

# The Price of Vanity [B1]

In un regno in cui bellezza e potere regnano sovrani, l'incessante ricerca della perfezione da parte della regina porta a una sconvolgente caduta.

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The Queen looked at all the paintings of her with a sense of dissatisfaction. None of them fully captured her beauty. She was certain, however, that Pavlo would succeed where all the other artists had failed. Pavlo was the best sculptor in the kingdom, and today he was going **to cast** her face and body to produce a sculpture that would capture her beauty in all of its magnificence. Someone entered the studio. It was Lutan, her most loyal servant. "My most esteemed Queen," Lutan said, with a **deep bow**. "**It pains** me to disturb you. However, the military guards insist that I inform you that the rebels are planning a revolt. **We beg** you to leave the castle immediately and be escorted to a secure and secret refuge." "Absolutely not!" **retorted** the Queen. "Those idiot rebels are incapable of revolt. And besides, Pavlo is preparing the **plaster** for my sculpture. Tell them I am busy and not to disturb me again, under any circumstances." Lutan bowed again. "I will **relay** the message, your Majesty." The Queen **stood still** — as still as the sculpture would stand, she thought — and Pavlo applied **plaster** all over her body. It was not as pleasant as she'd expected, particularly not being able to move or speak. But then, this was the price that must be paid for beauty. She imagined the finished sculpture, a perfect replica of her being **displayed** in public, as people came from all over the kingdom to admire it. Pavlo told her he would wait until the **plaster hardened**, and then he would remove it with great care. "The rebels are here!" someone shouted. It was Lutan's voice. "My most esteemed Queen, the rebels have invaded the castle!" he said, in a panicked voice. "They have killed most of the guards and many of the servants. They are searching for you. They plan to... to... to... to assassinate you, too. Oh my Queen, my Queen!" The Queen tried to respond, but the **plaster** had **hardened**. She couldn't even move her **lips**. "No, no, no," said Pavlo, voicing her thoughts. "You must excuse me, my Queen, but I didn't come here to die." "Pavlo, where are you going?" shouted Lutan. "You can't leave! You must release the Queen from the cast. Do it immediately or I'll have you executed!" "It's too late for that," said Pavlo, and then produced

a terrible scream. "You've killed him!" shouted Lutan. "You've killed the great artist Pavlo!" "That was me," someone said – someone lower class, thought the Queen [in disgust](#). It was one of those horrible rebels. "And you'll be next if you don't tell us where the Queen is!" It was only then the Queen realised that the idiot rebel didn't know that she was inside the sculpture. She would have laughed if she could — and if it wouldn't have revealed her position, of course. "Never!" said Lutan. "I'll never [betray](#) my Queen!" "Your Queen?" said the rebel [in disgust](#). "Your tyrant! That's what she is, a tyrant, an egotist! Her people [starve to death](#) while she spends the kingdom's riches on luxuries, on sculptures like this..." The Queen heard something metal against the sculpture. The rebel was hitting the sculpture with something. A knife? She [held her breath](#). "... on paintings to capture her vanity!" he shouted. This time, the Queen heard something [tear](#). It was the paintings, she [reckoned](#). The rebel was [tear](#)ing the paintings with a knife. "You can't do that!" said Lutan. "I can, and I'll be doing it to the Queen before the night ends. You have one final chance: where is she?" "I'll never tell you and you'll never find her!" said Lutan. The Queen felt [touched](#) by Lutan's loyalty. He really was her most loyal servant, and it was sad that he was going to die. She heard Lutan's final scream. He had served her well. Other rebels came and went, but none of them realized that she was inside the sculpture. And finally, one of the remaining guards came searching for her. She tried to scream, but she could produce only the smallest sound, too small for the guard to hear. "We are all leaving," she heard him tell one of her servants. "We are evacuating the castle and going to a safe and secret refuge." They were leaving the castle! She had feared that the rebels would burn down the castle but now she wished they would. She would rather burn than die like this: trapped, alone, starving to death. It was almost a year later when peace and order were [restored](#) to the kingdom. People presumed that the Queen had been killed and so they proclaimed a new Queen, this one gentle and altruistic, loved by her people. The sculpture was discovered. It was considered of great value because the great artist Pavlo had been working on it when he was killed. Other artists worked on it, [chiseling](#) it to reveal its [features](#) — the [features](#) of the beautiful but egotistical former Queen. In time, the sculpture went on display in public and people came from all over the kingdom — and later all over the world — to see and admire it, never

realising that the Queen had starved to death inside it, never realising the true price of her vanity.

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# Glossary

- **lips** = labbra
- **chiseling** = lavorare con lo scalpello
- **deep bow** = profondo inchino
- **It pains** = causare dolore
- **plaster** = gesso
- **stood still** = rimanere immobile
- **starve to death** = morire di fame
- **restored** = ristabilire
- **features** = lineamenti
- **to cast** = fare un calco
- **hardened** = indurirsi
- **in disgust** = disgustata
- **betray** = tradire
- **tear** = strapparsi
- **We beg** = implorare
- **relay** = riferire
- **displayed** = esporre
- **held her breath** = trattenere il respiro
- **retorted** = rispondere a tono
- **reckoned** = pensare
- **touched** = commossa