

# Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 16

“What?” Grandma’s tone shifted sharply. “It must be Jillian! The company was fine until she came back. This is definitely her doing! I’m going to settle this with her!”

I wasn’t sure what Archie said to her after that, but it was enough to calm her down. No one came to bother me again.

At noon, I ordered takeout. Later, Logan came to pick me up.

“If your brother had just followed the path you had laid out for him, the company wouldn’t have to be in this mess. But he turned a winning hand into a losing one,” Logan said as he drove.

I frowned slightly. “How long can it hold out?”

“At most, a little over two weeks,” Logan replied. “Our company has already started preparing for an acquisition.”

Hearing that left a bitter taste in my mouth. Watching something I had nurtured for so long deteriorate made me feel complicated.

Sensing my mood, Logan reached over and took my hand. “The company will still be in your hands in the future.”

I shook my head. “I know you have plans for it. Merging it into Harmon Group might actually be for the best. To be honest, my parents founded this company, and real estate was always its core business. But it was never really my area of expertise.”

Harmon Group, on the other hand, was built on real estate. With Logan managing it, he could carve out a better future for the company.

Leaning back in my seat, I said, “I’d rather focus on the daily commodities industry.”

Logan smiled. “Then here’s to you reaching new heights, Ms. Houghton.”

Suddenly, a few photos surfaced online. They were taken during our trip to Atruarea. Logan’s face was clear, while mine was mostly obscured—just the back of my head or a partial side profile could be seen. Anyone who wasn’t familiar with me wouldn’t recognize me

After all, Logan was the heir to Harmon Group. His father, Jackson Harmon, had already stepped back, leaving Logan in charge. Therefore, any gossip about him instantly attracted attention.

Logan raised his hand sincerely. “I swear, I had nothing to do with this.”

I studied the photos carefully, “Huh, they were taken at just the right angles. Not a single front-facing shot of me.”

Logan played dumb. “There’s an easy fix, darling. Just say the word, and I’ll make an official announcement right now.”

“Oh, please. We’re meeting your parents tomorrow. How am I supposed to face them with this nonsense all over the Internet?”

I hadn’t even met them yet, and I had already stolen their son away. More than that, I was worried his parents might find the whole thing improper.

“You don’t have to worry. No matter what happens, I’ll take care of it.” Logan ruffled my hair. “Now, let’s get some rest. You’ll need your energy to meet your in-laws tomorrow.”

I shot him a look. “Why does that sound like I’m heading into battle?”

Logan chuckled. “Alright, alright. There’s no need to stress. You’ll charm them easily.”

Even with Logan’s teasing, I was still nervous about meeting his parents for the first time.

We brought gifts and drove to the Harmon residence.

Logan’s mother, Lydia Parry, was a kind-looking woman. The moment she saw me, she took my hand with a gentle smile. “Finally! I’ve been waiting for you, Jill, Can I call you that?”

Her kindness instantly put me at ease. “Of course... Lydia.”

I was shy when I said it, but Lydia’s face lit up with joy. She pulled me inside and sat me down.

“It’s so good to see you.” Then, she took out an emerald bangle she had prepared in advance and handed it to me. “It’s just a little something from the family—nothing too special. Just wear it for fun.”

She said it so casually, but I knew its worth. Even at an auction, it would cost millions of dollars.

“Thank you, Lydia.”

Jackson was just as warm. “Jill, if this brat ever bullies you, just come to us. We’ll make sure he pays for it.”

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I glanced at Logan with a smile and saw the helpless expression on his face.

With a chuckle, I said, “You can rest assured, Jackson.”

Logan let out a dramatic sigh. “Looks like I’m the odd one out here.”

Dinner at my in-laws’ home went smoother than I had expected. By the time evening rolled around, I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

As Logan placed a bowl of soup in front of me, he pulled me into his arms. “See? I told you it wouldn’t be that bad.”

I wrapped my arms around his waist. “It wasn’t just ‘not bad’. If you’d told me how easygoing they were earlier, I might’ve agreed to meet them sooner.”

Logan sighed in mock disappointment. “So my charm still isn’t enough to compete with my parents, huh?”

