

## Wife Mask 491

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Lance gave a knowing shrug, a hint of amusement flickering in his eyes. "It's not that she doesn't get it. It's that it doesn't register as important. Not to her."

"What do you mean?" Jeff demanded. "You know something, don't you? You're keeping secrets from me!"

"Guilty as charged," Lance replied, his grin widening with theatrical flair. "Being Elliana's chosen apprentice comes with classified intel."

With a dramatic swirl, Lance walked upstairs, leaving Jeff sulking behind, practically glowing green with envy. Why was Lance the one Elliana confided in?

Jeff couldn't believe it. Wasn't he supposed to be the one who knew her best? Jealousy simmered beneath his confusion— an almost juvenile ache twisting in his chest.

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Their silent exchange lasted only a few seconds before Cole looked away. Elliana wasn't fazed-she let her eyes wander over the other guests, her face calm and unreadable.

Though Trinity hailed from the Craig family, she was raised in the Evans home. So both families had shown up in full force for her banquet.

Ruben stood proudly at the front of the Evans family, surrounded by younger family members. Even the elusive Jason had made an appearance.

Jason kept his mask on and stayed off to the side, quiet and alone. He didn't speak to anyone, and his cold, distant air came off as aloofness.

The Craig family, once crushed by Merlin, now basked in attention thanks to the famous Milena, who was supposedly about to become Trinity's mentor, a story fed by Trinity and Murray.

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Despite his age, Jeff's voice carried like a cannon. Everyone in the hall turned to look.

Raylan was so furious that he could have spat blood. If Jeff weren't an Evans, he might have lunged at Jeff right then and there.

Just then, a tall, lean man stepped out of the crowd. His voice rang sharp and clear. "Raylan. Apologize to Ms. Marsh. Now."

It was Quentin-Raylan's uncle and the current head of the Hudson family.

When Raylan insisted on marrying Paige, Lenard had agreed, but he took away Raylan's family head status and gave it to Quentin instead. Paige had been fuming with this. She had never truly liked Raylan, and her loathing for him had grown now that he was stripped of the family head role. But with no better admirers in her corner, she had no choice but to keep up appearances of adoring Raylan.

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On the sidelines, Lance risked a glance at Cole. A chill swept through him-Cole looked ready to erupt. Did Cole really have to glare at the world like that?

Drama swept into the ballroom as Trinity made her entrance, instantly seizing everyone's attention. She was dressed to the nines. Dressed in a lavish custom gown and adorned with an array of glittering jewels, she carried herself with the poise and grandeur of a true princess.

No one could miss Trinity's eagerness to show off her supposed future as Milena's prized protégé. She'd surrounded herself with the city's socialites, who now trailed after her, eager to lavish compliments.

Elliana took in the scene unfolding before her, the corners of her mouth curling into a meaningful smile. Trinity had turned this banquet into a full-blown spectacle, every detail screaming for attention. The thought of Trinity's precious "Milena" being unmasked as a fraud painted a clear picture-Trinity's pride would crumble, and the humiliation would be impossible to hide.

Trinity glided across the marble floor, her gown swishing with dramatic flair as she approached. "Elliana, what a pleasure to see you here tonight. I know you're passionate about medicine as well, so let me introduce you to Dr. Atkinson later."

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None among the guests had ever met the genuine Dr. Atkinson before, but the enthusiastic greetings from Murray and Trinity quickly convinced everyone.

In an instant, the entire hall seemed to come alive. People surged forward, eager to claim even a second of the attention of "Milena."

Voices overlapped as guests called out. "Dr. Atkinson, meeting you is truly a privilege!" "Everyone here has heard about your accomplishments!"

"Your arrival is a great honor for the medical world in Ublento!"

As the crowd pressed closer, everyone seemed desperate to speak with "Milena." Even Ruben made his way forward, determined not to miss his chance. For families with loved ones who were sick, men like Milena held almost mythical status. Ruben, thinking of Cole, was ready to set his pride aside for just a moment.

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Joy was written all over Norwood and Joslyn, their grins impossibly wide. Bonnie, not to be outdone, flashed a sweet and almost comical smile.

Once the initial round of pleasantries was over, attention shifted to the ceremony marking Trinity's apprenticeship.

A hush fell as guests instinctively parted, making room in the heart of the hall.

Trinity walked forward, her face composed and serious. She bowed before "Milena" in solemn deference, eyes unwavering. Then, she lit up with genuine excitement. "Becoming your protégé is an incredible privilege. I hope you'll teach me everything you know."

Just as "Milena" prepared to offer a few courteous words, a piercing cry tore through the hall. "Dr. Atkinson, you have to help my son!"

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Bonnie curled her lip in scorn. "Elliana, this isn't one of your cheap melodramas. The boy's life is at stake. If you get in the way and something happens, will you take responsibility for his death?"

Norwood chimed in, his tone dripping with disdain, "Trinity is a genius handpicked by Dr. Atkinson. Even she wouldn't act rashly here. The nerve of you messing with a human life just to show off!"

Joslyn joined in, lips curling with amusement. "Let's be honest, Elliana, everyone knows you can't stand Trinity outshining you. But this isn't your stage for petty rivalries—a boy's life is hanging by a thread."

Panic twisting his features, Foley bellowed, "Stay away from my son! Don't you dare touch him!"

A shadow of triumph danced across Trinity's face, only to vanish as she donned a mask of gentle concern. With a practiced air of graciousness, she stepped forward. "Elliana, I know you're eager to prove yourself, but this situation is far too complex for you. Please, let Dr. Atkinson take over."

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Jeff said, "Go ahead, Elliana. Take your time—we'll wait for you right here."

Lance coughed, glancing at Jeff. "Yeah, I'll wait for you with Jeff here."

A sly smirk tugged at Elliana's lips. "I'm planning a long bathroom break. Are you seriously just going to stand there the whole time? Worried I'll get lost or what? Why are you glued to me?"

Lance and Jeff exchanged awkward glances, thoroughly chastened by her teasing retort.

Elliana shot them a frosty look, then spun on her heel and strode straight into the restroom.