

The Mocked Miss's Hidden Crowns – Chapter 66

Work hard?

Eleanor felt her head throb just thinking about it. Even if she dumped all the knowledge in the world straight into Charlotte's brain, there just wasn't enough time for her to process it all. But what was done was done. All she could do now was help Charlotte as much as possible, then go beg Mr. Baker for a little mercy.

"Starting this afternoon, you'll come to my office every day," Eleanor said. "I'll give you three hours of one-on-one physics tutoring."

Three hours?

Charlotte's eyelashes fluttered. That sounded like pure torture.

"Ms. Adams, I already found a tutor," Charlotte said quietly. "I wasn't feeling well last time, but I promise I'll be fine for the next test."

When they left the teacher's office, the sweet, obedient look on Charlotte's face disappeared. Her eyes turned cold.

Andrew had just gotten an earful from Eleanor and hurried to catch up with her. "Hey, big shot."

Charlotte turned slightly, her eyes cool and sharp as she looked at him. "What did you just call me?"

Her gaze could cut right through someone.

"Charlotte?" Andrew's voice stumbled for a second. She didn't seem bothered by it, though, so he fell in step beside her. "Bald Lee is notorious for holding grudges," he said lightly. "If he tries to kick you out, just tell me and I'll...."

"You'll make sure I stay?" Charlotte's lips curled into a small, knowing smile.

Andrew's cheeks turned pink. "I'll just mention my brother's name," he mumbled. Anthony's name always worked better than a fistfight.

Anthony...

Charlotte looked up at the wide, blue sky. The corners of her mouth lifted just a little. "Alright," she said softly.

When she smiled, her lips curved like

a crescent moon. She looked warm and beautiful, the kind of smile that made people want to get closer. Andrew found himself staring, a little dazed. He couldn't imagine how someone with such an innocent face could be so good at stirring up trouble.

News about Charlotte's wild promise to score second in the grade spread across school in no time. It shot straight to the top of the vanguard. High School forum.

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The headline was brutal. [Last Place Student Claims She'll Take Second. Is This a Moral Crisis or Just a Mental One?]

The comments section blew up.

First comment: [If I hadn't spent all my allowance, I'd buy her a mirror so she could take a good look at herself.]

Second comment: [How does she have the guts? Does she really think the top students at Vanguard are like those in her little country school?]

Third comment: [As the current number two, I feel personally attacked and a little scared. Charlotte, please go easy on me!]

Fourth comment: [There's one week until the next test. If Charlotte really gets second, I'll livestream myself Leating crap for everyone to see.]

Fifth comment: [You better stick to your word!]

Sixth comment: [Honestly, Charlotte seems pretty smart. Maybe she'll really pull it off?]

Seventh comment: [Who are you fooling? Is this Charlotte's burner account? Say it on your main!]

Eighth comment: [Charlotte must be delusional. Are you the same?]

The thread kept going, with more and more people piling on.

Delusional?

In a quiet corner, Shirley scrolled through the nasty comments. Her fingers shook and her face turned bright red.

"This is too much," she whispered, jaw clenched. "How can they say things like that?"

She was just about to stand up for Charlotte when she sensed someone nearby. Looking up, she saw a shadow fall across her desk.

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Charlotte stood off to the side, her right foot pressed against the wall. The crisp black and white of her uniform made her look even slimmer, her pale skin almost glowing under the hallway lights. Her hair was long and dark and

fell softly over her shoulders. She wore an old, faded backpack slung across her body, and her eyes— clear and cool—were locked on Shirley.

Shirley let out a startled yelp and scrambled to her feet. "Charlotte!"

Charlotte glanced at the laptop screen, where the school forum had already exploded with hundreds of new messages. Most of them trashed her, calling her arrogant and just waiting for her to fail. The rest were going after Shirley.

"Charlotte, I... I believe in you," Shirley said, voice trembling, eyes shining with sincerity as she stepped closer. "You can totally get second place. Don't listen to what they're saying online."

Charlotte just smiled, calm and unaffected. "Actually, I came here to ask you for a favor."

"Huh?" Shirley blinked, completely lost.

She stared at Charlotte, cheeks turning pink. "Is... is there something I can help with?" Honestly, all she was good at was studying.

