

Beneath His Ugly Wife's Mask: Her Revenge Was Her Brilliance

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"Props to the editing team! That side-by-side shot is brutal -brilliantly brutal!"

"The difference is staggering. One looks like a goddess while the other like a ghost that crawled out of a grave."

"I get it now-Paige is the star, the main act. Elliana? She's the punchline. The tragic joke everyone tunes in to laugh at."

The chat room, restricted to cold, cruel lines of text, could barely contain the flood of reactions. Had the viewers been in the same room, it would've sounded like a madhouse—laughter crashing like thunder, chairs scraping back from shock, people slapping tables, wiping tears from their eyes. It was chaos. A circus. And Elliana was the clown who didn't know she'd stepped into the ring.

Elliana's appearance sent the live viewership soaring, skyrocketing from thousands to millions, thrusting the broadcast straight to the top of the trending charts.

Haley, the immoral director, sensing gold, gave a quiet command to the crew to keep the cameras on Elliana.

Soon, the chat's tone shifted—but not toward mercy.

"What was Elliana thinking, walking out like that? Does she not own a mirror?"

"I heard she burned her house down when she was five. Her mom died in the fire, and she got disfigured."

"I mean, sure, it's sad. But sympathy ends when you're the one who started the fire. She's no victim. She's a monster with Lipstick."

A towering screen beside the camera fed a constant stream of the live chat, fully visible to the guests.

Elliana's humiliation played out in real time, her name dragged through the digital mud by millions. And around her, not a single sympathetic face. Only thinly veiled glee.

Especially Paige-smiling sweetly for the camera, but inside, she was reveling in it. This? This was merely the opening act. Elliana would suffer much more before the curtains closed.

But Elliana didn't flinch. As the chat dredged up her old scars and the fire that marred her childhood, she simply curled her lips—not in shame, but in quiet defiance. This was why she had come. To rip open the lies sealed fifteen years ago. To clear her name. And to drag the truth—kicking and screaming—into the Light.

Haley, handpicked by Royal Entertainment, played her part like a puppet on Paige's strings. She let the torment stretch, milking every cruel comment, every sneer, before finally speaking in that polished, professional tone. "Elliana, please share your motto with the audience."

Everyone expected Elliana to crumble-or retaliate in a fit of rage. After Kent's thinly veiled threats, surely she'd back down.

But Elliana didn't even glance at Kent. Her gaze locked onto the camera lens like a loaded gun. "I'm here to uncover the truth behind that fire-and the real culprit should be the one trembling right now."

The studio froze. Paige and the crew were blindsided. No one had expected Elliana to go there. Not publicly. Not live. But by the time they scrambled to recover, it was too late. The chat had already turned.

"Wait-Elliana's saying she didn't start the fire?" "If she's this bold on live TV, maybe she really was framed."

"This just got juicy. From drama queens to criminal cover- ups!"

"Didn't Paige's mom used to be a mistress? What if she wanted Elliana's mother out of the way permanently?"

The audience had lost interest in pretty faces. Now they wanted blood. And Paige, once worshipped by the crowd, could only watch as the tide swept her under—her mother's past dragged up like a corpse from deep water.

Rage and panic flared behind Paige's carefully maintained smile. And then, unable to stop herself, she snapped— blurting something that would tip everything even further out of her control...

"Elliana, everyone must confront the consequences of their actions. There's no escape through avoidance or denial. Fortunately, your youth when those mistakes occurred means people will forgive you. Simply live honorably from now on." Paige's words dripped with false concern, each syllable striking Elliana like a physical blow.

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Elliana pierced Paige with an icy stare. "The police never confirmed anything back then. What authority grants you the right to judge me?"

The mysterious fire that year remained unsolved. Though investigators concluded it was arson, they never identified the perpetrator. The accusation against Elliana had been maliciously fabricated by the Jones family.

Elliana's pointed challenge left Paige scrambling to appear wounded. "Elliana, I speak only for your benefit. I hate seeing you stumble through life, repeating one error after another..."

A harsh laugh escaped Elliana's lips. "Are you threatened by my search for truth? Why resist uncovering what really happened? Does guilt haunt you?"

Panic flashed across Paige's face. "Elliana, stop this nonsense! What possible reason would I have for guilt? I was merely eight when the fire occurred. How could it involve me?"

"Indeed." Elliana's lips curved into a dangerous smile, unafraid to expose secrets before millions of livestream viewers. Since Paige was determined to destroy her, she abandoned all pretense of civility. The time had come to shatter this carefully constructed facade. "My parents remained married when the fire devastated our lives, yet you're three years my senior, being my half-sister. Isn't that intriguing?"

