagious.

Eleanor took it all in, then glanced around the room. "Did anyone see anyone near Charlotte's desk today?"

Everyone shook their heads. It had been lunchtime and the classroom was empty.

There was no evidence proving

Charlotte didn't bring the snake, but

nobody could explain why the snake

had bitten her either. Eleanor*

found herself lost in thought.

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 57

"Mr. Lee, Charlotte says she didn't bring the snake. Maybe it's all just a misunderstanding," Eleanor said, trying to keep things calm. "Can't we just let it go?"

"Let it go?" Bald Lee looked like he was about to explode. Being called out by Charlotte in front of everyone had clearly gotten under his skin. "A student got bitten. How are we supposed to let that go? Ms. Adams, you're still young.

You have no idea what a problem student can do to a class." He shot Charlotte a sharp glare. "If you let her stay and she causes even bigger

trouble next time, are you taking responsibility? Is the school?"

His words were harsh and direct. Charlotte glanced at Eleanor, who looked uncomfortable, then lifted her eyes, her voice slow and steady. "I already told you, I didn't bring the snake."

Bald Lee snorted. "You say you didn't. Prove it." He clearly didn't think she could.

Charlotte didn't flinch. "If I prove it, you'll apologize for accusing me. Deal?"

Bald Lee's face twitched, his big body stiffening. He grunted, "And if you can't, you're out. Right now."

"Fine," Charlotte said, her eyes turning cool.

Without another word, she walked over to the security guard, reached right into the

bag he was holding, and calmly pulled out the snake.

The guard's eyes went wide. "What are you doing?"

Charlotte held the snake by its head and walked straight toward Bald Lee. He practically tripped over his own feet backing away, his legs shaking. Seeing him so scared, Charlotte almost laughed. She gave the snake a little shake. "Hope you're not about to go back on your word, Mr. Lee."

Everyone stared in shock as she reached into her pocket, pulled out a small black sticker, and stuck it on the snake's head. Then she turned and headed for the door, the snake dangling from her hand.

Right then, Andrew and Parrish strolled back from lunch. They stopped dead in their tracks, faces going pale.

"Oh my god," Parrish yelled, darting behind Andrew and peeking out, his whole body tense at the sight of the snake.

Andrew backed up too, biting his lip, his eyes locked on Charlotte's calm face. For a second, he wondered if she was even real. Was she really just a regular girl?

Charlotte didn't say a word to them. She walked outside, down the steps, and tossed the snake into a bush.

Bald Lee, still flustered, rushed after her and barked, "Charlotte, you're destroying the evidence! What if it bites another student?"

Eleanor hurried over as well, but instead of scolding Charlotte, she immediately checked if Charlotte was okay. "Are you hurt?"

"I'm fine," Charlotte said, giving her a quick smile. She pulled out her phone and opened a tracking app. The screen showed a blinking dot by the east gate's flower beds. "MS. Adams could you get a few more security guards? There might be more than one snake."

Eleanor hesitated, not sure how Charlotte knew, but seeing how serious she looked,

she nodded and had someone go call for help.

Two more guards showed up, tools in hand.

Charlotte's eyes glinted as she nodded toward the flower beds. "The snakes are under those flowers."

Bald Lee rubbed his thinning hair and stood on his toes, trying to see what she was up to.

"It's pretty simple," Charlotte

explained "When snakes feel

threatened, they go back to their

nest. If we find a nest, that proves the snake wandered into the classroom by itself."

Eleanor looked at Charlotte, who stood off to the side, her eyes dark and steady. There was something about her, a quiet strength that made everyone stop and pay attention.

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 58

She really was sharp, sharper than anyone had expected.

"Yeah, that must be it," Shirley said quickly, nodding like her life depended on it.

Bald Lee looked Charlotte up and down, not quite convinced, his face darkening. "Cut the tricks. If you can't find the snake—"

"Snake!"

Before he could finish, one of the security guards shouted. Everyone spun around to see a green snake peek its head out and then dart back into hiding.

"Back up, everyone!"

The guards rushed in with their tools, digging into the flowerbed. After a bit of chaos, they uncovered a deep hole right at the base of the wall.

"There are two snakes in here, and some eggs too," one of the guards called out, his voice a little shaky. "Good thing we found their nest. If those eggs

hatched, imagine how many students would have freaked out."

The guards scrambled, carefully scooping up the snakes and eggs and dropping them into a bag.