"I've been looking for a physics tutor. I want you to help me," Charlotte said, pulling a stack of cash from her bag and holding it out. "Tutors outside charge five hundred per session, and I'll probably need a few. Since we're friends, how about a discount? One thousand for however many lessons it takes. Sound good?"

Shirley froze, not sure if she'd heard right. Charlotte wanted her to tutor physics?

"But... aren't you worried I'll mess up? My physics grades are always at the bottom..."

"Do you want to help or not?" Charlotte cut her off, raising an eyebrow.

Seriously, as if someone who'd won a national physics competition would ever rank at the bottom of their class. Shirley probably just kept her head down and tanked her scores to avoid attention because of all the bullying.

"I'll do it!" Shirley nodded hard and quickly tried to give the money back. "You said we're friends. I can't take your money."

"Even between friends, things should be clear." Charlotte pressed the money back into her hands. "If you don't take it, I'll have to find a regular tutor, and at five hundred a session, I can't afford it. With you, a thousand gets me way more lessons. I'm the one getting the better end of the deal."

Shirley just stared, still trying to process. Did it really work out that way? "But—" Charlotte shot her a look that instantly made Shirley clam up.

"Then... I'll do my best. I'll teach you everything I know," Shirley promised, a little flustered but determined.

Charlotte nodded, taking out her phone so they could swap contacts. She checked the time. "I've got something to do today. Let's start tomorrow afternoon."

"Charlotte—" Shirley called after her, but Charlotte was already gone, disappearing down the hallway. There was only a week until the exam. Wasn't she worried at all?

Shirley hesitated, then pulled out her phone and found Charlotte's profile. After a few seconds of nerves, she sent over a set of physics problems.

Her message was shy and a little anxious: Charlotte, here are some practice problems. Try them out, and if you get stuck, I'll help you tomorrow.

She hit send, clutching her phone as her heart pounded. A few seconds later, Charlotte replied.

File received.

Can I leave the ones I don't know blank?

Of course, Shirley answered right away. Charlotte's foundation wasn't great, so it was normal for her to have trouble with some of the questions.

That's fine then, Charlotte replied.

That's fine? For some reason, seeing those words made Shirley feel a wave of unease. Surely she'd at least try the basic questions. She wouldn't just leave everything blank... right?

Trying to reassure herself, Shirley tucked her phone away and carefully put the thousand yuan in her bag. Her smile lit up her face. Tonight, she could finally buy something nice

for her grandma.

After school, Charlotte changed out of her uniform and stuffed it in her bag. She

hopped on her motorcycle, the engine rumbling to life.

Night had fallen, and city lights

flickered on across the streets. A

black sports car glided down a busy avenue. Inside, Kenneth held his phone, a lazy smile tugging at his lips as he chatted with Anthony.

"It's just a girl. Why are you being so secretive? Not even letting me see her?"

Anthony's laugh came through the speaker, warm and indulgent. "She's one of a kind. Of course I'm going to keep her close."

Kenneth rolled his eyes. He'd seen his share of beautiful women. Was this one really so special?

Suddenly, a loud roar filled the air as a flashy red motorcycle pulled up right next to him. Kenneth glanced over, not expecting much, but then he saw her underneath the helmet sawher the girl's profile was so striking it made his heart skip a beat.

That face...

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Why did she look so much like Nora?

Kenneth rolled down his window, slipped off his sunglasses, and rested his arm on the door. He leaned out a little, honking a few times, trying to catch her attention.

Charlotte turned her head at the noise. She pushed up her helmet's visor, and for a second Kenneth just stared. Her face was small and delicate, her eyes impossibly clear, her nose perfect, lips pressed together in a line. Even the cool, slightly distant vibe she gave off reminded him so much of Nora.

It only took that one look for Kenneth to be sure. This girl had something to do with his aunt Nora. Maybe she was the sister they'd all been searching for.

"You look really familiar," Kenneth called out, his eyes fixed on her. He was usually so quick with words, but now his throat felt dry. "You look like my sister."

Charlotte glanced down at the man in the car. He had gray-blue hair, a ripped tee, and a weird silver chain hanging around his neck. Her indifference shifted to something closer to annoyance. Was this seriously how people were still trying to hit on strangers?

"Why don't you look again? Maybe I look like your dad."