The observation struck Paige's most vulnerable point. Nothing terrified her more than public discussion of her illegitimate birth. Elliana's calculated revelation forced her to press her lips together in rigid silence, terrified that further conversation would expose even more humiliating truths.

Though Paige retreated into silence, the livestream chat erupted with speculation.

"I dismissed it as gossip before, but Elliana's public statement and Paige's inability to deny it suggests the rumors were accurate. Kiara truly was the mistress!"

"Now Elliana's hostility toward Paige makes sense. Is Elliana avenging her mother?"

"Paige's mother destroyed Elliana's parents' marriage, so Elliana targets Paige's relationship. Perfect karmic justice!"

"I loathe home-wreckers and feel zero sympathy for their illegitimate children. Despite Paige's beauty, she'll never earn my support!"

Witnessing public opinion turning viciously against Paige, Haley frantically signaled the camera crew to redirect focus toward the next guest.

Vivien stepped into the spotlight. The moment cameras captured her, she waved enthusiastically and beamed. "Hello, everyone! I'm Raylan's sister, Vivien. My mission on this show is protecting my brother and his fiancée's perfect relationship from any outside interference!"

Vivien's rehearsed declaration, prepared before Elliana's explosive revelation about Paige's illegitimate origin, had been crafted to target Elliana.

The whole crew's original strategy involved portraying Elliana as harboring designs on Raylan, suggesting she joined the show to steal Paige's fiancé. However, circumstances had shifted dramatically, and Vivien failed to adapt, inadvertently deepening Paige's humiliation.

The livestream chat immediately rekindled discussions about infidelity and homewreckers.

Paige shot Vivien a venomous glare, muttering through clenched teeth that Vivien was an absolute imbecile.

Oblivious to her blunder, Vivien eagerly anticipated exposing Elliana's former supposed feelings for Raylan, salivating at the prospect of humiliating Elliana before millions.

Haley, however, dared not risk another disaster and swiftly directed cameras toward the next guest.

The following introductions proved disappointingly mundane.

Two freshly debuted male artists, Townsend Herrera and Cesar Chapman, clearly hoped to benefit from proximity to the celebrated actor Kent, yet neither possessed any

distinguishing qualities.

Two rich girls, Nayeli Byrd and Celine Rivera, alongside a loaded guy, Joaquin Fairclough, similarly failed to capture any meaningful attention.

The final guest, however, offered an unexpected breath of fresh air. Hailee Loftus stood apart—a recent college graduate from modest origins, her background sharply contrasting with the assembled elite.

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The previously subdued livestream chat suddenly buzzed with renewed interest.

"Hailee radiates authenticity - gentle, unspoiled, her natural appearance feels refreshingly genuine."

"Wait, isn't this program titled 'The Heiress' Graduation Trip'? How did someone ordinary secure a spot? What purpose does she serve?"

"Will a regular person inevitably suffer among these wealthy heirs and socialites?"

With quiet confidence, Hailee smiled and shared her purpose. "My goal is simple: meet diverse individuals, experience new perspectives, and expand my knowledge. I appreciate your understanding."

The other guests exchanged contemptuous smirks.

Elliana's gaze sharpened as she sensed something amiss.

Elliana's mind raced. The show, pretentiously titled "The Heiress' Graduation Trip," established its exclusive social hierarchy instantly, creating no space for commoners. Yet, somehow Hailee—a girl of remarkably ordinary background—had inexplicably secured a place among them. Why?

From Hailee's first appearance, Elliana's mind worked to unravel this puzzle. As contemptuous glances cascaded toward Hailee, Elliana swiftly connected the pieces. Beyond the artists—Kent, Townsend, and Cesar—everyone recognized Hailee, though she remained oblivious to their identities. Her presence couldn't be coincidental. Some hidden agenda lurked beneath the surface.

After the final introduction, Haley reclaimed control with practiced authority and unveiled the episode's challenge. "Today, we'll guide our live audience through the

Ublento Art Museum, immersing ourselves in masterpieces from renowned artists while experiencing the sublime beauty of refined aesthetics. The evening culminates on the third floor, where we'll witness the finale of the Starry Oil Painting Competition. I'm thrilled to announce we've secured legendary oil painter Mr. Luciano Scott as our special guest."

Before Haley's final word faded, Vivien erupted with calculated enthusiasm, "Mr. Scott stands as an icon in the oil painting world and currently presides over the Calligraphers and Painters Association. Meeting him has been my lifelong aspiration!"