"They're living creatures. Take them out to the wild and let them go," Charlotte said softly, almost as if she was talking about a lost kitten.

Once the guards left with the snakes, the whole scene went quiet. The truth was clear as day.

"Mr. Lee, looks like everything's settled. Charlotte really is innocent," Eleanor said, letting out a sigh of relief.

With no excuses left, Bald Lee's face went from sour to downright stormy. He kept his mouth shut and tried to slip away, but Charlotte stepped right in front of him.

She stood there, posture relaxed, her expression almost lazy. "Mr. Lee, you made a promise. Time to keep your word and apologize."

Apologize? No one had ever demanded that from him in all his years at this school.

"Charlotte, I'm already letting this go. Don't push it."

Charlotte blocked his path, tall and calm, looking down at him. Her voice was cold. "Are you going to break your promise?"

Class C students, never ones to miss some drama, started whispering from the sidelines.

"Mr. Lee, we all heard you. You promised."

"Set an example for us, Mr. Lee."

"Apologize, apologize!"

"You" Bald Lee was flustered. He turned to Eleanor, desperate. "Ms. Adams, why don't you handle this?"

Eleanor acted innocent, as if she didn't know what he meant. "Didn't you say if Charlotte proved she was innocent, you'd apologize? I think teachers should keep their promises, right? It's important for students to see that."

Charlotte couldn't help but glance at Eleanor, raising her eyebrows in silent approval.

Bald Lee was fuming now, face twisted with anger as he glared at Charlotte.

"I'm not apologizing. What are you going to do about it?"

Charlotte's eyes narrowed, a flash of

irritation on her pale face. She was about to say something when a cold voice cut through the tension

"If you don't, by tomorrow, everyone at Vanguard High will know you bullied a new

student. Maybe the whole internet will know, too."

Bald Lee looked up and saw Andrew,

leaning casually against a planter with his phone out, a teasing smile on his lips. The Blair family was the riches in cabinda, with serious influence everywhere. And Andrew's older brother, Anthony, was known for being ruthless. This was not someone you wanted to upset.

Andrew held up his phone, still smirking. "So, what's it going to be?"

Bald Lee's face was like thunder. He turned back to Charlotte, clenched his jaw, and forced out, "I'm sorry. Is that enough?"

Charlotte arched an eyebrow, her tone completely unbothered. "Sorry, what did you say? I didn't quite catch that."

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 59

"Charlotte, seriously, don't push it," Bald Lee nearly spat, grinding his teeth so hard it looked painful.

Charlotte's smile was icy. "Mr. Lee, you're supposed to be a great teacher. Can't you even manage a real apology?"

A ripple of laughter broke out around them. He deserved it, honestly. That's what he got for looking down on people. Running into Charlotte was just his bad luck.

Bald Lee's anger was almost visible, simmering up from his feet to his forehead. He shot a glare at Andrew's phone, clenched his fists tight, and forced out the words. "Charlotte, I was wrong to blame you today. I sincerely apologize."

Charlotte's lips curled into a cold smile. She didn't say a word.

Eleanor stepped forward, sensing the drama had gone on long enough.

"Charlotte, Mr. Lee already apologized. Let's just move on."

Charlotte shrugged. "Sure. Ms. Adams is pretty. If she says to forgive you, I'll let it go."

Eleanor's cheeks turned a soft pink.

Bald Lee looked like he might explode, his face pale with rage. He shot Charlotte a death glare. "You got lucky this time. But remember, I'll make sure you're kicked out of Vanguard High sooner or later."

Then he turned his icy stare on Eleanor. "And Ms. Adams, you'll regret your choice today."

Eleanor pressed her lips together. "I just did what a teacher should do."

"Great. I can't wait to see how this troublemaker drags down your class average and tanks the school's graduation rate."

With that, Bald Lee stormed off, students all around watching him go with open amusement.

Shirley watched him leave and shivered. She leaned close to Charlotte. "You should be careful around Mr. Lee from now on."

Charlotte nodded. "I will. Class is starting soon, you should get back."

"If he gives you trouble, promise you'll tell me."

Shirley looked worried. "What are you even going to do?"

Charlotte's lips twitched like she was trying not to laugh. She put on her best well-

behaved student face. "I'll reason with him, obviously."

Shirley eyed her, not convinced for a second.

