

WHEN POWER LOOKS LIKE A HOUSEBOY

She shifted the folder against her chest, crossing one arm loosely. "Well unfortunately I've learned to trust my first impression," she said. "And my first impression of you is that you are not on my level. I don't entertain this kind of thing. We are not the same class."

The words should have hurt more than they did. Instead, they stirred something else inside him. Irritation, yes. But also a dark, amused part of him that found the situation absurd.

This woman Camilla had no idea she was talking to her boss, the new CEO of Xavier global holdings.

"I see," Ethan said quietly. "You think I'm below you."

"It isn't personal for me," she replied, which made it feel even more personal. "I simply don't date houseboys or low-level staff. I have standards."

"Houseboy," Ethan repeated in his head, almost choking on a laugh.

If Leonard heard this, the old man would probably faint. The new owner of Xavier Global, treated like a houseboy in his own villa.

He glanced down at himself. Wrinkled shirt from travel and stress. No tie. No obvious brand names. No security detail at his side. To her, he really did look like every other worker running errands in the mansion.

He blew out a short breath, half sigh, half laugh. "You really have no idea," he said aloud.

Her eyes narrowed slightly. "About what?"

"About who you're talking to," Ethan replied, straightening a little.

She gave an annoyed little scoff. "Let me guess. You're actually very rich, right? You boys all use the same line." 1

"Not a line," Ethan said. "A fact."

He lifted the hand holding the flash drive slightly, then let it fall back to his side before she could focus on it. "Hey, madam," he said, looking directly into her eyes. "You judge too quickly. I am very rich. I own this whole building."

He was kind of eager to clear her doubts and impress her.

Silence pressed into the hallway. 1

Her expression shifted from bored to disgusted disbelief. "You own this building," she repeated slowly.

"Yes," he said simply. 1

She stared at him like he had just claimed to own the sun. "You must be very crazy," she said. "And delusional."

He spread his hands a little. "Or maybe you're just wrong about me." 1

Her jaw tightened. She stepped closer, not in fear, but with the force of someone used to being obeyed. "Do you know," she said sharply, "that I can get you sacked for saying something like that?"

He watched her, studying the way her spine straightened, the way her voice carried without shouting. She was used to power, at least over



people who wore what he was wearing. 2

"Is that so?" Ethan asked softly.

"Yes," she replied. "And not just for your words. For approaching me like this. For stopping me in this corridor. I can have you dismissed before the day ends." 2

Her threat hung between them, sharp and confident, as if his entire life depended on her mood. 2

She had no idea who she was talking to.

And Ethan, holding his grandfather's empire in one hand and her contempt in the other, felt something dangerous stir behind his calm eyes. 4

For a moment, neither of them moved. 1

Camila's chin was slightly raised, her eyes turned cold, every inch of her body language was screaming that she was done.

Then she exhaled, loud and impatient.

"You know what," she said, shaking her head, "I really don't have time for this... just fuck off." 2

She stepped forward and shoved him out of her way with her shoulder, as if he were nothing more than a cleaning staff blocking the hallway. Ethan's back brushed the wall, and he had to steady himself with one hand. 3

He didn't say a word. 1

He just watched her walk away, heels clicking against the marble, grey suit cutting through the corridor like a blade. She never looked back at him, not once.

"Interesting," Ethan thought, his jaw was tight. "Very interesting." 1

Camila's focus shifted the second she reached the far end of the hallway.

The thick sandalwood doors of Magnus Xavier's room opened. Steward Leonard stepped out, his face was pale, his eyes red-rimmed. His shoulders were heavy with grief, but his back was still straight in loyalty. 3

Camila adjusted the folder in her arms, straightened her posture, and moved toward him with brisk, practiced confidence. 1

"Mr Leonard," she called. "Good afternoon."

Leonard looked up, a little startled. "Camila Rowan," he said softly. His voice was rough, like it had been used too much already. "What is it?" 1

"I'm sorry to bother you at a time like this," she said quickly. "I know today is... difficult. But this is urgent." 1

Ethan stayed where he was, about thirty paces behind them. He didn't move, but his ears were open. 1

Leonard rubbed his temple. "What's so urgent that it can't wait?"