Haley's smile glinted with manufactured warmth. "Mr. Scott devotes himself entirely to his craft and rarely entertains strangers. Our show has cultivated this rare opportunity for you all to encounter him personally. Seize this moment—let's discover who might earn the privilege of becoming his student."

Paige's eyelashes fluttered dramatically. "Are we all eligible for consideration?"

Haley nodded with theatrical assurance. "Indeed, though becoming Mr. Scott's protégé demands extraordinary talent. His artistic pursuit knows no boundaries, and his standards for accepting students remain formidably high. Fortune favors you all!"

Paige clutched Raylan's arm with practiced excitement. "What an exquisite artistic journey awaits us! I've nurtured a passion for painting since childhood. I simply must excel and secure my place as Mr. Scott's student, contributing my vision to the artistic community."

Raylan gazed at her with manufactured adoration. "Chase your dream—I stand behind you completely."

Vivien chimed in with saccharine support, "You'll triumph, Paige, without question!"

Several guests, self-proclaimed art enthusiasts, perked up at the prospect of studying under Luciano's tutelage, eagerly anticipating their chance.

Only Elliana's lips curled into a knowing, sardonic smile. In her mind, she'd rechristened this farce "The Heiress 'Dramatic Show"—a brutally accurate label for the production's true nature. Haley and the others dressed today's spectacle in cultural sophistication, yet every segment had been meticulously engineered to glorify Paige alone.

The nauseating reverence for Luciano particularly grated against Elliana's nerves.

Luciano was no devoted artistic purist—behind his cultivated facade lurked countless shadowy transactions entwining money and influence. His appearance undoubtedly came with an exorbitant price tag from Merritt, all calculated to elevate Paige's social standing.

Elliana could map the coming charade with perfect clarity: Luciano would lavish praise on Paige's "exceptional talent," proclaiming her art's transcendent potential before announcing—with practiced spontaneity—that he'd selected her as his final protégé. Regarding the evening's competition, Paige had certainly submitted her entry long ago, with the championship trophy already engraved with her name. Once broadcast, this episode would catapult Paige's reputation to stratospheric heights, unleashing a deluge of lucrative endorsements.

This supposed cultural exploration masked a shameless vanity project funded by wealth and manipulation, with Paige as its centerpiece.

As for whatever traps Paige had set along this carefully choreographed path, Elliana had yet to uncover them.

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Having dissected these machinations and noting the cameras focused elsewhere, Elliana discreetly messaged Matthew. "Investigate Luciano's meetings and activities over the past forty-eight hours."

Matthew's response arrived instantly. "Consider it done, Lexi."

Right then, Haley announced their departure.

The production team had arranged transportation to the Ublento Art Museum. At Haley's signal, everyone gathered their belongings and migrated toward the waiting bus.

Elliana pocketed her phone and reached for her suitcase.

In that moment, Vivien approached. With cameras trained on Paige and Raylan ahead, this exchange remained unfilmed, revealing Vivien's authentic, tyrannical nature.

"You-come here!" Vivien jabbed a finger toward Hailee imperiously. "You're responsible for my Luggage!"

Everyone within this privileged circle recognized Vivien's tyrannical tendencies and wisely avoided confrontation. They silently collected their belongings and departed.

Humiliation blazed across Hailee's face, yet she swallowed her outrage and reluctantly grasped Vivien's massive suitcase, struggling under its weight.

Elliana, witnessing this cruelty, found herself intervening. "Vivien, why should someone else bear your burden?"

Vivien, nearly turned away, froze at these words and slowly pivoted, her eyes hardening to glacial points as they locked onto Elliana...

Hearing Elliana's words, Vivien shot Hailee a look and scoffed, her voice subdued enough not to be caught by the live stream. "She's just a nobody. She's Lucky we even let her on this show. What does she even bring to the table— fetching water? Collecting freebies? Sucking up paychecks she hasn't earned?"

With a sharp sneer aimed at Hailee and Elliana, Vivien turned on her heel and stalked toward the bus. "An ugly face she muttered. "You two really are made and a useless extra, for each other."

Elliana's eyes narrowed as she watched Vivien strut away, her figure retreating like a shadow that clung too long to the Light.

Beside Elliana, Hailee shifted uneasily. "I'm sorry, Ms. Marsh," she said softly. "I got you involved in this."

Elliana turned and gave Hailee a quiet once-over. Hailee looked like someone cut from a different cloth entirely— honest, untouched by scheming, with eyes too clear for a world this cruel.

"Why didn't you take a regular job after college?" Elliana asked, her voice calm but curious.

Hailee hesitated for only a moment before answering with quiet conviction, "Because this show pays better. My boyfriend... He's very sick. He needs surgery, and we don't have time to save up the slow way."