Word about Charlotte's win over Bald Lee spread through Vanguard High like wildfire. In class, people started treating her like some kind of hero. They chatted with her more even reminded her there was an exam that afternoon.

Charlotte hadn't gotten her nap, and her medicine was running low. All afternoon,

her head felt heavy and foggy.

It wasn't until the bell rang that she finally came back to herself.

"Pens down. Time's up."

As her test paper was collected, Charlotte pressed her lips together and slumped over her desk, eyes

closed, lashes long and thick

like

butterfly wings.

stoppi Andrew couldn't

Across the

her coolly striding by

earlier, snake in hand. His eyes sparkled with new admiration.

Charlotte felt someone staring. She glanced up suddenly, right into Andrew's eyes.

He blinked, then grinned. "I have to admit, you're kind of awesome."

Charlotte stood, nodded with her usual calm. "Thanks for helping earlier."

Andrew hadn't expected that. He blushed. "I..."

But before he could finish, she'd already grabbed her bag and walked out without looking back.

Parrish watched her go, shaking his head. "Charlotte surprises me every single time."

...

That evening, Charlotte walked in the front door and was immediately met with Steven's furious face.

She spotted Olivia nearby and instantly understood why.

"I heard you made a scene at school today and embarrassed Mr. Lee in front of everyone."

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 60

Steven got up and planted himself right in front of Charlotte, his face tight with annoyance. "The principal says a famous professor recommended you. How would you even know someone like that? You've been living out in the sticks for years."

He started pacing, his words coming sharper. "So what did you do to get into Vanguard High? Who did you have to cozy up to?" His voice kept rising. The thought of Charlotte doing whatever it took to get her way, even selling herself like before, made his blood boil. "I thought maybe living in the country would teach you something, but you're still just as shameless as ever."

Charlotte just looked at him, completely calm except for the cold little smirk on her lips. "Are you trying to teach me a lesson now?"

Steven's voice faltered for a moment. "I'm your father. Of course I can tell you what's right and wrong."

"My father?" Charlotte let out a cold, almost mocking laugh. "Sorry, I thought my father died five years ago."

For her, he might as well have. He watched her get bullied, never once stepping in. He let the psychiatric hospital take her away, didn't say a word. He was the one who sent her off to the countryside, left her to survive on her own for five years. In her heart, her father had been gone a long time.

The mention of five years ago brought a flicker of guilt to Steven's face.

"Charlotte, how can you say that? You're being so ungrateful. Your father worried himself sick over you, you know. His hair turned gray," Elizabeth jumped in, stepping forward to scold her.

Steven's guilt vanished. All he felt now was disappointment. He did so much for this daughter, and this was how she repaid him.

Charlotte's eyes turned ice-cold as she looked at Elizabeth. "If you're so eager to talk about the past, maybe we should sit down and really go over everything that happened."

Just one look from her made Elizabeth's skin crawl. Charlotte's gaze was so dark and cold, it was like she could see straight through her.

The old scandal... Elizabeth was involved. But all the evidence had pointed to Charlotte, as if she'd been the one to seduce someone. How was she supposed to clear her name now?

"Charlotte, even if you're not

embarrassed, the Main family can't stand any more gossip," Elizabeth said, pretending to be caring as she reached for Charlotte's hand. "And dragging it all up again will only hurt you."

A thirteen-year-old girl, almost... If people started talking about that again, how would Charlotte ever hold her head up?

Charlotte glanced down at

Elizabeth's hand gripping her arm.

Her eyes turned even colder. She

lifted her elbow just a little, and Elizabeth lost her balance, landing, hard on the sofa content

"Charlotte!"

"Mom, are you okay?" Olivia hurried over to help her mother up, then glared at Charlotte. "Mom was just worried about you, you could least appreciate it

instead of shoving her Apologize!"

Charlotte brushed off her sleeve, clearly done with all of them. "She's your mom. Mine's been dead for years."

Olivia was stunned into silence.

Charlotte walked to the fridge, grabbed a carton of milk, and took a long drink. She looked at Steven and raised her eyebrows. "Just so you know, I'm moving out tomorrow."

Moving out? Steven's face went stiff. "Who said you could move out?"

Charlotte didn't even look back. "I'm not asking for permission. I'm just letting you know." Her voice echoed through the hallway as she headed upstairs.

"If you leave, don't expect a single cent from this family," Steven snapped.

He stood there, more disappointed than ever. How did she think a high school kid could make it without any money from home?