

Chapter 886 Confrontation With Cruz Family Members

During their journey in the car, Marco sat silently, looking depressed.

Clifford noticed and smiled. "Don't fret, once you see how powerful the Cruz family is, you will be grateful to both me and your father."

Marco pressed his lips into a tight line, ignoring him. After a few more minutes, they arrived. The place looked like a castle one would see in a movie.

There were rows of tall, Gothic buildings. They drove past the gate, onto a long road. An exquisite garden surrounded the place.

These buildings looked like the old ones that belonged to the aristocrats in the last century, extremely luxurious and classy. The astonishing buildings portrayed the fact that the Cruz family really was a prestigious family.

With a smug smirk, Clifford stole a glance at Marco, hoping to find him amazed. He was disappointed to find no awe on Marco's face. Marco wasn't even paying attention to the buildings.

Clifford scoffed. "The Cruz family is a million times more powerful than all the small families in Vagow combined. Being away for twenty years has caused you to lack class and experience. You're going to learn a lot as you're back. I won't have you disgrace the family's name any longer!"

Marco completely ignored Clifford, like he was nothing.

Clifford didn't expect Marco's behavior, and it was getting under his skin. "Since you've seen all these, you should know where you stand now when it comes to the Cruz family. I told you, didn't I? That one day you would return."

Clifford was only confidently talking because Marco came back, especially because of how decisive Marco was when he decided never to return. Clifford felt that Marco was just acting up.

It was his duty as Marco's uncle to teach him some sense. "As a member of the Cruz family, start acting like one. Get rid of that little attitude of yours. I will take you to meet and get familiar with the family members. They may be distant relatives, but they've been living in Zodiac for decades, so they're still your elders."

Was this a satire on his narrow-minded and unruly character?

Marco sneered. "I have no interest in listening to you. Besides, you know the real reason I came back."

Clifford's mouth fell open.

"It would be best if you had nothing to do with the attack, you'd regret it if you did... 'Uncle'." Marco's tone was filled with scorn.

Clifford was a bit frightened. It took a while for him to regain his senses. Embarrassed and annoyed, he looked away. "I don't want to waste my time arguing with you. Not everyone is going to tolerate your behavior, so you better learn how to act before meeting the elders."

Marco went back to ignoring him.

After driving through the garden for some time, the car came

to a halt. A servant wearing a tuxedo bowed respectfully and opened the car door.

The beautiful, carved door before them opened, and Clifford walked up to Marco. "This is the Cruz family's main house. Most of the prestigious elders are here to welcome you, the head of the family's son. Do not embarrass your father! Got it?"

All eyes turned to them as they entered. Marco could feel the stares without even looking.

Clifford cleared his throat. "These are your uncles and aunts. Come say hello, Marco."

There were some young people in the crowd as well, all noble and arrogant. None of them took Marco seriously. The elders looked at him, as if waiting for him to make a fool of himself.


Marco stared at each of them individually and turned to Clifford with a cold look. "I'm not interested in getting to know any of them."

Someone scoffed loudly. "Oh my! Clifford, is this really the head's son? So rude and arrogant?! Isn't he afraid of humiliating the Cruz family's name?"

"It's no surprise. After all, he was raised in Vagow, that small city. He's obviously uneducated. I heard that he has a little girlfriend from one of those poor families. What a joke. Have they broken up? He has only brought shame to our name," another person added.

Marco narrowed his eyes and turned to Clifford once again with a smile. "You've confirmed that I'm the head's son, right?"

"Yes." Clifford was in a little world of his own, happy to see that the others were being mean to Marco, and didn't even realize that he had answered Marco's question.

Chapter 886 Confrontation With Cruz Family Mer  +120 Points at most

Marco turned back to the two people who had spoken and smiled. "I certainly didn't expect the great Cruz family to be an inferior one with no strict family rules and no respect for the family head's son. You are only my distant relatives. When exactly did you get the right to decide my family's affairs?"

Chapter 887 Gigolo

Upon hearing Marco's words, the entire hall fell silent, followed by a burst of commotion.

The elders, who had been the target of Marco's scrutiny, had lost face and felt embarrassed.

A middle-aged man maintained a serious expression as he remarked, "Even if you are the son of the head, you must show respect to us! Despite being a distant relative, I am still your elder, as are the other elders in this room. Why didn't you greet us when we met?"

This man's name was Damir Ruiz. Although his last name was not Cruz, he was the son-in-law of the Cruz family.

Everyone nodded in agreement, criticizing Marco for his disobedience. With the backing of the others, Damir gained more confidence. With a smug smirk on his face, he assumed an air of superiority and snorted loudly, "How dare you be so rude to an elder upon your return to the Cruz family? I fear you'll only bring shame to the family. I suggest that he be disciplined according to the family rules."

As Damir scolded Marco, Clifford lifted his gaze and wore a fake smile to mediate the dispute, while secretly reveling in seeing Marco being singled out.