Then, with a small, grateful smile, she added, "Thank you for speaking up earlier. Really. But I knew what I was signing up for. I'm not one of them-I'm just passing through their

world. I had expected the bullying. But if it means I can help the person I love, I'll take every insult they throw at me and keep going. I just have to make it to the end."

Hailee's fear was plain to see—being kicked off the show halfway through would mean losing her full payout. And without that money, her boyfriend's surgery might never happen.

Elliana hadn't expected this delicate-looking girl to be so quietly tenacious. For just a boyfriend—not a husband—Hailee was enduring public ridicule, emotional strain, and the venom of women like Vivien. Most would've walked away by now, found someone new, and cut their losses.

Hailee reminded Elliana of herself—of the younger version who bore cruelty in silence, who clenched her fists through every indignity and refused to back down. She had once needed someone to stand up for her. Now, she could be that person for someone else.

Elliana's gaze flicked toward Vivien, who had just reached the bus steps, all smug confidence and swinging hips.

A smirk tugged at Elliana's lips. With a flick of her fingers, a silver needle slipped into the air, invisible to all but her. A beat later, Vivien let out a startled shriek and went crashing backward off the bus.

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Vivien hit the ground hard, her skirt flaring up in a humiliating arc. Lacy black panties—scandalously sheer—flashed under the sun, broadcast live to millions. Gasps exploded across the live stream.

"What the—did I just see that?" "Vivien's wearing that on a daytime show?"

"So much for the elegant heiress image—looks like she's ready for a midnight rendezvous!"

"Who was she planning to seduce on set, exactly?"

"No wonder she acts so high and mighty—compensating for something wild under the surface!"

The show had been pushing a love story angle—Paige and Raylan as the golden couple. Paige had been basking in the limelight until Vivien's unfortunate tumble stole the show.

The chat exploded with Vivien memes, screenshots, and commentary. Paige's name all but vanished from the feed. Haley, behind the scenes, snapped to action, instructing the crew to pan away from the chaos. But the damage was already done.

Paige, seething inside, kept her smile frozen in place. She wanted nothing more than to kick Vivien out of her way—and possibly off the planet—but Raylan stood beside her, and millions were watching. So, she put on a show of concern and rushed to Vivien's side, her voice dripping with faux empathy.

The camera zoomed in as a bodyguard draped his jacket over Vivien's lower half. Her cheeks burned as red as her exposed lace.

Vivien wailed dramatically on the ground, her voice echoing across the set. "It hurts! Ah—it really hurts!"

Paige clenched her jaw, restraining the fierce urge to kick Vivien. Instead, she bent down with practiced sympathy and said sweetly, "Vivien, hang in there. The doctor's on the way."

Right on cue, the show's accompanying physician arrived. A brief examination was all it took. "Severe soft tissue bruising. She needs rest and observation. I recommend hospitalization."

"No!" Vivien sobbed harder, clutching the hem of her designer skirt. "I don't want to go to the hospital! This is my first variety show! I still have so much to show! My dream of becoming a star hasn't even started!"

But her cries did nothing to change her fate. Moments later, she was whisked away—suitcase and all—still crying about lost dreams and camera time.

With Vivien out of the picture, the filming resumed. Raylan, though still by Paige's side, seemed uneasy. His sister was injured, hospitalized—and it just didn't feel right to continue with showy romance while she was lying on a stretcher. Paige, stuck playing the grieving girlfriend, wore a mask of polite concern and somber elegance. Internally, she was fuming. This wasn't how things were supposed to go.

Elliana, watching the whole thing unfold, barely held back a chuckle. She leaned toward Hailee and said with a grin, "Well, the bully's off the board. You can breathe a little easier now."

Hailee glanced up at Elliana, and while no one else had noticed Elliana's little sleight of hand, she had. She'd seen the flick of the fingers. The needle. The smirk.

Eyes wide with a mix of awe and disbelief, Hailee whispered, "Ms. Marsh, I-I want to tell you a secret..."

Gratitude welled within Hailee as she resolved to repay Elliana's defense with a vital revelation she'd just intercepted. She swept her gaze across the surroundings, verifying no listening ears lurked nearby, and then leaned in with hushed urgency. "Ms. Marsh, I need to warn you. I overheard Haley and Paige whispering about plans to sabotage you during the recording."

Though Elliana had anticipated such plots, appreciation softened her features. "Thank you for the warning. Let's go."

With swift determination, Elliana gripped her suitcase handle and strode toward the waiting bus.

Hailee hesitated briefly before falling into step behind her.

