

Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 11

Evie's pathetic acting was almost laughable.

"You did that on purpose?" I sneered.

Evie sniffled. "How could you accuse me like that, Jillian?"

Right at that moment, Archie walked in. Dressed in a sharp suit, he looked so different that I almost didn't recognize him.

After understanding what had happened, he turned to me. "Jillian, Evie didn't mean to, Can't you just let it go?"

I replied coldly, "We'll know if it was intentional once we check the security footage."

This situation was eerily similar to the first time Evie and I had met.

Back then, I had let it slide for Archie's sake. But now? I didn't even intend to acknowledge him anymore, so why should I tolerate Evie putting on the innocent act in front of me?

The moment I mentioned security footage, Evie panicked. She lowered her head and mumbled pitifully, "Jillian, are you still holding a grudge against me? I'll replace your outfit, okay? Please don't be mad."

I was so confused.

Before I could respond, Archie immediately stepped in to comfort her. "Jillian has so many clothes. It's just one piece that you dirtied. Don't cry."

"I know." Evie leaned into him as she dabbed at her tears. "I may not come from a wealthy background, but I never intended to take advantage of you. I'll make sure to buy you a new outfit."

"Great." I smiled. "When will you bring it? I'd like it better if you paid for it yourself."

Evie's face froze.

Archie quickly spoke up for her. "Jillian, Evie is working hard to support herself through school. She doesn't have that kind of money. Don't pressure her like this."

"She's the one who offered," I said indifferently.

“Jillian.” Archie looked at me, disappointment written all over his face. “I never thought you’d be this kind of person. I told Evie you were reasonable, but now you’re making such a fuss over a single outfit.”

“Don’t be mad, Archie,” Evie whispered. “I’m not good enough. That’s why Jillian doesn’t like me.”

Archie grew even angrier. “You did nothing wrong! You don’t have to apologize.” He gently wiped her tears away.

Then, he turned back to me. “I already know the whole story, Jillian. Evie didn’t do it on purpose, and she already apologized. She’s just a poor student, and now she’s pregnant. Do you really have to push her this far? Why can’t you be as forgiving as you were before?”

He looked at me as if I had just bullied his beloved.

I got up, glanced at Evie, and then slapped Archie across the face.

His eyes widened in disbelief.

I shook out my hand. “I let it go last time. And what did I get in return? Her pushing the limits and you standing here, blaming me.”

Then, I slapped him again and sneered. “If your ears are useless, you might as well not have them! Didn’t she remember she was broke when she offered to compensate me? If she had any dignity, why would she need you to step in for her?”

“Archie, you sure are bold now. Where was this courage a year ago when you were drowning in debt? Why didn’t you tell those loan sharks to be forgiving? And yet here you are, acting tough in front of me.”

Archie’s face turned red. He clenched his fists and kept his head down, silent.

Evie, teary-eyed, touched his cheek and glared at me.

“I know rich people like you look down on me! But if you have a problem, take it out on me. Why did you slap Archie? I’ll pay you back every cent I owe, including what I owed you back then! I, Evie Carter, won’t owe you a single penny!”

Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 12

Half an hour later, Evie stormed in and threw a stack of cash onto the table.

“This is 20 thousand dollars. It’s more than enough to cover your two dresses. I never like owing people anything.”

With a smirk, I glanced at the giant diamond ring on her right hand.

“Really? But didn’t you say you’d pay for it yourself?”

Evie looked smug. “Archie agreed to this. If it weren’t for him begging me to use this money, do you think I’d want to? Jillian, Archie said that from now on, what’s his is mine and our child’s. One day, I’ll make sure you pay for every bit of humiliation you’ve made me suffer.”

With that, she turned on her heels and walked out.

Not long after, Archie knocked and stepped inside.

He hesitated at the door before speaking in a low voice. “Jillian, Evie’s hormones are all over the place because of the pregnancy. Don’t take it to heart. And... don’t take what I said to heart either.”

