

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 11 |

The commotion in the hall pulled every eye toward the staircase. The family hurried up, tense and on edge.

"My trophy..." Olivia rushed to the mess, hugging her trophy tightly. Her eyes shimmered with unshed tears.

"Charlotte, what are you doing?" Steven's voice was stiff, his face drained of color as he stood frozen in shock.

"Cleaning up," Charlotte replied coolly. She barely glanced Steven's way, then let her grip loosen. Several certificates slipped from her hand, landing in the trash with a soft thud.

Olivia's expression twisted. She was just about to protest, but Elizabeth held her back.

Elizabeth's smile was as gentle as ever. "Olivia, since Charlotte wants this room, we'll let her have it."

Let her? Charlotte's lips curled with a sneer. She nudged the trophy and her bag out of the way with her foot, tilting her pretty face upward. Her gaze was lazy, almost playful, as she looked at Olivia and her mother. "Since when do my things need someone else's permission?"

The room fell silent. No one could believe it. Charlotte, who used to be so soft and timid, suddenly seemed like a completely different person. Did she grow a backbone in the countryside?

People always said rust never turns to gold. Maybe they were right.

Olivia and her mother were left speechless, their faces pale and flushed at the same time.

Everyone knew Olivia was talented, refined, the darling of Cabinda's elite. She played piano, painted, and carried herself with perfect grace. People loved her, envied her.

Charlotte, though... She was just the scandal. She'd had a breakdown, tried to seduce a man, then nearly stabbed him when things went wrong. Her name was mud.

Compared to Olivia, she didn't even deserve to shine her shoes.

It was only a room. Did Olivia really care?

Elizabeth swallowed her anger, her soft smile never faltering. "Do as Charlotte says."

Olivia's hands tightened around the trophy. Her glare at Charlotte was icy, but she kept her mouth shut.

"Charlotte, watch your tone."

Steven's voice was low, his eyes

dark as he looked at her. He couldn't ignore the hurt on his wife and daughter's faces. This was his stepmother and stepsister after all.

He'd hoped she would have changed, maybe grown up a little. But now, she seemed even more impossible than before.

The house had finally been peaceful for a few years, and now she was back, bringing chaos. Did she have it out for the Main family?

Charlotte raised her eyebrow, a sly smile playing on her lips. "What, you want me to start throwing punches?"

Steven's face flickered. "You..."

A memory flashed through his mind.

Charlotte, just thirteen, plunging a knife into her mother's thigh. He'd never thought his quiet daughter could do something so violent.

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Seeing Steven glare at her, Charlotte just arched a brow, her voice light. "What, are

you thinking of sending me back to the countryside for another five years?"

Steven's eyes clouded with guilt. He lowered his voice. "I know it's been hard for you, but it was for your own good..."

Her own good? All those years of pain, humiliation, loneliness... That was supposed to help her?

Before Steven could say more, Charlotte had already turned and slipped into the room, closing the door behind her.

Steven let out a heavy sigh, rubbing his forehead. "How can she be so ungrateful?"

Elizabeth rested a hand on his

shoulder, her voice soft and

soothing "Don't take it to heart.

She's had a tough time

and she's

been alone for so many years. She'll come around if we're patient with her. We'll give her space."

Steven gave her a grateful look, then glanced at Olivia with a sigh. "If she were even

half as well behaved as Olivia, I'd count my blessings."

Olivia lowered her head, looking every bit the perfect daughter. But as she stared at the mess on the floor, a cold glint flickered in her eyes.

Charlotte, what an idiot.

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Charlotte stepped out of the shower, skin still warm and damp, and reached for her favorite cotton nightdress. Her dark hair, wet and shiny, fell over her shoulders as she moved around the room, relaxed and unhurried.

She grabbed her tablet from the nightstand and opened the "Loving Family" group chat. After everything that happened yesterday, the chat was eerily quiet. Everyone seemed to be walking on eggshells.

Nine: Home now.

Charlotte typed a quick reply while searching through her bag for something.

Jackson: [Thanks to the DNA data you gave us, we've made huge progress on the malaria treatment. Apex's lab caught wind of it and wants to buy out the patent for a ton of money...]

Nine: [My research is only for Eldoria.]