After stowing their Luggage, the two boarded the vehicle and materialized back into the live broadcast.

The bus doors sealed shut with finality, and the journey to Ublento Art Museum commenced.

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Tension permeated the vehicle's interior while the live chat spiraled into chaos—comments veering wildly off-topic, completely derailing the show's intended trajectory.

No one had foreseen such immediate complications. Paige's expected dominance over Elliana had reversed into repeated failures, and Vivien, meant to be her accomplice, had foolishly been whisked out of the scene.

The livestream couldn't afford dead air—enthusiasm needed Maintaining, or viewers would abandon the broadcast in droves.

Since Paige and Raylan still needed to perform their melancholy scene over Vivien's injuries, Haley couldn't ask them to enliven the atmosphere now, forcing her attention elsewhere. Her gaze landed on Kent first. "Kent, why not entertain everyone with a

song?"

Haley surmised that Kent, playing a key role in Paige's love triangle, seemed the perfect choice. A love ballad dedicated to Paige could elevate the broadcast's mood while refocusing attention where it belonged.

Yet, the moment the suggestion left Haley's lips, Kent's eyes blazed with horrified disbelief.

Internally, Kent unleashed a stream of curses. What incompetent producer had the show hired? Didn't they know about his tone-deafness?

Haley missed his silent panic entirely. "Just perform your hit single, 'Irresistible Charm. '"

Kent teetered on the edge of a meltdown. That "hit" belonged to another singer entirely—released under his name after his ascent to fame, purely for profit. His celebrity status was built on fabrication, every performance merely elaborate Lip - syncing. The prospect of singing live before countless viewers spelled certain catastrophe.

Oblivious to his distress, Haley beamed with satisfaction and instructed the crew, "Cue Kent's music."

Though desperate to verbally eviscerate Haley, Kent found himself trapped as the music began. With no escape, he cleared his throat and braced himself.

Just as the introduction neared its end, Kent seized a water bottle, and the moment his cue arrived, erupted into violent coughing. The hacking fit nearly turned him inside out.

Anticipation dissolved into disappointment as viewers flooded the chat with dissatisfied comments.

After coughing until crimson stained his cheeks, Kent raised apologetic eyes. "Sorry, I don't think singing is possible for me today."

A sardonic smirk curved Elliana's lips. What a spectacular disaster of a performance... Just then, her phone vibrated against her hip. A message from Matthew illuminated the screen. "Lexi, I've forwarded Luciano's complete itinerary from the past forty-eight hours in the attached file."

Elliana opened it to discover confirmation of Luciano's visit to Merritt's exclusive club.

Matthew continued, "Lexi, we've secured surveillance footage from Luciano's other destinations, but the Merritt's club remains impenetrable. Their cybersecurity exceeds our capabilities."

"I'll handle this personally," Elliana replied.

With the other guests deliberately shunning her and Hailee momentarily called away, Elliana made use of the isolation to infiltrate Merritt's network through her smartphone. Using Matthew's timeline, she swiftly located footage of Luciano's meeting with Merritt—Paige conspicuously present.

In the footage, Merritt admired a canvas before him with evident satisfaction. "My sincere gratitude, Mr. Scott, for delivering this painting personally."

In response, Luciano's smile dripped with obsequiousness. "Serving you is my greatest honor. This represents my finest work yet. With Miss Jones' name attached, victory at the Starry Oil Painting Competition is assured."

Nearby, Paige blossomed with delight as she extended a substantial check toward Luciano. "I appreciate your work, Mr. Scott. I anticipate our continued collaboration."

Elliana downloaded the damning evidence, meticulously erased her digital footprints, and exited the system.

At this time, the bus rolled to a stop at the Ublento Art Museum where Luciano awaited, dressed in artistic finery, surrounded by an admiring crowd.

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Paige, who had maintained her facade of melancholy throughout the journey, suddenly illuminated with excitement and rose eagerly.

As passengers disembarked, Paige deliberately lingered behind. Once beyond the camera's reach, she seized Elliana's wrist with surprising force.

Elliana regarded her with unruffled composure. "What do you want?"

Paige arched her eyebrows, undisguised arrogance saturating her expression. "Elliana, I have a few words for you..."

"Elliana, don't mistake your temporary victories for lasting triumph," Paige hissed. "You stole my rightful marriage, dragged my name through filth, destroyed my engagement celebration, and disrupted this show's Launch-yet you cannot halt my ascension. Watch closely as I soar to stardom while you remain nothing but a forgotten stepping stone beneath my feet. When I stand bathed in adoration's spotlight, you'll writhe as the internet's favorite mockery. Let's see whom Cole chooses when the dust settles!"