I no longer knew how we had ended up like this.

“I already told you. I’m not your sister anymore. You got what you wanted. From now on, we’ll go our separate ways. Don’t contact me again.”

I glanced at the bedroom. “I can’t take everything with me today. I’ll send someone to pack up the rest later. As for anything useless, just throw it away.”

I zipped up my suitcase and gave it a tug. It was pretty heavy.

“I’ll carry it down for you,” Archie offered.

I had no intention of making things difficult for myself. “Thanks.”

Archie gave a small smile. “It’s nothing.”

After a pause, he asked, “What are you planning to do now?”

“I’m going on a trip to unwind. Everything else can wait.”

When we reached the first floor, I took my suitcase from him. Looking at the younger brother I had watched grow up, I felt a swirl of emotions.

“If you have any issues at the company, ask the senior employees. I’ve already arranged things with Kaylee. Just focus on stability for the next year. That’s the best course of action. I’m leaving now. Take care of yourself.”

As the plane soared through the sky, all my stress and frustrations seemed to fade away.

Logan handed me a blanket. "Cover up. Don't catch a cold."

I took it, preparing to nap. "Wake me when we land."

After a few hours, the plane landed

We had a full day of rest at the hotel. We didn't bother with a strict itinerary; we just went wherever we felt like going.

For five days in Atruarea, I turned off my phone, cutting myself off from the outside world and enjoying a carefree life.

On one particular morning, rain poured outside. The gloomy weather made me want to stay in bed all day.

But lying in bed was like feeding myself straight to the wolf.

The next day, determined not to repeat my mistake, I decided to go shopping.

Logan wasn't too thrilled. Before leaving, he even tried to convince me otherwise. But this time, I refused to listen.

I grabbed my phone, picked up my bag, and headed out.

The mall was packed. I stepped into a women's boutique.

Logan picked up a dress, held it against me, and nodded approvingly. "This looks great. Try it on."

I eyed it suspiciously. "You sure?"

It was a black, body-hugging mini dress with fluffy fur accents in the front.

Logan's expression turned playful. "It'll definitely show off your figure."

I knew exactly what was going through his mind. I elbowed him, but instead of hurting him, I ended up hurting myself.

Logan immediately forgot his teasing and checked my arm anxiously. "Are you okay?"

"It's not my arm," I snapped. I had strained my aching waist from the earlier movement. Annoyed, I shot him another glare.

Realizing he was at fault, Logan rubbed his nose sheepishly and grinned. “I’ll give you a massage when we get back. I promise you’ll feel better in no time.”

Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 13

Just then, my phone rang. I handed my bag to Logan and stepped aside to answer it in a quieter spot.

Kaylee’s voice came through, sounding aggrieved. “Jillian, you finally picked up.”

Her voice sounded off. She had been with me since she had graduated. Despite being young, she was tough, hardworking, and always eager to learn. No matter how stressful things had gotten, she had never once cried.

I comforted her, saying, “Take your time. Tell me everything.”

Kaylee sniffled. “Ever since you left, the company’s been a mess. Mr. Houghton listened to us at first, but within a few days, he started summoning the other board members. Not only that, Ms. Carter and Mrs. Houghton Senior keep using meal deliveries as an excuse to show up at the company.

“Mrs. Houghton Senior is your grandmother, but she keeps badmouthing you and has even overturned a lot of the policies you put in place. When we tried to stop her, she had Mr. Houghton fire us.”

I pressed my fingers against my temple. “Archie agreed to all of this?”

Kaylee sighed. “Yeah. Mr. Houghton never really trusted us to begin with. He’s been dropping hints about it for a while now.”

“I see,” I said, exhaling slowly. “You’re all incredibly capable. This is on me. I’ll recommend you to other companies.”

“We want to work for you, Jillian.”

I chuckled softly. “That means starting from scratch. Are you sure you’re up for that?”