I kissed the corner of his lips. “You’re number one.”

He smirked. “Now that’s more like it.”

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My new company was officially open for business. To gain some momentum, I finally accepted the offer Logan had been extending to me.

After all, he had been turned down so many times that he was already losing patience. And honestly, why wouldn’t I take advantage of the benefits my own husband was offering?

Besides, this deal was also a morale boost for my team.

Both sides were eager to work together, so the contract was finalized quickly. With everything set in motion, the employees divided their tasks and got to work

Two days later, a commotion erupted outside the company. I pressed the intercom button and asked Kaylee, “What’s going on?”

She responded, “It’s Mrs. Houghton Senior and Ms. Carter.”

“Let them in. Have security wait outside.”

A moment later, Evie and Grandma stormed into my office.

Evie pointed at me furiously. “It was you, wasn’t it? You couldn’t stand it, so you set Archie up! How could you be so vicious?”

I almost laughed. “Ms. Carter, if you have proof, feel free to take it to the police.”

Grandma slammed her hand on my desk. “Listen to me, Jillian! If you dare harm my grandson, I’ll make sure you suffer for it. I’ll show up here every day and make a scene. Let’s see if you can still run it then!”

“I only respect reason, not shameless tantrums.” I turned toward the door. “Security! Get them out of here!”

A few tall security guards stepped in and started dragging them out.

Evie suddenly dropped to a crouch. “I’m not leaving! Jillian, unless you explain everything to me, I’m not going anywhere! Ouch! My stomach hurts! If anything happens to my baby today, I won’t let you off the hook!”

The moment Grandma heard the word “baby“, she let out an ear-splitting wail and collapsed onto the floor. “My granddaughter is bullying me! What is wrong with this world? Someone help!

Just then, Archie rushed in from outside.

He looked at me, and I waved a hand at the security guards. “Stand down.”

Then, I turned to Archie. “Mr. Houghton, does your family ever go away? Do I really need to call the police to get rid of you?”

Archie helped Evie and Grandma to their feet before turning back to me. “I’m sorry, Jillian. Grandma and Evie are just worried about the company. It’s—”

I cut him off. “I don’t want to hear about the company. You begged for it back then, so whatever happens now is your responsibility. I’ll let today’s incident slide, but if there’s a next time, I’ll make sure the police handle it.”

Grandma’s face twisted with rage. “You still have the nerve to bring up the company? Did you do this on purpose? You handed us an empty shell while secretly transferring all the money away!”

Her eyes scanned my office, her fury escalating. “Otherwise, where did you get the money to rent such a nice place?”

# Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 18

I said flatly, “What’s wrong? You were the ones who were so desperate to take over the company, and now you regret it?”

Evie snapped, “We wanted the company as it was, but you handed us an empty shell! You tricked us!”

I turned to Archie. “You know exactly what the company looked like when I handed it over. I got the board to accept you, left a team to support you, and paved the way so smoothly that even a three-year-old could have kept it running for six months. And yet, look at you, Archie.

“You were never convinced, always chasing unrealistic ambitions. The moment you took over, you wanted to make your mark, so you fired the entire secretariat department. But you let the board down.

“It’s been just over 20 days, and you can barely keep the business running. Archie, I have to say—I’m truly impressed.”

Archie’s face turned red with humiliation.

Grandma couldn’t bear to see her precious grandson being criticized. “Jillian, who do you think you are to talk down to him like that? If it hadn’t been for you meddling behind the scenes, Archie would’ve done better than you ever did!”

I let out a cold laugh. “You’re really blind with confidence, Mrs. Houghton Senior. Honestly, I’ve always wanted to ask you, Putting everything else aside, is it really that hard to admit that I have more experience than Archie?”

“It’s like just nodding to that fact would be the end of the world for you. Does putting down your own granddaughter, another woman like yourself, bring you joy?”

I looked at her with pity. “You went from being a daughter-in-law to a grandmother. That alone should have earned you respect from both me and Archie.

“But instead, you constantly belittle me just to prop him up. You cling to this outdated mentality, desperately trying to keep it alive. You spent your whole life pandering to men. How utterly pathetic.”