Venom and ice crystallized in Paige's glare, revealing the festering resentment she refused to relinquish.

Elliana's soft laughter floated between them as_ she recognized Paige's lingering obsession with Cole. This elaborate production-orchestrated through Merritt's considerable influence-served merely to rehabilitate Paige's tarnished image and recapture Cole's attention. Raylan was nothing but a convenient distraction, a human shield against Paige's scandals. How tragically pitiful. Years meticulously crafting her facade as Ublento's premier socialite, desperately accumulating accolades—all to marry Cole. Such hollow ambition.

Elliana's half-smile cut like glass. "I'll be watching intently—as you're blinded by others' brilliance while struggling to escape the judgment you've earned."

"You!" Fury drained color from Paige's face, but fear of discovery forced her rage underground. "What gives you the right to address me this way?" she seethed. "Remember why you joined this show—to extract the truth about that fire. Provoke me further, and those answers vanish forever."

Elliana's derisive scoff sliced through Paige's threats. "Oh, come on, don't make me laugh. It's not like we just met yesterday. Why would I trust anything slithering from your lips?"

Bewilderment flickered across Paige's features. "You're not seeking truth? Then what purpose brings you here?"

"Your downfall."

"How Laughable! With what weapon? Your empty title as Mrs. Evans?" Paige's voice dropped to a venomous whisper. "Word travels that Cole fled home last night, too furious to share your roof. How much Longer can you maintain this performance?"

With so many people in the Evans family's household, it wasn't surprising that someone

would gossip about this. Paige's knowledge didn't shock Elliana in the slightest. Elliana surmised that perhaps this incident explained Paige's persistent delusion regarding Cole. She resolved to let Paige cling to false hope—the higher her expectations soared, the more devastating their inevitable crash.

Interpreting Elliana's silence as confirmation, Paige's satisfaction bloomed into smugness. She delivered a final contemptuous snort before abandoning the vehicle.

Through the window, Elliana observed Paige gravitating toward Luciano, her practiced charm and radiance activating before the cameras. Elliana stepped from the bus, a knowing smile playing across her Lips.

The entourage surrounding Luciano streamed toward the Ublento Art Museum, Paige accompanying him per the show's orchestration, cameras tracking their every movement.

Relegated to the crowd's periphery with no visibility, Elliana retrieved her phone to monitor the livestream.

Paige engaged Luciano in art discourse, reciting clearly rehearsed lines that manufactured an illusion of artistic expertise, particularly regarding oil painting.

Luciano's arrival electrified the comment section.

"Mr. Scott's presence elevates everything-instant cultural refinement!"

"Never imagined I'd witness a master artist up close—thank you, producers!"

"Did you notice? Paige's commentary left Mr. Scott nodding appreciatively, praising her artistic perception. He seems ready to accept her as his protégé!"

"Where's Elliana hiding? Cowering in some corner, crushed by inadequacy before true artistic greatness?"

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"The Evans family's judgment bewilders me. Why choose worthless Elliana when Paige would bring such distinguished pride to their name?"

Elliana savored these comments with quiet amusement, anticipating the mortification awaiting Paige's devotees when their goddess's fagade eventually shattered.

Suddenly, commotion rippled from ahead.

Glancing up, Elliana realized they'd entered the museum's first exhibition hall, where an oil painting commanded universal attention.

Luciano adopted the posture of artistic royalty as he addressed the gathering, "This masterpiece, titled 'Spring Goddess,' comes from my idol, Rosa..."

The unexpected introduction of her work—with Luciano claiming devoted admiration—caught Elliana off-guard.

While she absorbed this ironic turn, Paige's voice sliced through the moment with calculated precision. "Elliana, come here..."

Without needing direction, the crowd stepped aside, leaving a clear path that led the camera straight to Elliana.

With a saccharine smile, Paige turned to Luciano and said, "Forgive the interruption, Mr. Scott, but I was hoping Elliana could hear your thoughts firsthand. She should see what true art feels like."

Luciano returned the gesture, offering a mild smile and a small nod in response.

Paige lifted her hand in an inviting wave. "Elliana, hurry up and get over here!"

Elliana didn't have much choice under so many watchful eyes. She made her way forward and stood next to Paige without hesitation.

With a sugary tone, Paige made the introduction. "Mr. Scott, meet my sister Elliana. I'd love for you to mentor her too."

Moments earlier, Luciano and Paige had pretended it was their first encounter, keeping things formal and proper. But once Paige quoted a few lines, Luciano laid on the compliments thick, his praise gentle but overwhelming, slowly coaxing her into comfort.

