

## Chapter 1229 Melvin Fell III

Although Melvin had grown accustomed to Marco's indifference, he still felt slightly annoyed and breathed heavily.

No one except Marco dared to speak to Melvin, the patriarch of the Cruz family, in this manner.

Despite this, Melvin remembered his intention to show kindness to Marco today. He smiled as if unconcerned about Marco's attitude and said sincerely, "Marco, are you still so angry with me that you refuse to come back?"

Marco frowned without responding, finding it absurd.

He suspected that Melvin intended to make a concession, but to him now, Melvin's attitude no longer mattered.

Melvin continued, "Marco, it was unreasonable for me to demand you date Kaley, but that was for your good... But now that Loraine's identity has been revealed and you two are engaged, I will not oppose your relationship anymore."

Pausing for a moment, Melvin added more sincerely, as if his actions were truly for Marco's benefit, "You can return and help me manage the company with Loraine. After your marriage, I will hand over most of the business to you."

With an icy expression, Marco sneered to expose Melvin's true intentions, "You agreed to our relationship because Loraine is part of the Wilson family. Otherwise, you wouldn't agree, right?"

Melvin didn't care whether it was Loraine or Kaley who married Marco; what mattered was that they were connected to the Wilson family.

Despite his motives being exposed, Melvin smiled and calmly said, "I called you today to ask a question. Do you still want to find out who hurt your mother? If you do, return to the Cruz family and assist me."

Marco took a deep breath, his eyes darkening.

Melvin finally addressed it formally.

It was a deep secret. Those involved had either been killed early or knew little about it.

Therefore, despite sending people to investigate privately, Marco only found insignificant information without Melvin's guidance.

The force behind his mom's death had extraordinary power. Even Melvin, the patriarch of the Cruz family, had to stop investigating and hide his son in Vagow for over twenty years.

Marco immediately recalled the details he had uncovered and asked casually, "Winfred took me away that year. What about you?"

He discovered his mom faced danger immediately after his birth. Even during Winfred's urgent escape with him, he was pursued, yet Melvin never appeared.

Melvin remained silent for a while, then sighed deeply, "I didn't tell you before because I wasn't sure you were strong enough to handle the mastermind. But now that you're grown, I can share some of it."

He appeared to be considering his words. With a bitter smile, he said, "At that time, I was intercepted by the individuals sent by the mastermind and couldn't shake them off. Even though I had dispatched my men to safeguard your mother, it ended up being of little help. By the time I arrived, Winfred had already taken you away. He couldn't risk contacting me while you were

being chased... I only learned later that he was seriously injured and died shortly after returning to Vagow. It took me a long time to confirm that the force wasn't paying much attention to you. Then I discovered your whereabouts through investigating Winfred."

He sighed again, "I secretly sent a branch of the Cruz family to protect you in Vagow. But... you know what happened afterward."

Marco fell silent for a moment, remembering that Grady's father had passed away in an accident without informing his family about Melvin's directives, leading them to cease sending updates to Melvin.

Melvin, fearing the secret force, refrained from reaching out to the branch until Clifford got the exact information and came to Vagow.

Marco composed himself and said, "I'll keep investigating, but I won't take over the Cruz family for now. If you need help, isn't Clifford a reliable assistant?"

"He... I still hope you reconsider. Clifford is capable but not as dependable as you."

Marco furrowed his brow slightly, detecting a disagreement between Melvin and Clifford, but he remained indifferent. He responded, "I'll think about it. If there's nothing else, I'll hang up."

Without waiting for Melvin's reply, he ended the call. Just before the line disconnected, he faintly heard Melvin's puzzled voice. "Clifford?"

The voice faded as the call ended.

Marco dismissed it without much thought. He returned the phone to his pocket and instructed the driver to head back to Solar Company.

The next day, Marco and Loraine led their teams to the amusement park to inspect the new construction area. During the visit, he received a call from the Cruz family butler.

"Mr. Cruz, your father fell ill. He is now in the hospital."



## Chapter 1230 Visiting Melvin

Hearing the butler's words, Marco's eyelids twitched. But then, he recalled his conversation with Melvin just the day before.

Given Melvin's cunning nature, it was plausible he feigned illness to lure him back, possibly to entrap him!