“We’re sure. We’ve already talked it over. Wherever you go, we’ll go.”

I nodded. “Alright then. Treat this as a paid vacation for now. We’ll sort everything out when I return.”

When I hung up and turned around, I saw Logan standing there. He had clearly been listening for a while.

I slipped my phone back into my bag. “You heard all of that?”

Logan took my hand. “Yeah. So what’s your plan?”

I sighed. “Shouldn’t I be asking you that?”

”

Harmon Group had already become a shareholder in my family’s company a while ago. It was all because of Archie’s massive gambling debt. That debt was also how Logan and I had first crossed paths.

“I’m done interfering. Just do what you need to do,” I said.

I had already done more than enough for that family. And Archie’s choices this time had truly disappointed me.

Logan ruffled my hair. “Then don’t stress about it. I picked out some clothes. Go try them on.”

Ever since I had turned my phone back on, the calls hadn’t stopped.

Most were from the management team, venting about the chaos at the company. I reminded them that I was no longer part of it before ending the calls.

At this rate, it was impossible to enjoy the trip any longer, so I booked a flight for the next day.

After landing, I met with Kaylee first and then immediately started scouting locations for the new company.

The moment Logan heard about it, he said, “That’s easy. Just pick a spot in one of our buildings.”

I appreciated the offer but shook my head. “It’s still just a small operation. I can’t afford the rent in a prime location like that.”

Logan leaned in and kissed me.

“What kind of nonsense is that? Since when does my wife need to pay?” His eyes gleamed mischievously as his hands started wandering. “But if you really insist on giving me something in return, we can negotiate a different kind of payment...”

I smacked his hand away. “Behave.”

Logan huffed in protest.

Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 14

I softened my voice. “Don’t worry. If I really can’t handle it, I’ll definitely ask for your help.”

Logan reluctantly agreed. “That’s more like it.”

“By the way, weren’t you planning to introduce me to your parents? Have you set a date?”

Logan’s eyes lit up. “You’re saying yes? I’ll set it up right now!”

He planted a quick kiss on my cheek and ran off to make the call. I smiled helplessly, feeling a warmth spread through my heart.

Logan finished the call in no time and pulled me into his arms. “Don’t worry. My parents are great. They already like you.”

I was surprised. “They know it’s me?”

Logan hesitated before admitting, “They kind of forced it out of me. But don’t worry. I only told them, and I made them promise not to tell anyone else.”

He nuzzled against my neck. “If you don’t want to go public, I won’t let anyone find out.”

When Logan and I had gotten married, it had been a purely strategic decision.

Back then, I had never expected anything beyond mutual benefits, so we had chosen to keep it a secret. But through it all, Logan had always respected my boundaries, and that meant a lot to me.

I looked at him and explained, “That’s not what I’m worried about. If you’d told me earlier, I would’ve visited them sooner. They’ve known about me all this time, but I never once went to see them.”

Logan gently stroked my face, trying to comfort me. “It’s okay. They won’t mind. They said they’re free next week and left it up to us to decide the time.”

I nodded. “Alright.”

After two days of scouting, I finally settled on a location that was both affordable and well-situated. Next came purchasing office supplies, handling paperwork, and applying for business licenses.

That weekend, I treated my team, who had chosen to start over with me, to dinner.

Raising my glass, I looked at the familiar faces around me. “Thank you all for trusting me again. This is a fresh start. Let’s build something great together!”

“To new beginnings!”

“To new beginnings!”

As the night went on, I drank more than I should have and had to fake being drunk to slip away.

Logan was waiting by the car. He stepped out and helped me inside.

“How much did you drink?” he asked.

“I was happy, so I drank a little more than usual.”

Logan was worried. “I can’t imagine you’re still feeling happy if you’re this miserable.”

When we got home, he made me a cup of honey water. I took a sip, and the warmth eased the discomfort in my stomach.

Logan set the cup aside. “Don’t fall asleep here. Go upstairs.”