Grandma’s eyes widened in shock. I must have struck a nerve because she lunged at me, screaming, “You bitch! I’ll tear your mouth apart!”

Archie quickly held her back and shot me a disapproving look. “She’s your grandmother. Do you have to be so vicious?”

I lifted my gaze. “You’re the one who benefits from these outdated traditions. I’ve put up with this nonsense for years, and all I did was say a few words to vent my frustration. I think I’m being quite restrained.

“You know the truth, Archie. But since you’re the one enjoying the privileges, of course, you don’t see a problem with it.”

Then, I turned to Evie. “Your turn, Ms. Carter. What can I say? The first time I met you, you gave me this classic bitchy vibe. And the moment you spilled coffee on me, I knew you did it on purpose. You act like you’re so much better than me. Did you really think you were hiding it well?”

I offered her some advice. “In the real world, it’s best to stay humble. Otherwise, someone will eventually teach you a lesson.”

Evie wasn’t willing to back down. Suddenly, something occurred to her.

“Why are you being so aggressive, Jillian? Did Logan dump you? His pictures with another woman are all over the media. Who knows? Maybe she’s meeting his parents next. You’d better hold on tight.”

“That’s none of your concern.” I turned to Archie. “Are you leaving on your own, or should I have security throw you out?”

Archie pressed his lips together before saying, “Harmon Group wants to acquire the company. Jillian, are you really going to stand by and watch it fall apart?”

“Archie, I’m not a miracle worker. I can’t revive the company. I already told you everything you needed to know. Now, please leave.”

After finally getting rid of them, I felt my head pounding.

I called Kaylee over. “Tell the security downstairs that if they see those people again, they should stop them at the entrance. If they refuse to leave, call the police.”

## **Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 19**

On Friday afternoon, Lydia called me. “Jill, I hope I’m not interrupting.”

I smiled. “Not at all I’m not too busy right now.”

She invited me out for some shopping. It was a classic bonding activity for a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

I quickly messaged Logan, asking about Lydia's favorite clothing brands and jewelry preferences. He responded promptly.

After giving instructions to Kaylee, I went to pick up Lydia before heading to the mall.

From the moment we entered the first floor, I had the distinct feeling someone was following us. The place was crowded, so I couldn't be sure if it was just my imagination.

By the time we reached the fifth floor, where the clothing stores were, Lydia eagerly pulled me into a trendy boutique.

She said gently, "See if there's anything you like."

As I browsed, an all-too-familiar voice suddenly rang out, "Oh my, you're Mrs. Harmon, aren't you?"

I turned around to see Grandma and Evie blocking Lydia's way.

Lydia greeted them politely, "Hi."

Seeing that, I walked over. Mindful of Lydia's presence, I didn't want to argue with them. "What are you doing here?"

Surprised, Evie said, "Oh, Jillian! You're here too? You and Mrs. Harmon..."

She deliberately paused before adding, "So, I guess things didn't work out with Mr. Harmon, and now you're trying to win over Mrs. Harmon instead?"

The implication was clear. She was practically calling me a manipulative schemer.

Lydia frowned. "I invited Jill out today. Do you need something?"

Noticing Lydia's attitude toward me, Grandma's expression shifted immediately. She put on a warm smile. "Mrs. Harmon, I'm Jillian's grandmother, Marlene Payne. This is Evie Carter, my granddaughter-in-law."

Lydia didn't seem surprised. "It's crowded here. Let's find a place to sit and talk."

"Of course, of course."

As we walked, I pulled Evie aside and asked sharply, "What are you two up to?"

She smirked. "I underestimated you, Jillian. You really have some skills. You actually charmed the lady of the Harmon family. But since we can't get what we're owed from you, have to ask Mrs. Harmon."

I frowned.

Grandma put on an air of authority as she spoke to Lydia. “Jillian never tells me anything. If I hadn’t run into you today, I wouldn’t have even known that she’s about to get married”

Lydia responded in a gentle tone, “Jill is a wonderful girl. If she joins our family, we’ll make sure she’s well taken care of.”