Though it seemed far-fetched, the Cruz family's past actions had eroded their trustworthiness in Marco's eyes, prompting him to anticipate the worst scenarios.

Ignoring the butler's worried tone, Marco maintained a stoic face and replied firmly, "Inform Melvin that I won't return. Save his efforts. His health is not my concern."

After ending the call, he noticed Loraine's worried look. A surge of warmth filled him, and with a reassuring smile, he dismissed her concern. "It's nothing."

However, Marco's phone rang again, this time displaying images sent by the butler.

The photos were slightly blurry, likely due to the butler's rush.

They were pictures of Melvin in a hospital bed, connected to an oxygen machine. He looked ashen and lifeless.

Marco's eyes narrowed, and his heart skipped a beat.

Could this be true? Was Melvin truly sick? Critical enough to be in the ICU?

Just a day ago, they had spoken, and Melvin had sounded perfectly well...

Caught in a whirl of doubt and uncertainty, Marco hesitated, unsure if he should visit Melvin in the hospital.

Beside him, Loraine caught a glimpse of the screen and quickly pieced together the situation.

Observing Marco's hesitation, she sighed and calmly turned to give instructions to postpone the scheduled tours.

Once she had settled her work obligations, she took Marco's hand and said gently, "Let's go. I'll accompany you to the hospital."

Marco was surprised. He turned to look at her with a complex, emotional expression. His emotions were stirred not only by Loraine's empathy but also by her readiness to stand by him.

The Cruz family had never shown Loraine the respect she deserved. And Melvin had only accepted her because she was part of the Wilson family, not because of who she was as a person.

Despite this, Loraine was willing to support him and follow him to the hospital.

As if reading his thoughts, Loraine offered a gentle smile and reassured him, "I support your choice. The way the Cruz family treats me doesn't matter. And Melvin is still your father. He hasn't truly harmed me, so I bear no grudge against him"

Loraine knew Marco well—better than he realized. Marco had shown concern for Liza; it was inevitable he'd feel the same for his own father, though he might not openly acknowledge it.

Thus, she made the decision for him to ease any concerns he might have about her stance and affirm her unwavering support for him.

Marco's face was a tapestry of emotions, and he was nearly

moved to embrace Loraine right there. But instead, he tightly gripped her hand and expressed his heartfelt gratitude. "Loraine, thank you..."

Meanwhile, outside the ICU, the Cruz family members paced back and forth, their faces etched with concern.

Among them was Clifford, visibly distressed. His eyebrows were soaked with sweat as he cast nervous glances toward the closed doors of the ICU, deeply worried about his brother. But, his concern masked a deeper, gnawing fear.

Recent events haunted him; during recollections, his face grew paler and his heart raced. Even the slightest approach from someone startled him, prompting an automatic, strained smile as he hastily dismissed them.

Though others tried to reassure him and urge him not to worry, Clifford's body remained rigid. His mind swirled with haunting thoughts: "Has he discovered the truth? That smile seems threatening. Does he suspect I harmed my brother? He..."

Tormented by this mix of paranoia and regret, Clifford questioned his own actions. He wondered how he had lost control and attacked Melvin.

This internal conflict frayed his sense of reason, leaving him mentally strained. Adjusting his glasses, he strived to maintain a calm facade.

As of now, nobody was aware that he was responsible for Melvin's hospitalization, and his secret would remain undiscovered. His primary focus now was to seize control of the Cruz family's power, and more darkly, to ensure that Melvin would never regain consciousness.

The thought made Clifford's eyelid twitch.

In fact, he had already begun to assert control. Although he

Chapter 1230 Visiting Melvin

 +120 Points at most

was still hesitant about whether to eliminate Melvin for good, he took control of the family's covert resources shortly after Melvin's collapse.

His sudden rise to power was met with skepticism. His authority was so questioned that he struggled to rally support even for urgent tasks like finding Ariadna. This outcome meant his efforts were in vain.

Reflecting on this, Clifford's expression darkened further. He bitterly recalled the loyalty those people showed Marco. Despite him being with the Cruz family longer, they would rather pledge loyalty to Marco than to him!

