

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall (Prov 16:18)

A Proverbial Story

By Ted Hildebrandt

Victor Grant was the kind of manager people spoke of in hushed, fearful tones. Tall, impeccably dressed, and radiating an air of self-importance. Victor had built a reputation not through kindness or brilliance but through domination, sarcastic belittling of others, and unbounded pride. He made no secret of his belief that no one in the company could match his wit, leadership, or vision.

He often strutted through the office like a monarch surveying his subjects, dispensing criticism as though it were a favor and dismissing ideas that weren't his own. Employees feared his sharp tongue and cringed under his cruel, snarky comments. Over the years, many promising young talents left, sick and tired of Victor's suffocating and stifling reign.

But among those who remained was Evelyn Hart.

Evelyn was humble, steady, quiet, and observant — a woman who believed in the strength of preparation and patience. While Victor overlooked her, assuming her to be an unremarkable cog in his grand machine, Evelyn was meticulously listening to others, open to learning and innovation. Her kindness and talent easily gained the respect of her peers.

One day, the company announced a major opportunity: a lucrative research grant from a high-profile client that could redefine their future. Victor, of course, declared himself the natural choice to lead the proposal, claiming no one else had the vision or acumen for such an undertaking.

The executive board, wearied but unwilling to challenge him, agreed — with one caveat: if anyone else could present a better proposal, they would consider it.

Victor scoffed. "Let them try," he said with an arrogant smirk, "they'll only embarrass themselves."

Evelyn, encouraged by her colleagues, quietly assembled her team. Night after night, they worked tirelessly, gathering insights, crafting a strategy, and anticipating the client's unspoken needs. Where Victor's plan was bold but superficial, relying on bravado and unproven assumptions, Evelyn's was thoughtful, innovative, and deeply rooted in research.

The day of the presentation arrived. Victor strode into the boardroom with confidence, certain of his ultimate victory. He delivered his pitch with the usual flair — sweeping gestures, grand promises, and haughty boasts about his irreplaceable leadership.

The board nodded politely.

Then came Evelyn's turn. She spoke calmly, letting the strength of her work shine without needing theatrics. She outlined real solutions, detailed risks and contingencies, and demonstrated a thorough understanding of the client's industry, leaving the room silent in admiration.

There was no polite applause when she finished, only an astonishing, apparent certainty of her triumph.

The decision was unanimous. The contract would go forward under Evelyn's leadership.

Victor's fall was swift and absolute. His pride, so long his shield, had blinded him to the rising talent around him and the weaknesses of his own arrogance. Stripped of his authority, he was demoted and left to watch from the sidelines.

Evelyn didn't gloat, nor did she seek revenge. She simply got to work, proving that real strength is shown not in arrogance, but in humble wisdom through careful listening and sustained and steady excellence.

Victor learned — too late — the truth of the ancient proverb: **"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."**