The light turned green just then. Charlotte let out a silent sigh, turned away, and slid her legs onto the bike's pegs. She leaned forward, twisted the throttle, and took off, her motorcycle disappearing into the night.

Kenneth was still chewing over what she said. Maybe I look like your dad... Nora and his dad were siblings, and they looked a lot alike. It actually wouldn't be weird if his aunt's daughter looked like his father. The more he thought about it, the more he realized she really did resemble his dad.

The roar of her engine snapped him out of it. He caught sight of her speeding away and hit the gas, determined not to lose her. But she must have noticed, because she started weaving through traffic, clearly trying to shake him.

Kenneth grinned to himself. Most people only knew him as a celebrity, but secretly he was an F1 driver. If she thought she could outrun him, she was in for a surprise.

He floored it, his black sports car cutting through the city like it owned the place. He was just about to catch up when she suddenly turned a corner and..... she was gone.

In less than five seconds, she'd vanished.

Kenneth drove a little farther, just in case, but it was useless. She was gone. He pulled over, grabbed his phone, and shot a message to his family group chat.

Just saw a girl who looks almost exactly like Nora.

Before anyone could reply, he sent another.

But I lost her.

Charlotte parked her bike in a nearby garage. She took off her helmet, shook out her hair, and found a bench to sit on. As she pulled out her phone, a message from Anthony popped up. .net

Lottie, send me your number.

Charlotte stared at the screen for a few seconds, her fingers hovering over the keyboard. After a short... pause, she typed it in. Then she opened a special app, decrypted Anthony's number, and moved it past her firewall.

A few seconds later, her phone rang.

"Where are you? I'll come find you."

She glanced around, trying to decide what to say. Before she could answer, Anthony's voice came through the line again, low and steady.

Just send me your location. Find somewhere safe to wait. I'll be right there.

"Alright."

She shared her live location with him, closed the app, and went back to searching for nearby hotels.

About ten minutes later, she felt someone approaching from behind. A tall,

dark shadow moved slowly toward her footsteps steady and sure.

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Charlotte's eyes grew darker as she casually switched off her phone and glanced up, meeting Anthony's gaze. He was impossible to ignore, even in the low evening light. The long black trench coat made his shoulders look even broader, his waist trim. He kept his eyes lowered, but there was a hint of a smile at the corner of his mouth.

Anthony's whole presence was magnetic. The air around him felt charged.

"Have you been waiting long?" he asked, stepping closer. He crouched down in front of her, bringing himself eye-level. His voice was low, a little rough, almost teasing. "Are you cold?"

They were close, close enough that Charlotte caught the clean, subtle scent of his cologne. For a second, she just stared, soaking in every detail of his face. "I'm fine," she said, her voice soft.

She stood up, picking up her backpack. "Should we get something to eat?" Her voice sounded a bit raspy.

Anthony noticed her calm expression and smiled, then slipped off his coat and draped it over her shoulders with a gentle touch.

"What do you want to eat?" he asked.

Charlotte glanced at the coat, pausing for a brief moment, a little caught off guard. "Hm?" he prompted again, lowering his head slightly, the smile on his lips growing. "Anything's fine," Charlotte replied. She didn't protest about the coat, just shrugged it on and walked by his side.

"There's a good place up ahead. Let's go there," Anthony suggested.

He turned to look at her as they walked. She had her lips pressed together, her eyes focused lazily on the path ahead. Her face looked innocent enough, but there was something wild about her, like she could do anything she wanted at any moment.

He couldn't help but remember the way she looked on that heavy motorcycle, all confidence and attitude. There was so much more to her than she let on, and he was starting to get really curious about all the secrets she kept.

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After they finished dinner, Charlotte stood up, grabbed her bag, and wandered

out to the restaurant entrance. She leaned on the railing by the lake, letting the cool air brush across her face.

Anthony came out a moment later after settling the bill. He spotted her right away, her silhouette slim, legs long and straight. He walked over, settled himself and his coat back on her shoulders.

"It's getting chilly. Don't get sick," he said softly, his voice warm and comforting.

Charlotte nodded, slipping her hands

into the coat pockets. Her fingers brushed against something inside. She stilled for a moment, then pulled Anthony's phone and handed it to him. "Your phone," she said.