Just then, Marco and Loraine appeared, walking towards the ICU together. A malicious idea formed in Clifford's mind as he saw them.

Overcome by resentment, he intercepted Marco, adopting an authoritative demeanor of an elder. He then chastised him sharply, "As my brother's son, why have you just arrived? And to bring an outsider—how inappropriate!"



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## Chapter 1231 Passing The Buck

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Marco's frown deepened upon hearing Clifford's words.

He instinctively positioned himself in front of Loraine, his gaze cold as he confronted Clifford. "Loraine is my fiancée, a member of the esteemed Wilson family. You have no right to speak about her in such a manner."

Clifford's expression froze as he was sharply reminded of Loraine's significant connections—she was not only the CEO of Universe Group but also the beloved granddaughter of Joseph.

While the Cruz family held a high status and didn't need to cozy up to the Wilsons, disrespecting them wasn't acceptable either.

Clifford's face paled as various thoughts raced through his mind.

Suddenly, he recalled Ariadna's disappearance and some information from Mr. K. He couldn't shake the belief that Ariadna's vanishing was somehow linked to Loraine.

Furthermore, Ariadna's rebellious behavior had escalated after encountering Loraine, reigniting Clifford's animosity.

Suppressing his anger, Clifford forced a smile. "Very well, I will overlook the fact that you brought Loraine here. But what about your tardiness?"

Addressing Marco in front of the Cruz family members, Clifford continued with a disappointed tone, "You know your father ended up in the hospital from overwork, right? As his son, if you

had returned to the family and assisted him with the family business, perhaps he wouldn't have ended up in the ICU. If the Cruz family incurs any losses because of this, it's on you!"

The Cruz family members remembered the uproar when Marco left and began viewing him differently.

To them, Solar Company's quick rise in Zodiac was due to the Cruz family's influence. Marco's current behavior seemed traitorous.

They completely ignored the fact that Solar Company had been thriving even before Marco's identity was revealed.

Marco frowned, preparing to respond, when Loraine unexpectedly chuckled. "I didn't expect the powerful Cruz family to fall into disarray just because Marco didn't assist. It appears that the Cruz family fails to live up to its reputation."

Her words, seemingly echoing the sentiments of the Wilson family, caused tension among the Cruz family members present.

Clifford narrowed his eyes, feeling he had made a misstep.

Lorraine's tone turned icy. "Moreover, you only informed Marco about his father's hospitalization today. We came as soon as we were notified. What's your point? Did you purposely delay informing Marco?"

Clifford's face flushed as he retorted, "Absurd!"

The butler gave Clifford a pointed look. Indeed, delaying the notification had been Clifford's decision.

The butler had intended to inform Marco immediately, but Clifford had insisted on prioritizing Melvin's care, causing the delay.

Clifford stiffened, redirecting his ire and sharply rebuking

Loraine, "Sharp-tongued! Is this how you speak to your elders? Show some respect!"

Loraine chuckled softly. "Weren't you just saying I was an outsider? Now you're invoking the elder card?"

Clifford's anger simmered, his face darkening.

Sensing the escalating tension, the butler said, "Mr. Clifford Cruz is just concerned about his brother."

"Could you clarify the situation?" Marco asked.

The butler sighed, "Mr. Clifford Cruz found your father collapsed on the floor unconscious when he went to discuss business matters with him. We're awaiting further details from the hospital."

Upon hearing this, Marco regarded Clifford thoughtfully. Clifford stiffened, feigning anxiety. "Butler, didn't you mention that Marco should visit? Let's not delay further."

The butler nodded, and turned to Marco. "Your father has not regained consciousness. The doctor permits only one visitor. Knowing you needed this chance more, I've been waiting for your arrival."

Marco nodded in acknowledgment, casting a pointed glance around. "While I'm inside, please ensure Loraine is well taken care of. Do not let anyone disturb her."

Loraine smiled subtly at Marco's concern. The butler paused briefly, then nodded in agreement.

Clifford seethed with anger, his expression darkening further as he glared at Marco.

Ignoring Clifford, Marco turned and entered the ward.

Inside, the room was still, punctuated only by the soft hum of

medical equipment. Melvin lay on the bed, pale and motionless, his chest rising and falling faintly.