Grandma’s eyes lit up. Her wrinkled face practically glowed with delight. “That’s wonderful news! Should we arrange a formal meeting between our families to discuss the wedding? I’ve prepared a generous gift for my future grandson-in-law.”

Bringing this up now was just a roundabout way of inquiring about the wedding gifts in return.

My frustration grew heavier. Their intentions were crystal clear. Did they really think they could use my wedding gifts to save their failing company?

What should have been a pleasant shopping trip was completely ruined by them.

Lydia, however, remained composed. “Of course. I’ll discuss it with my husband, and we’ll look for a hotel for the wedding.”

Grandma beamed and left with Evie.

I felt bad for dragging Lydia into this, but she surprised me by comforting me instead. “With a grandmother like that and a sister-in-law like her, I bet you’ve had a tough time.”

My eyes welled up. “It’s not so bad.”

She patted my hand. “Your parents are gone, and you’ve been holding this family together by yourself. Yet instead of supporting you, they’ve been exploiting you. As long as you have a clear conscience, you don’t need to pay attention to their complaints.”

No one had ever said something like that to me before.

I nodded. “Okay.”

Lydia gave me a reassuring smile. “Talk to Logan about these things. You’re husband and wife. You’re supposed to face hardships together. Don’t hesitate to depend on him.”

“Thank you, Lydia.”

She smiled. “Come on. Let’s continue shopping.”

This time, I decided to meet Archie.

When I arrived at the company and pushed open his office door, several people looked up at once.

I glanced around. "Perfect. Everyone's here."

Archie stood from behind his desk. "Jillian? What are you doing here?"

I glanced at him. "What, should I have let you continue harassing the Harmons?"

Evie looked smug. "You hear that, Archie? She and Logan are already discussing marriage. If she just speaks up, Harmon Group wouldn't dare acquire our company."

Archie shot me a look. "This isn't about the acquisition anymore. Even if Harmon Group backs off, there are still other companies interested. What we really need is funding."

Grandma cut straight to the point. "Then ask Harmon Group to invest in us. They're giving Jillian a wedding gift anyway."

The way she spoke, it was as if she already considered the Harmon family's assets to be hers.

Meanwhile, Archie's expression wavered. He was clearly tempted by the idea but too prideful to say so outright.

Their entitlement was downright laughable.

I sat down on the couch. "I won't agree to that."

Grandma's face darkened at once, "You don't agree? Jillian, don't forget. I have the final say. If I don't approve, you won't be marrying into the Harmon family,"

I rebuked casually, "You're welcome to try."

She opened her mouth to argue, but Archie stopped her.

After hesitating for a moment, he said, "If you won't ask them for help, could you at least use the house in Meadowlark Heights as collateral for me? Once the company stabilizes, I'll return it to you,"

I looked up. "And if I say no?"

A flicker of guilt crossed his face. "You're a woman, Jillian. You can't win against me."

Grandma was even blunter. “Jillian, if you hand over the house, I promise you’ll have a grand wedding and get every bit of your wedding gift.

“But if you insist on being stubborn, you won’t see a single cent from the Houghton family. We’ll take this to court, and I know people there. Archie is the legitimate heir by legal adoption. He has just as much right to that house as you do.”

“Grandma, are you really my grandmother?” This was truly eye-opening, “You’re teaming up against your own granddaughter over money?”

Grandma didn’t even flinch.

“Jillian, I don’t want it to come to this, but think about it. You’re a woman. You can’t just let all that money slip into someone else’s hands. Archie is family, and he’s doing this for the company. If he manages to turn things around, won’t you benefit from it too?”

## Regret Is Only the Beginning - Chapter 20

Grandma spoke so righteously, but it was too bad I didn’t believe them anymore.

“Even if I ever get married, I’ll have a prenuptial agreement in place. Besides, the house is my personal property. And as for the company, the day it was handed over to Archie, it ceased to have anything to do with me.”

I had made myself perfectly clear, yet Archie still wouldn’t let it go.

“Just say yes, Jillian.”

I was silent for a long time before I finally said, “I can’t give you the house.”

That was the truth.

Archie suddenly let out a laugh. For a moment, his expression was so unfamiliar, it was unsettling.

