

Regret Is Only the Beginning

Chapter 6 Adoption Certificate

I finally understood the real reason Grandma had come.

Seeing how difficult it was for me to hand over a single house, she probably realized that getting control of the company back would be just as hard.

Grandma couldn't sit still any longer. She rushed over, trying to remind me of my "duties".

But I had never been someone who could be easily manipulated.

Annoyed, I reminded her, "Grandma, have you forgotten who I am and who Archie is?"

Grandma fell silent, and her gaze turned complicated. Her previously gentle attitude shifted into something colder.

"Jillian, are you saying you don't plan on handing the company back to Archie?"

Smiling, I looked at her coldly. "Grandma, maybe you're getting older and forgetful. There was never any talk about returning the company to Archie. Whether I manage the company or Archie does, you're still our grandma. Why bother trying to change who runs it?"

Grandma's face darkened. She slammed her hand on the table and said, "What kind of company isn't run by a man? Are you trying to make everyone think the Houghton family has no one left?"

"Jillian Houghton, I'm telling you! You have to give the company to Archie! A woman's duty is to get married and not meddle in men's business!"

Her words were laced with a deep-rooted preference for men. I had known for years that Grandma held these views, but hearing it so bluntly from her still stung.

No matter how capable a woman was, it meant nothing. Even if I had successfully run the company for years and earned public praise, to Grandma, it was all irrelevant.

She believed that a woman's place was at home, raising children. No matter how much I had achieved, a single word from her claiming a man would do a better job was enough to dismiss everything I had accomplished.

I wasn't surprised, though. I had long since stopped expecting anything from her.

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In the afternoon, Archie and Evie came over again when they noticed Grandma's efforts had failed to make me give up the house.

Evie said softly, "Jillian, I understand your concerns, but I'm not after your family's money. Archie and I truly love each other. No matter how much you try to stop us, it won't work."

I almost laughed at her words. "Whether you're after the money or not doesn't matter. He doesn't even have much."

Evie's face stiffened at once.

Archie got agitated. "What do you mean by that, Jillian?"

When money was mentioned, it was like I had hit a nerve.

Evie, ever thoughtful, gently helped him calm down. "I think I understand what Jillian means. She's saying that everything from the Houghton family has nothing to do with you. She's actually taking away your inheritance just to stop us from getting married."

"She wouldn't dare," Archie said angrily. "Jillian, you're going to get married sooner or later, and I'm the man of the Houghton family. I'm the true heir! I get the final say on everything in the family. If you don't give me that house, then get out of the Houghton family!"

I was struck by the ugliness of it all. The blood ties, built over more than a decade, suddenly fell apart so grotesquely.

My heart grew cold, and I threw an adoption certificate at him.

"Take a good look, Archie. You're just an adopted child! You have no say in the Houghton family!"

Evie didn't even glance at the certificate. Pointing at me, she said, "Jillian, I didn't expect you to fabricate a fake certificate just to hold on to the money!"

I responded coldly, "If you don't believe it, go ask the extended members of the Houghton family."

Archie seemed to see the truth in my words. Doubt washed over him.