

Chapter 1233 Decoding

Meanwhile, after Marco left the hospital with Loraine, his expression was grave.

His brow furrowed deeply as he recollected the blinks Melvin had shown.

He was certain it was a form of code. It was a message Melvin was straining to convey, possibly revealing the real reason behind his sudden grave illness.

The challenge now was to interpret it.

Given the circumstances, the code wouldn't be too intricate, as Melvin lacked the energy to think about anything overly complex...

Seeing his troubled look, Loraine asked with worry, "What's the matter? Is Melvin not doing well?"

Following a brief pause, he nodded. After a moment of thought, he shared Melvin's cryptic message and his assumption with Loraine.

Loraine pondered for a bit before responding, "It does appear there's something more to Melvin's sudden illness."

At that moment, both of them simultaneously thought of the same individual, the very person who stood to gain the most if Melvin were incapacitated.

Marco scoffed, "My gut feeling is that Clifford is up to no good."

Although they were both aware of Clifford's hypocrisy and expected his reactions to be exaggerated, Marco still felt he had

overdone it.

Lorraine reflected on her recent observations and said, "Clifford appeared quite concerned about Melvin. However, when you went into the ward, I noticed he seemed very anxious, almost like he was scared of something."

And when Clifford caught sight of them, his eagerness to address them seemed strange... It was almost as if he was eager to pin Melvin's collapse on Marco.

As they delved deeper into their discussion, their suspicions grew. Once back in the car, Marco quickly pulled out a pen and paper and jotted down the frequency of Melvin's blinks. Before long, he came up with a series of codes from a mix of long and short symbols.

He tapped his fingers lightly on the dashboard, pondering the possible decryption methods. However, without a shared password book or common interests with Melvin to guide the decoding, he was momentarily stumped.

As they both examined the symbols, Lorraine had a sudden idea and asked, "What about having Qbot take a look at this?"

With the vast data capabilities of Qbot, decoding the general content should be pretty easy.

Marco's eyes brightened slightly. He nodded and activated the Qbot program on his phone.

In just a short time, Qbot managed to decipher several short words, flashing terms like "brother" and "poison" on the screen.

Since there were no further complete codes available, additional decoding was impossible. However, the amount of information they had already decoded was sufficient.

Marco and Lorraine exchanged a look. They realized their

suspicious were likely correct.

Melvin was signaling to Marco that he had been poisoned, and the culprit was likely Clifford!

Marco's brow furrowed deeply in concern. He struggled to comprehend Clifford's motive.

If he aimed to become the head of the Cruz family, wouldn't it be more advantageous when Melvin had just navigated through a crisis and hadn't fully taken control of the Cruz family yet? Why act now?

Then, it dawned on Marco.

At that time, Melvin was barely keeping a grip on control of the Cruz family, while Clifford clearly lacked the capability to manage it.

The reason Clifford hadn't betrayed Melvin over the years was that he was unaware Melvin still had a son. If Ariadna were the heir to the Cruz family, there would have been no need for Clifford to turn against Melvin.

But now, Marco had returned, and Ariadna had run away from home.

Thinking of Melvin's pale face lying in the hospital bed, Marco felt a twinge of worry.

After all, since Clifford had resorted to such measures, he would no longer value their brotherhood.

Now, even if Clifford felt remorse, he had no opportunity to turn back. In other words, he might go as far as to kill Melvin to prevent him from waking up and exposing him.

However, if Melvin didn't wake up, they lacked any evidence to prove that Clifford was responsible.

Noticing Marco's grim expression, Loraine said in a soft voice, "Do what you think is necessary. Even if not for Melvin's sake, you need to take control of the Cruz family for your own sake. After all, if we allow Clifford to act unchecked, the next person to suffer could be someone we care about."

The rift between Clifford and them had grown too deep to mend, and if he were to gain control of the Cruz family, his vengeful, malicious nature would undoubtedly lead to further harm.

Recalling Clifford's longstanding animosity towards Loraine, Marco's gaze grew steely. He mulled over her words and finally nodded. "I'll quietly reach out to some key allies within the Cruz family. Meanwhile, I need a diversion to keep Clifford occupied. At least... I need to keep him so busy that he won't have time to monitor the hospital."