She dumped out the contents of her bag onto the bed, sorting through the mess until she finally found her bottle of pills.

Nine: [Tired. We'll talk tomorrow.]

With that, she left the group chat and, without thinking much about it, accepted a friend request from someone named "Adonis."

Charlotte set her tablet aside and glanced at the clock on the wall. It was getting late. She shook two white pills into her palm, swallowed them with a sip of water, and crawled under the covers. Closing her eyes, she tried to let sleep take her.

But sleep was anything but peaceful. Nightmares twisted through her dreams, one after another, until a loud, sharp knock broke through the haze.

Charlotte's eyes snapped open. She sat up quickly, her breath coming in shaky bursts.

"Charlotte, Mr. Main wants you downstairs for dinner."

She wiped the cold sweat from her forehead, still rattled, and looked outside. The sky was dark, and the clock read seven.

"Charlotte....." the maid called again, her voice a little louder this time.

"I heard you," Charlotte answered, her voice steady even though her heart was still racing.

She closed her eyes for a brief moment, letting herself regroup, then opened them, calm and collected again.

After washing up, she opened her closet. The shelves and hangers were crammed with luxury clothes, all bright colors and flashy designs. Pricey, sure, but none of them felt right for her.

Her fingers drifted over the hangers until she found a simple white dress. She slipped it on. Against her pale skin and delicate features, the white fabric made her look almost unreal untouched by everything around her.

Downstairs, the rest of the family was already at the table. As she entered, all three looked up at once.

For a split second, Charlotte caught a flash of surprise and admiration in their eyes, but it faded quickly, replaced by something harder to read.

"Charlotte, come sit with us," Steven called out, his smile extra wide as he gestured to the empty chair.

Charlotte had her mother's beauty,

that much was obvious, but before, she'd always kept her head down, never bothered to dress up. No one her. Now with her new

attitude, she almost glowed. She was even more striking than Olivia.

Steven felt a wave of satisfaction wash over him. Maybe sending her away hadn't

been such a bad idea after all. At least she had her looks.

Charlotte sat down and started eating, not sparing a glance for anyone else.

Her cool indifference made Elizabeth's jaw tighten. Seeing Steven beam at Charlotte only made things worse for her.

Elizabeth forced a bright smile. "Charlotte, I hope you enjoyed your time at the sanatorium?"

Charlotte picked up a potato from her plate, not even acknowledging her. Elizabeth pressed on, pretending not to notice. "I heard the school out there isn't very good, and your grades probably suffered. The entrance exams are only about a hundred days away, so your father and I talked it over..."

"We wanted to get you into Vanguard High School, but they only take top students.

So I asked around, pulled some favors, and after a lot of convincing, they agreed to

let you enroll at Pathfinder Academy..."

Pathfinder Academy?

The worst school in all of Cabinda?

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Charlotte smiled softly, picked up another piece of potato, and kept eating like nothing in the world could bother her.

"At least you'll be able to get a community college diploma," Elizabeth said gently. "If you ever get stuck, just ask Olivia. She was in the top five in the whole province on the last mock exam."

Olivia perked up, proud as ever. "I'll put together some easy practice questions for you. As long as you actually do them, hitting the minimum score should be a breeze."

"With you around, I'm not worried," Steven said, nodding with approval. "You've always been so sensible. Make sure to look after Charlotte."

"I will," Olivia promised, her eyes bright. She lifted her chin, glancing at Charlotte, waiting for some sign of jealousy.

But Charlotte just calmly sipped her soup, totally unbothered, barely even looking at them.

Steven's patience wore thin. He frowned, voice tight with frustration.

"Charlotte, we're talking to you."

Charlotte set her chopsticks down, dabbed her lips with a napkin, and finally looked up, eyes clear and cool. "Oh? Were you saying something?"

Steven stiffened, his anger barely contained. "You—"

"Charlotte, Dad's talking about your school stuff," Olivia chimed in, resting her

chin on her hand and putting on an innocent look. "Pathfinder Academy isn't the best, but with your grades, you might not even get in. Don't be so picky."

"You done?" Charlotte stood up, dusting off her hands. "If you are, I'm leaving."

"You-" Steven was livid, feeling completely invisible.