Their performance was seamless. Everyone in the room assumed that Luciano saw real potential in Paige and was already considering her as a future protégé.

The ones trying to grab even a minute of Luciano's time were left watching in envy, just like the thousands tuning into the livestream. Paige had clearly stolen the spotlight.

With Paige's invitation placing her in the spotlight, Elliana suddenly looked like the next chosen one in the eyes of the crowd.

Online, comments poured in, overflowing with admiration for Paige's apparent generosity.

"Unbelievable! After everything, Paige still hands Elliana this kind of chance? That level of kindness is rare-some people chase this moment for a lifetime."

"Exactly. Paige has done her part—now it's Elliana's move."

Deep down, Elliana wasn't fooled. She could see the trap dressed up as kindness. Just as she had expected, the moment played out exactly that way.

Luciano gave Elliana a once-over and then let out a short, mocking laugh. "Is that getup supposed to show us how much you know about art?"

The crowd erupted. Laughter echoed through the space, and every eye turned toward Elliana like she was the punchline of a long-winded joke.

Elliana didn't blink. Her hand went to her untamed wig, and her gaze shifted to the framed photograph of a world-famous artist hanging just behind him. "So tell me, Mr. Scott. Are you saying he doesn't get art either?"

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Everyone turned to see what had caught her eye. On the wall hung a portrait of a legendary artist from the previous century-his hair just as untamed and his face just as boldly painted as Elliana's.

A faint smirk tugged at Elliana's lips. "When a genius wears it, you call it expression. But when someone like me does the same thing, suddenly it's ignorance? Tell me, Mr. Scott, do you judge art or the artist?"

The question hit Luciano like a slap. Color drained from his cheeks before rushing back in full force.

On the livestream, the chat exploded with Laughter.

"You know, I thought Elliana's outfit was a bit much at first, but after seeing that artist, she doesn't seem so out of place. This isn't weird-it's art!"

"Lol, she flipped the script! Mr. Scott definitely came off a little biased there."

"Weren't we told Elliana was awkward and clueless? She just wrecked that narrative with one comeback!"

Noticing the livestream comments drifting away from the show's intended focus, Paige swiftly stepped in to steer the conversation back on track and lighten the moment for Luciano. "Mr. Scott, could you please introduce us to Rosa's Spring Goddess?"

Thankful for the lifeline, Luciano latched onto the new topic and dove straight into his monologue about Spring Goddess.

With focus restored to the painting, Paige allowed herself a quiet exhale—though not without casting a daggered glance in Elliana's direction.

What rattled Paige most was how unpredictable Elliana had become—every word from Elliana now had the potential to knock her off balance.

Elliana tilted her head slightly, a half-smile playing on her lips, as she listened to Luciano's polished introduction of her creation, Spring Goddess.

"Rosa is widely celebrated across the globe for her brilliance in fashion and jewelry design, but long before she launched the Rosa brand, her talent first emerged through painting. One of her earliest creations, Spring Goddess, holds a special place in her artistic journey. The Ublento Art Museum was lucky enough to add Spring Goddess to its collection five years ago, and it has remained one of its most cherished pieces ever since. As someone who deeply admires Rosa's work, I've studied this painting in great detail. I encourage you all to take a closer look. This isn't merely an oil painting—it's nature captured through a master's hand. After witnessing Rosa's artistry, most other paintings struggle to compare."

While Luciano continued his polished delivery, Elliana couldn't help thinking he and Paige might've taken the same drama class—both excellent at memorizing their lines.

With a smile still lingering, Luciano turned toward Paige. "Would you care to share your interpretation of Spring Goddess?"

The question wasn't spontaneous. It had been planned in advance, scripted to give Paige the spotlight and boost her standing in the viewers' eyes.

Paige's smile radiated confidence as she replied, "I'll do my best, Mr. Scott. I only hope my reflections do justice to Rosa's brilliance."

Under Luciano's approving gaze, Paige launched into her recitation, her voice gaining confidence with each word. "Actually, I'm also a devoted admirer of Rosa. It's truly an honor to share the same artistic idol with you, Mr. Scott. I often envision the moment we might meet our inspiration together. I've made countless pilgrimages to the Ublento Art Museum to stand before the Spring Goddess. Each visit unveils new layers, fresh revelations. Rosa captures the very essence of beauty in her work. Nothing I've encountered compares to Spring Goddess—how it distills the world's entire spring into a single canvas. With just a handful of masterful strokes, Rosa conjures a breathtaking spectrum of color, while delicate ink touches reveal the goddess's beauty and compassion. Yet, the true power of Spring Goddess transcends Rosa's technical brilliance—it's the artistic vision that moves us. Viewing this masterpiece through different lenses—angles, times, moods—creates an entirely unique experience each time."