I stretched out my hand. “My head hurts.”

Logan immediately scooped me up in his arms. “Let’s see if you still drink this much next time.”

Even after a full night’s sleep, my head still felt heavy.

By the time Logan came in with breakfast, I was already dressed.

“Take the day off. Don’t go in today,” he said.

“I had Archie send my stuff to Meadowlark Heights. I need to go check on it.”

Logan pulled me to sit beside him. “Eat first.”

As we were leaving, he said, “Don’t drive today, I’ll take you.”

“Alright.”

When we arrived at Meadowlark Heights, I got out of the car, and Logan drove off.

I unlocked the door and stepped inside, finding several large boxes stacked in the living room.

After about an hour of unpacking, I heard the doorbell ring.

Frowning, I went to check, only to see Evie and Grandma standing outside.

“What are you doing here?”

Evie brushed past me without waiting for an invitation.

Then, she scanned my place. “I heard you’re starting a new company, Jillian. Not bad. Looks like you’ve saved up quite a bit over the years. No wonder you let go of the company so easily. Turns out you already stashed away enough money for yourself.”

She turned to Grandma and said, “Marlene, we were worried for nothing. She took all that money.”

Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 14

I softened my voice. “Don’t worry. If I really can’t handle it, I’ll definitely ask for your help.”

Logan reluctantly agreed. “That’s more like it.”

“By the way, weren’t you planning to introduce me to your parents? Have you set a date?”

Logan’s eyes lit up. “You’re saying yes? I’ll set it up right now!”

He planted a quick kiss on my cheek and ran off to make the call. I smiled helplessly, feeling a warmth spread through my heart.

Logan finished the call in no time and pulled me into his arms. “Don’t worry. My parents are great. They already like you.”

I was surprised. “They know it’s me?”

Logan hesitated before admitting, “They kind of forced it out of me. But don’t worry. I only told them, and I made them promise not to tell anyone else.”

He nuzzled against my neck. “If you don’t want to go public, I won’t let anyone find out.”

When Logan and I had gotten married, it had been a purely strategic decision.

Back then, I had never expected anything beyond mutual benefits, so we had chosen to keep it a secret. But through it all, Logan had always respected my boundaries, and that meant a lot to me.

I looked at him and explained, “That’s not what I’m worried about. If you’d told me earlier, I would’ve visited them sooner. They’ve known about me all this time, but I never once went to see them.”

Logan gently stroked my face, trying to comfort me. “It’s okay. They won’t mind. They said they’re free next week and left it up to us to decide the time.”

I nodded. “Alright.”

After two days of scouting, I finally settled on a location that was both affordable and well-situated. Next came purchasing office supplies, handling paperwork, and applying for business licenses.

That weekend, I treated my team, who had chosen to start over with me, to dinner.

Raising my glass, I looked at the familiar faces around me. “Thank you all for trusting me again. This is a fresh start. Let’s build something great together!”

“To new beginnings!”

“To new beginnings!”

As the night went on, I drank more than I should have and had to fake being drunk to slip away.

Logan was waiting by the car. He stepped out and helped me inside.

“How much did you drink?” he asked.

“I was happy, so I drank a little more than usual.”

Logan was worried. “I can’t imagine you’re still feeling happy if you’re this miserable.”

When we got home, he made me a cup of honey water. I took a sip, and the warmth eased the discomfort in my stomach.

Logan set the cup aside. “Don’t fall asleep here. Go upstairs.”

I stretched out my hand. “My head hurts.”

Logan immediately scooped me up in his arms. “Let’s see if you still drink this much next time.”

Even after a full night’s sleep, my head still felt heavy.

By the time Logan came in with breakfast, I was already dressed.

“Take the day off. Don’t go in today,” he said.

“I had Archie send my stuff to Meadowlark Heights. I need to go check on it.”

Logan pulled me to sit beside him. “Eat first.”

As we were leaving, he said, “Don’t drive today, I’ll take you.”