Charlotte took a few steps, then paused and looked back, as if she might say something apologetic. Instead, she said, "The food's too salty. Try less salt next time."

Steven was left speechless.

Watching Charlotte walk away, Elizabeth spoke quietly. "Do you think... she's still mad about what happened back then?"

Steven's face went pale.

"But it was Charlotte's own fault," Olivia said. "She snuck into that guy's room, tried to seduce him, and when she got caught, she almost—"

"Olivia." Elizabeth finally cut her off, pretending to scold her, but only after Olivia finished her sentence.

"That girl is hopeless. Five years and she hasn't changed at all!" Steven's face was tight with anger and disappointment.

With the Main family's reputation,
Charlotte would have to marry well
someday, What powerful family
vel

would want someone with no
college degree and a bad
was

reputation? One daughter was headed for a top university, the other barely scraping by with a high school diploma. He couldn't stand the embarrassment. There was no way he'd let his name be ruined because of Charlotte.

She was going to school, whether she wanted to or not.

Night faded in, city lights flickering on one by one. The Main family estate sat in the

shadows, security guards pacing back and forth below.

Charlotte changed into black

clothes, tied her hair back, and

pulled on a mask until most of her face was hidden. She took out a rope with a grappling hook, flicked her finger, and watched it catch perfectly on a tree branch outside.

She slung a bag over her shoulder, stepped onto the window ledge on the third floor and zipped down the rope, clearing the wall and landing lightly on the other side. .net

Half an hour later, she arrived at Cabinda's swankiest club. The place was all marble and gold, packed with the city's wealthiest people.

Charlotte handed over her ID, showing she was eighteen. Still, the guard stopped her at the entrance.

The security guy looked her up and down, obviously suspicious. "This isn't a bubble tea shop, kid. You'll need more than an ID to get in here."

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Charlotte pressed her lips together, pulled out her phone, and brought up her bank balance.

"How about this?" she asked.

The security guard rubbed his eyes and leaned in, counting the zeros on the screen. "One zero, two, three, four, five, six..." He didn't even get through all the digits before Charlotte slipped her phone away and strolled past him.

The guard stared after her, wide-eyed. "That's... a ridiculous amount of money."

Inside, the club was alive with noise and laughter. People were drinking, partying, losing themselves in every kind of fun you could imagine.

Charlotte stood out like a beam of light in the middle of all that chaos. She was tall and graceful, her posture unshakable, her clothes simple and a little bit academic. In a place like this, she looked totally out of place, but that only made her more noticeable.

She hadn't even been inside for a minute before people started eyeing her. Was she a lost student sneaking in for excitement, or maybe some sugar daddy's latest fling? Everyone knew rich men loved bringing pretty young things to clubs like this.

Charlotte moved through the crowd, ignoring the stares, and found a quiet corner to sit. Her cool, steady gaze swept across the hall, scanning faces. It didn't take long for her to spot the man she was looking for out on the dance

floor.

He was probably in his early thirties, sharply dressed with the kind of fake respectability that only made him look shadier. He had his arms wrapped around a curvy woman, the two of them dancing way too close.

Charlotte's slender fingers curled tight around her drink as she watched him. She tapped the table. "Excuse me," she called.

A server hurried over.

"I'd like your most expensive bottle of red wine. And a carton of milk."

The server blinked, clearly confused. "Sorry, milk?"

Expensive wine, sure, that was easy, but milk? This was an upscale club, not a coffee shop.

"Our priciest wine costs seven figures, but... we don't have milk," he admitted.

Charlotte reached into her bag, took out a no-limit bank card and a thick stack of cash, and placed them neatly on the tray. She looked up her face bright and innocent. "What about now?"

The server's whole attitude changed. He grinned. "Of course. I'll get it for you right away."

He rushed off, and less than ten minutes later, he was back with a big smile, carrying a bottle of red wine and a carton of milk.

Charlotte grabbed the milk, poked a straw into it, and took a sip. "Can you open the wine, please?"

"Yes, right away."

The server uncorked the wine and offered it to her, still grinning. "Would you like to check it?"

Holding her milk in one hand, Charlotte tapped the top of the wine bottle with her other hand. "Send this over to that gentleman," she said, her voice calm.