Anthony grinned and took it from her, their fingers brushing together. His eyes sparkled with a quiet

charm. For a heartbeat, their even

met, and a strange electricity ran through her making her skitter. The moment lasted only a second before Charlotte looked away, steady as ever.

Anthony tucked his phone away and let out a low laugh. "What time's your first class tomorrow?"

"Seven."

"Do you want to walk a bit more, or should we head back?"

Charlotte was just trying to figure out which hotel would be best when a sudden, sharp crash broke through the night. A heavy splash followed, loud and jarring.

"Help, help!"

"Someone fell in the water!"

She turned quickly toward the commotion. Not far away, a serious accident had just happened. A boy, maybe ten years old, had been hit by a car and thrown straight into the lake.

People were already gathering at the lakeside. Someone was about to jump in to help, but the boy had landed far from shore, and the water looked deep and cold.

It would take at least five minutes for someone to swim out there. By then, it might be too late.

Charlotte didn't hesitate. She knew she could make it in a minute and a half. Her eyes went sharp with focus. Without thinking, she bolted for the water and dove straight in.

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"Charlotte!"

Anthony never saw it coming. One second, Charlotte was beside him, the next she was diving straight into the water. He reached out, but his fingers just grabbed thin air.

Did she even know how to swim?

He didn't waste a second thinking. Anthony jumped in after her.

But what happened next caught him completely off guard. Not only could Charlotte swim, she was fast... faster than he'd ever seen. He'd won gold at swimming championships before, and even at his best, this distance would take him a minute and a half. Somehow, Charlotte was ahead of him.

She slipped beneath the surface and lifted the unconscious child, surfacing just as Anthony caught up.

Everything about this felt strangely familiar to Charlotte. Her heart thudded wildly in her chest, her thoughts spinning.

"Charlotte, give me the kid."

She just stared at him, dazed, until Anthony frowned and took the child from her. He wrapped one arm around her waist, pulling her close. "Hang on to me," he said, voice low and rough.

Her fingers shook as she grabbed his arm. Together, they swam for shore.

Five minutes later, they dragged the boy onto the grass.

The kid's head was bleeding badly, his breathing faint. He'd taken a hard hit, then gotten knocked around by the water. Now he just lay there, blood pooling beneath him, barely conscious.

"My baby! Please, my baby..." The boy's mother, elegant in her expensive clothes, crumpled to her knees, sobbing. "Is there a doctor? Someone help my son, please..."

It was rush hour. The ambulance was stuck way down the road, nowhere close.

People crowded around, whispering, but nobody stepped forward.

"His skull's cracked. Can anyone really save him?"

"I saw the whole thing. He got tossed through the air, landed in the lake... There's so much blood. Even a doctor would have trouble."

Charlotte heard them but didn't

pause. She pulled off her heavy coat, her eyes determined. She yanked the black hair tie from her wrist, quickly

messy bun,

pulled her wet hair into of her

and exposed the pale

neck.

novels

Dropping to her knees, she unzipped her soaked backpack and dumped everything

out. An old tablet. A neatly folded Vanguard High School uniform. A few bottles. A small wooden box.

Anthony's gaze sharpened. He hadn't expected this. She knew how to use acupuncture needles.

The crowd started to notice too.

"Hey, what are you doing?" someone called out.

"I'm saving him," Charlotte replied, her voice cool and steady. She disinfected the needles with practiced hands.

"Saving him?" a guy in the crowd

echoed. "Are you even a doctor? Or

maybe you're just a med student? Wait is that a high school uniform? You're not still in high school are you?"

People began to murmur.

"A high schooler? She can't know anything about medicine! Who does she think she

is, trying to help?"

"We know you mean well, but don't do anything crazy, okay?"

"Yeah! If something happens, you'll never be able to take the blame!"

Voices overlapped, everyone piling on.

Charlotte didn't flinch. She lined up the needles with calm precision. As she

reached for the boy's hand, his mother shoved her away, panic in here
reyes. What are you doing to my son?" she cried, her voice shaking.

The push made Charlotte stagger, but Anthony caught her right before she fell.

He straightened, his eyes icy as he scanned the crowd. "If you can help, then
do it. If you can't, keep quiet."

Someone tried to speak up, but one look at Anthony's cold expression shut
them up fast.