This strategy would allow Marco to sneak his team into the hospital and possibly use the advanced ninth-generation surgical robot to treat Melvin.

Loraine pondered for a moment before she said, "Since Clifford has a grudge against me, I can act as the decoy to divert his attention. What do you think?"

Chapter 1234 The Bait

Upon hearing Loraine's suggestion, Marco immediately rejected it without hesitation. "No way! I can't involve you in this matter!"

His primary concern was to protect Loraine, and using her as bait could genuinely endanger her.

He would never allow that to happen.

Loraine, understanding his protective instinct, wasn't surprised by his reaction but persisted, calmly explaining, "I'll be careful. Right now, I can help you, so I will."

Marco, unwavering, responded firmly, "I'll find another way. There's no chance I'm letting you take such risks."

Loraine arched an eyebrow and employed her most convincing argument, speaking deliberately. "We promised to face everything together, remember? So, are you going back on that promise now, or..."

Caught off guard, Marco displayed a mix of frustration and helplessness but eventually relented, saying, "Alright. You can help, but you need to be extremely cautious! We must discuss every action, and your safety always comes first."

Loraine chuckled softly, leaned in, and gently kissed him, whispering, "Understood, Mr. Naggy."

Marco paused, his expression turning serious. Sensing a shift in mood, Loraine started to pull away.

But in the confined space of the car, there was little room to retreat.

Marco's long arms quickly drew her back, and he continued to express his concerns until she repeatedly promised to heed his warnings.

A few days later, at the Universe Group office, Loraine was working when Remy entered with urgent news. "Boss, there's significant turmoil within the Cruz family."

Already aware of the potential for chaos, Loraine looked up with a knowing smile and inquired, "What's the latest?"

Remy, always well-informed, summarized, "The head of the Cruz family is seriously ill and hospitalized. Currently, Clifford is managing the family's affairs."

She continued, "However, there seems to be some dissent regarding his leadership. It's causing quite a stir."

The unrest included some Cruz family elders openly refusing to follow Clifford. They declared that if Melvin didn't awaken from his coma, they would shift their allegiance to Solar Company and Marco.

Loraine's expression remained composed, her lips curving slightly as her eyes stayed cool and detached. She gestured for Remy to continue.

Remy then added, "Clifford is planning to host a banquet, likely aiming to secure a powerful partner to consolidate his position and stabilize the family's internal dynamics."

In every enterprise, loyalty is ultimately tied to interests.

Loraine tapped her fingers lightly on the table, then directed, "Find a way to secure an invitation to that banquet."

With the Cruz family in turmoil, Clifford might be distracted from monitoring the hospital. However, should he secure a robust partner and stabilize the Cruz family, his first action

would likely be to neutralize any threats.

Remy accepted the instruction without question and departed to make the necessary arrangements.

Meanwhile, Clifford was deliberating over the guest list for the banquet.

Over the past few days, the slightly plump and elegant middle-aged man seemed to have aged years, his face marked by exhaustion.

Rubbing his temples, Clifford removed his glasses and closed his dry eyes for a moment, the headache refusing to abate.

He was just starting to comprehend the significant responsibilities that come with being the head of the family—managing the elders and keeping Melvin's loyalists at bay...

It was no surprise that Melvin, who had steered the Cruz family through previous upheavals, had been so adept and resilient.

Coming back to the present, Clifford's voice was hoarse as he commanded, "Send an invitation to the newly prominent Riley family."

He had researched the Riley family, an old domestic lineage that had kept a low profile after moving abroad, yet held considerable influence.

Since their return to Zodiac, they had quickly assimilated into high society, hosting successful events and cultivating valuable alliances.

Clifford noted that the real strength of the Riley family might be much greater than it appeared. The fact that he could find no details about their young scion's past decade was particularly telling.

Their capabilities seemed to match those of the influential

Wilson family.

Narrowing his eyes, Clifford contemplated that if he could align with the Riley family, he wouldn't need to fear the Wilson family or Loraine, who was a thorn in his side.

His assistant then asked, "Should we also invite the Wilson family?"

Clifford responded with a strained smile, "Absolutely. At the banquet, I'll extend a genuine welcome and show the Riley family that we favor them over the Wilsons. Given that they're keen on establishing themselves here, they'll appreciate the recognition and likely be willing to collaborate with us."