"Understood."

The server took the wine and walked off, completely missing the thin layer of white powder floating inside. A gentle swirl and it disappeared.

"Mr. Ham, a young lady sent you this bottle of wine..." The server set the bottle down and turned to gesture back at Charlottes spot but stre was already gone. fo

Where did she go?

The man glanced up, but didn't care who sent it. His eyes were glued to the wine, a bottle worth hundreds of thousands. He grinned and smacked the woman next to him on the hip. "Come on, baby, pour me a glass."

He knocked back several glasses in a row.

A few minutes later, a woman screamed out on the dance floor.

Everyone's head snapped in that direction.

A man was collapsed on the ground, his pants soaked, a mess spreading beneath

him.

He had lost all control, right there in front of everyone.

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The whole thing happened so fast that the woman's dress caught some of the mess. She clutched her chest, gagging over and over. "This is so gross..."

"How did this even happen?" Jesse's voice shook as he tried to cover himself, his face flickering between pale and flushed. He kept scooting further into the corner.

People started whispering all around him.

"Isn't that Elizabeth's cousin?"

"He just... totally lost it in front of everyone."

"I swear, this'll be all over the news tomorrow."

"Seriously, I can't believe this. Wow..."

It didn't take long before people had their phones out, snapping pictures and recording video. No one wanted to miss a second.

"Stop! Don't take pictures!" Jesse tried to shield his face with his filthy hands, curling up on the floor in total humiliation. But just as he shouted, another loud, awful sound came from under him.

He'd lost control again.

A horrified cry escaped him. Jesse couldn't take it anymore. He scrambled to his feet, not caring that cameras were pointed at him from every angle, and stumbled out of the bar as fast as he could.

The sound of laughter echoed through the whole place.

Not far away, tucked in a quiet corner, Charlotte sipped her milk and watched it all with a cool, detached look. She took one last drink, then turned to leave.

Outside, as she waited by the curb for a ride, someone bumped into her hard. Her hat and milk hit the ground.

Before she could even look up, a harsh, slurred voice hit her ear. "Are you fucking blind? Watch where you're going!"

The smell of booze was overwhelming. Charlotte glanced at the milk spilled on the pavement, her brows drawing together in a frown, then lifted her eyes.

Four drunk guys stood around her.

The one who shouted, a guy with a scar running down his cheek, suddenly grinned when he saw her face. "Well, look at that. Didn't expect to run into a cute one tonight."

He checked her out from head to

toe, not even trying to hide it. "Hey, girl, why are you out here alone?" He staggered closer, reaching for her hand. "You bumped into me and broke my heart. How are you gonna make it up to me?"

Charlotte stepped away, annoyance flashing in her eyes. "Pick up my milk," she said, her voice cold.

"Milk?" The guy laughed, his gaze lingering on her. "No problem, come with me and I'll buy you all the milk you want."

He reached for her again.

Her eyes went ice-cold. In one swift move, Charlotte caught his wrist and twisted his arm back.

"Ah-ow, ow! Let go!" He struggled, surprised by how strong she was but couldn't break free. He turned and yelled at his friends. "What are you waiting for? Grab this little bitch and drag her into the alley

"Tonight, I'm gonna-"

His buddies cracked their knuckles and started to close in.

Before anyone could touch her, Charlotte moved. She drove her foot straight into Scarman's gut.

He let out a scream, flew back, hit the concrete wall, and collapsed to the ground groaning.

The other guys froze, glancing at each other. Their drunken haze started to clear and their faces twisted into scowls.

"Get her!"

How hard could it be for a bunch of grown men to take down one girl?

They closed in, surrounding her.

"Looks like I get the first taste of this little firecracker," said the one with glasses, smirking as he rubbed his hands together. "You're a wild one, huh?"

Charlotte didn't move. Her hand shot out, lightning fast, and gripped his neck.

He froze, shocked. "What the—?"

"I can get even wilder," Charlotte

replied, lifting an eyebrow. Before he could react, her other hand grabbed his shoulder. With a quick twist, she

flipped him over her hip and

flipped him

slammed him hard to the ground.

He barely had time to register what happened before she kicked him, sending him

sprawling across the pavement.