“Evie was right about one thing. You’d spend a fortune on a total stranger, but when I ask for a house, you refuse. Now that I’ve taken over the family business and I’m struggling, you won’t lift a finger to help. Jillian, have you ever really considered me your brother?”

Never in my life had I imagined he would say something like that.

I took a deep breath. A few seconds later, I grabbed the glass on the table and hurled it at him.

The glass struck the side of Archie's face before shattering on the floor. A thin trail of blood trickled from his temple.

"Have I ever considered you my brother?"

I stepped forward and grabbed his collar before spitting out my words one by one.

"That's a damn good question. When you racked up gambling debts and got cornered by loan sharks who threatened to break your limbs, did you stop to think about that before calling me, sobbing for help?"

"When I stood alone in front of those thugs, risking my neck to negotiate and buy you time, did you ever question whether I thought of you as my brother?"

"That stranger you're so bitter about at least knows when I'm upset and actually tries to cheer me up. Meanwhile, I've cleaned up your mess more times than I can count, and not once have you ever cared how I felt!"

"Fine, you want to split the family assets? Let's do it. Let's settle this once and for all!"

Archie stumbled back, his face drained of color.

Grandma had insisted on having her way, and Archie had completely burned the bridge. I had no energy left to carry a family full of dead weight.

"See you in court. This time, we're cutting all ties." I glanced at the three of them. "I just hope you won't regret it when all is said and done."

Logan brought me the documents.

Back then, when Archie had racked up a mountain of gambling debt, the debt collectors had come knocking. They had wanted his hands as collateral.

Archie had been scared out of his mind, bawling and begging me to save him.

He was my brother, after all. I couldn't just stand by and watch them mutilate him.

I'd had no choice but to scrape together the money.

But that kind of sum wasn't something I could just conjure up overnight. And those loan sharks weren't running a legal operation.

Every day, the interest had compounded, ballooning the debt even further. A single delay meant an even bigger price to pay.

I'd had no idea how to navigate that world, and Archie had been too terrified to think straight. When I had asked him who to contact, he hadn't had a clue.

So I'd had to find a way myself. After running around, I had finally gotten in touch with Logan.

Back then, he had seemed like a typical rich kid to me. He was born into a prestigious family yet hung around all sorts of people. But thanks to him, I had managed to meet the guy Archie had owed money to.

Loan sharks never worked alone. They always had muscle with them, each with a menacing look.

I had dealt with plenty of people in my life, but if it hadn't been for Archie, I would never have come into contact with guys like them.

Meeting them had been a gamble in itself. No one could have guaranteed I would walk away in one piece. They had been the real deal—men with nothing to lose.

But in the end, all they had wanted was money.

I had met with them and seen the IOU Archie had signed with his own hand.

"I'll get you the money," I had said. "But after this, you leave Archie alone."

"Fine. Come back here in three days. I expect the full amount."

I had frowned. "That's too soon. The sum is too large. I need at least six days,"

"Five." The man had smirked. "Ms. Houghton, we're only giving you this much leeway because of Mr. Harmon, Don't make things difficult for us."

I hadn't realized Logan had been pulling strings behind the scenes. I had been genuinely grateful.

Five days hadn't been just tight. It had been suffocating, I had liquidated everything I could—investments, properties, anything that could be sold. Even then, I had still been short by a significant amount.

Desperate, I had gone back to Logan and offered him a portion of my shares in exchange for the remaining funds.

He hadn't even hesitated before agreeing

But then he had said, "I have one condition."

“What is it?” I had asked.

Logan’s lips had curled into a slow smile. “Marry me.”

Snapping back to the present, I thought about how rushed that marriage had been and how uncertain I had been about the future.

And yet, looking back now, there wasn’t a single moment I didn’t feel grateful for the way things had turned out. A good man was rare, and I had been lucky.

Logan waved a hand in front of my face. “What are you thinking about? You’ve been zoning out.”

“Nothing” I glanced at the share conversion document and sighed. “I just can’t believe it’s come to this.”

Logan said, “With your brother’s personality and your grandma’s bias and pushy behavior, this was bound to happen.”