Her acting skills kicked in, emotion overtook Paige, her eyes brimming with unshed tears. "Spring Goddess holds within it every shade of human feeling—drawing one into a world overflowing with emotion from the very first glance."

Her final words hung in the air as two crystalline tears traced paths down her flawless cheeks.

The room erupted with thunderous applause.

In the live stream's comment section, praise surged like a tidal wave.

"Hear, hear!"

"Who Knew Paige possessed such profound insight into Rosa's work? Her art knowledge runs deep. No wonder she reigns as Ublento's premier socialite—genuine talent shines through."

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"Paige clearly has the makings of a remarkable orator. Her eloquence astounds me. Many share these feelings but lack the vocabulary to express them so beautifully."

Exhaustion crept through Paige's body after delivering such an extensive monologue. She had feared she would forget lines, but thankfully, she'd managed to flawlessly

deliver the script prepared by the production team, earning glowing responses.

Paige released a hidden sigh of relief while outwardly Maintaining her modesty. "I hope my impromptu thoughts weren't embarrassingly inadequate."

"Quite the contrary! Your interpretation soared! Such profound understanding-and those tears provide the ultimate proof! Only someone who truly comprehends Rosa's genius could experience such overwhelming emotion. Magnificent, truly magnificent!" Luciano nodded appreciatively. "Paige, with such penetrating artistic insight, your success in the art world is inevitable. I have tremendous expectations for you-the community will soon welcome another brilliant, creative mind!"

Paige ducked her head shyly. "Mr. Scott, you're far too generous."

Following Luciano's lavish praise, Paige's fans ignited the comment section with renewed fervor.

"Did everyone catch that? Mr. Scott just declared Paige a genius artist!"

"Paige defies expectations!" "I'm desperate to see her work! Where can we view it?"

"Word has it Paige's piece will feature in tonight's Starry Oil Painting Competition. Our visual feast awaits!"

Elliana surveyed the comments scrolling across the massive screen and then shifted her attention to Luciano and Paige, thinking what a waste it was that neither had pursued careers in acting.

While Elliana silently mocked their performance, Luciano's gaze suddenly locked onto her, his expression hardening to ice. "You seem remarkably articulate. Pride must run through your veins. Since Paige requested I mentor you, I'll extend one opportunity."

Luciano gestured toward Spring Goddess. "Why not share your interpretation of this globally acclaimed masterpiece?"

At his suggestion, every eye in the room swiveled toward Elliana. Haley immediately directed the camera to capture Elliana's reaction. This segment-meticulously orchestrated by the production team-aimed to broadcast Elliana's humiliation live, transforming her into public entertainment. The elegant phrases Paige had delivered were crafted by a consortium of art experts. Elliana, whose education hadn't even

reached elementary completion, couldn't possibly produce anything approaching' brilliance. Elliana's commentary falling short of Paige's wouldn't constitute the greatest embarrassment-it would merely confirm her inferiority.

The production team anticipated Elliana's spectacular failure before millions of viewers, leveraging the moment to manipulate public sentiment against the Evans family.

Elliana pierced through their transparent scheme, her gaze sweeping coolly across Paige's and Luciano's smug expressions. She lobbed an unexpected question into the tension. "Do either of you actually understand oil painting?"

Her query left the assembled crowd exchanging bewildered glances.

"Elliana, what could you possibly mean by that?"

"Mr. Scott presides over the Calligraphers and Painters Association, with award-winning works recognized both nationally and internationally. Paige's eloquent commentary just dazzled everyone present. How dare you suggest they lack understanding of oil painting?"

Throughout the crowd, sycophants mingled with Luciano's devoted protégés—people who had tied their fortunes to his reputation. At Elliana's words, fury rippled through them like electricity, some nearly vibrating with rage as they contemplated physical confrontation with Elliana.

Yet, Elliana stood unwavering, a lighthouse amid stormy seas, her gaze carrying the slightest edge of mockery. The crowd's accusations washed over her like water off glass, the anger radiating from Luciano and Paige barely registering in her composed demeanor.

The live stream's comment section exploded with disbelief.

"Is this happening? Elliana actually challenges Mr. Scott's oil painting expertise?"

"Mr. Scott commands absolute authority in Ublento's art community, yet this complete novice displays such audacity!"

"Pure jealousy, nothing more. Paige shines so brilliantly that Elliana can't compete-so she creates chaos instead!"