“Alright.”

When we arrived at Meadowlark Heights, I got out of the car, and Logan drove off.

I unlocked the door and stepped inside, finding several large boxes stacked in the living room.

After about an hour of unpacking, I heard the doorbell ring.

Frowning, I went to check, only to see Evie and Grandma standing outside.

“What are you doing here?”

Evie brushed past me without waiting for an invitation.

Then, she scanned my place. “I heard you’re starting a new company, Jillian. Not bad. Looks like you’ve saved up quite a bit over the years. No wonder you let go of the company so easily. Turns out you already stashed away enough money for yourself.”

She turned to Grandma and said, “Marlene, we were worried for nothing. She took all that money.”

Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 15

Grandma’s suspicious gaze fell on me immediately.

Since the last time I had seen Evie, she had undergone a dramatic transformation. Now, she was draped in gold and diamonds like she had fully integrated into high society.

Ignoring her taunts, I said flatly, “So, what’s the plan this time? How are you going to frame me now? But before you try anything, you might want to check if there are any security cameras in here. Otherwise, if something happens, you won’t be able to explain yourself.”

Evie’s face stiffened. She glanced around uneasily and cleared her throat.

“Jillian, I came here today to tell you that you’ve already taken plenty from the company. Now you’ve got a new business, and you’re living in a prime location like Meadowlark Heights. So from now on, stop asking Archie for money.”

Grandma chimed in, “Evie’s right. Jillian, you have more than enough to live comfortably. Try not to talk to Archie if you don’t have to. But don’t worry. I’ll ask him to give your new company some special treatment.”

I looked at them coolly. “How considerate of you, making a special trip just to say this. But this is my home, and you’re not welcome here. Are you going to leave on your own, or should I throw you out?”

Grandma frowned. “What kind of attitude is this, Jillian? I’m your grandmother. Is this how you treat me?”

I had long since given up on family affection.

“It’s precisely because I still acknowledge you as an elder that I’m giving you a choice.” I let out a mocking laugh. “When you were acting like a family to me, did you ever consider my feelings? Like you said, let’s stop keeping in touch if we don’t have to.”

Evie fanned the flames. “Marlene, look at her! She doesn’t even have a shred of respect for you. And let’s not forget—this house belongs to the Houghton family. You and Archie pitied her, so you didn’t take it back. And now she’s trying to kick us out?”

That struck a nerve with Grandma. Her face darkened. “Jillian, if I had known, I wouldn’t have left you a single property!”

That was a low blow.

Without another word, I called Archie.

“Archie, you have 30 minutes to get to Meadowlark Heights. If you’re late, I’m throwing them out myself.”

“Jillian—”

I hung up at once.

Evie panicked the moment she heard I had called Archie. “What’s that supposed to mean? You think Archie will take your side? Don’t forget. We’re his real family!”

Archie arrived within 30 minutes.

His hair was a mess, and dark circles lingered under his eyes. As soon as he arrived, he apologized. “I’ll take them away right now. Sorry for the trouble.”

I waved him off.

Archie turned to Evie and Grandma, trying to persuade them, but his stance only made Evie explode.

“What the hell, Archie? You’re siding with her? Do you even know what she just did? She’s trying to kick us out!”

Grandma also looked displeased.

Archie raked a hand through his hair, looking like he was on the verge of losing it. “I have enough to deal with the trouble at the company! Can you two stop making things worse?”

His outburst startled both of them.

The moment they heard the company was in trouble, Evie and Grandma forgot everything else and rushed to ask what was going on.

“We’ll talk at home,” Archie said. Then, he turned to me. “We’ll be leaving now.”

I hummed in acknowledgment.

As they walked out, I could still hear Evie demanding, “Archie, what’s happening with the company? Wasn’t everything running smoothly?”

Archie’s frustrated voice snapped back, “Smooth? All you do is spend money! Do you even know how many projects are bleeding cash right now?”