Marco's brow furrowed with suspicion. Just yesterday, Melvin had sounded perfectly fine on the phone. How had his condition deteriorated so suddenly?



## Chapter 1232 Suspicious

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Marco tried to piece together the fragments of yesterday's phone conversation with Melvin. Just as he recalled something, he saw Melvin's eyelids twitch.

A surge of surprise hit Marco, causing him to lean closer to the bed and scrutinize Melvin intently. He then confirmed it wasn't an illusion.

He was about to call a doctor when he saw Melvin's eyes crack open.

It looked like Melvin recognized him as he exhaled a barely noticeable sigh of relief. Then, with effort, he blinked slowly, once, twice...

The pauses between each blink seemed to form a deliberate sequence.

Marco immediately stopped to call for medical help and his expression turned thoughtful.

He mentally recorded the frequency of Melvin's blinks.

It looked like Melvin wanted to do more than blink, but that small act was draining all his strength.

Marco gave a slight nod to show he understood.

Melvin then closed his eyes, making it seem as if he had never woken up. Marco remained in silence for a moment, then left the room.

Outside, everyone's attention turned to him. Clifford stood suddenly and asked anxiously, "How is Melvin? Has he woken up?"

Marco gave Clifford a meaningful look and slowly shook his head.

Realizing his overreaction, Clifford cleared his throat and adopted a look of concern. "Marco, with your father ill, it's time you returned to the Cruz family. Don't worry, once you're back, I'll support you just as I did your father."

Marco didn't reply, but a previously fleeting thought began to solidify.

He recalled that just before their call ended yesterday, Melvin had called out Clifford's name.

This detail, coupled with the butler's account that Clifford was the first to discover Melvin unconscious, stirred a suspicion in Marco. He looked at Clifford. His eyes darkened though his face remained stoic.

After Clifford had finished speaking, Marco replied coldly, "Does the Cruz family disintegrate without Melvin? I have not embraced the Cruz family yet, so I won't return."

Clifford's expression tightened, but beneath it, he was satisfied. As Marco and Loraine left, he hissed, "Marco is truly heartless. Despite his father being in such a critical condition, he wouldn't come back to his family!"

A few relatives murmured in agreement, bolstering Clifford's stance. Clifford then turned to the butler and said with feigned worry, "I need to check on my brother!"

The butler hesitated. "The doctor mentioned only one visit per day to ensure Mr. Melvin's rest isn't disturbed..."

Clifford's expression grew stern as he rebuked, "Didn't you see Marco's attitude towards us? Besides, he's my brother. Am I supposed to just let him suffer alone in there?"

The butler's lips parted, but no objections came, and he stepped aside, allowing Clifford to pass.

Clifford's mouth twitched upwards in a slight smirk. He quickly adopted a worried look and rushed into the ward.

Once inside, with the door shut behind him, Clifford's face turned complex and stern. He approached the bed deliberately, gazing down at the pale, lifeless Melvin.

As he remembered Melvin's usually stern and authoritative presence, a smirk reappeared on Clifford's lips. His attention quickly turned to the heart monitor.

The steady lines, with no significant fluctuations, confirmed that Melvin was still deeply comatose.

Melvin appeared untouched, convincing Clifford that Marco had not attempted to glean any clues from him.

With a quiet sigh, Clifford felt assured that Melvin had not awakened.

He pulled a chair up to the bed, sat down with a light chuckle, and sighed deeply. "Melvin, you value that son of yours so much, but he shows no concern for you... In the end, it's me, your brother, who remains by your side."

Melvin didn't respond. His pale face still mirrored his habitual sternness and coldness.

A shadow crossed Clifford's face and his voice took on a cold edge. "Melvin, you excel in so many ways, but you shouldn't have ignored Aria because of Marco!"

In truth, Clifford felt no genuine allegiance to family bonds. And his betrayal of Melvin wasn't because he truly cared about Ariadna's well-being.

For him, Ariadna was just another piece in the game, a tool to gain control of the Cruz family, much like Marco.

So, when Melvin made little effort to find Ariadna, Clifford's suspicions grew, convincing him that Melvin was paving the path for Marco.

"Melvin, since you won't help find my daughter, don't blame me for taking power from you to ensure I locate her!"