"All right. Marco, we're family now. You need to apologize to Damir and let it go," Clifford urged him. Then, addressing Damir, he said, "Marco just returned, so it's understandable that he might not be familiar with all the rules. He can always learn them over time."

Marco was Melvin's son, after all, and Clifford knew what he needed to do.

He had done enough in secret. When it came to other matters, Melvin might have turned a blind eye to them and might even have been pleased to let Clifford teach the arrogant Marco a lesson.

If Marco faced punishment according to the family rules on his first day back, however, Melvin was not going to remain passive.

Although Clifford appeared to be defending Marco, he subtly compelled him to apologize.

Damir, fully grasping what Clifford was doing, snorted and feigned dissatisfaction. Then, he said calmly, "I'll listen to you, Clifford. As long as this guy apologizes, I'll forgive him."

Observing Clifford with a cold gaze, Marco recognized his attempt to manipulate Damir to coerce him into an apology, finding it both insulting and disrespectful.

Indeed, upon his return to the Cruz family, Marco found himself subjected to an onslaught of deceitful schemes. These so-called family members conspired against him one after the other.

Ever since he had decided to return to the Cruz family, he had braced himself for all these challenges. As he gazed at these scheming faces before him, however, he couldn't help but yearn for Loraine and the Torres family.

He wondered where Loraine was at that moment and whether or not she was worried about him.

Marco simply wanted to resolve the matter swiftly and reach out to Loraine. He addressed Clifford calmly, saying, "My time is

quite valuable. If Melvin has no desire to see me, I'll come back some other day. As for today, I'm leaving."

Marco was implying that his intention in returning to the Cruz family was not to learn their so-called rules, nor to waste his time dealing with them. In his view, they weren't worth any more of his time.

These words infuriated the distant relatives, with Clifford also frowning in dissatisfaction. Marco, however, paid no heed to their emotions, turned around and walked out without uttering another word.

Upon realizing that Marco was really leaving, Clifford was taken aback and flustered. Nonetheless, he convinced himself that Marco was merely pretending in order to frighten him. He forced himself to calm down and said, "Melvin is occupied with work, so he asked me to introduce you to the elders of the Cruz family first. He'll be back shortly."

Marco remained silent. Clifford changed his approach and said softly, "Moreover, this is your home. Where else could you go?"

Upon hearing this, Damir sneered contemptuously and said in an strange tone, "Clifford, you don't need to worry about if he has a place to stay. Isn't he the lover of a woman in Vagow? Oh, I understand now. No wonder he can't spare any time to talk to us. He's busy being a gigolo for that woman. How could his time not be valuable?"

Damir's eyes were brimming with malice. He eagerly anticipated seeing Marco ridiculed.

He was aware that more than half of the people there had no desire for Marco to return.

After all, before his appearance, Ariadna had been seriously ill, prompting some respected elders to contemplate selecting an

heir from among the branches.

Now, most of these present in the main house were closely affiliated with the main branch in Zodiac. They were much stronger than the distant relatives, and had long acquiesced in the struggle for the position of the head of the family.

Damir had always believed that his son was the most promising candidate to become the family heir, however, Ariadna recovered, and the so-called son of the head emerged!

Upon learning that Marco had become a gigolo, all the people in the hall expressed their disdain for him. Since he was a member of the Cruz family, the revelation brought disgrace to the entire family. Many people's unfriendly gazes towards him turned even colder.

Marco, however, maintained his composure. After Damir finished speaking, he chuckled and retorted, "I can't afford to be called a gigolo with you around. I heard that you crawled and groveled in order to become a part of the Cruz family. Is that correct?"

Chapter 888 Merging Solar Company

As soon as Marco finished speaking, Damir's face twisted in displeasure.

This was a deep-seated embarrassment for him, and he dreaded its mention. Consequently, even the Cruz family, aware as they were, refrained from discussing it to spare Damir's feelings.

Yet, here was Marco, not only raising the issue but doing so openly in front of everyone!

Some of the younger onlookers, previously clueless, now wore expressions of surprise. They gazed at Damir, their eyes tinged with scorn.

Damir himself was just a man dependent on his wife's fortune. How could he dare to judge others?

Clifford's eyes narrowed in suspicion. How did Marco come to know such private matters of the Cruz family?

Ousted by the Bryant family, he shouldn't have had any means or contacts. Could Loraine have been digging into the Cruz family's secrets?

The notion that Loraine might be stirring up trouble darkened Clifford's expression, and he let out a soft, icy snort.

He mulled over the possibility that Loraine and Marco's actions were calculated. They claimed disinterest in the Cruz family,

yet here they were, unearthing hidden details!

Clifford even suspected that Marco's intention to join the Cruz family might be fueled by Loraine's instigation, aiming to snatch the Cruz family's fortune!

After Marco revealed his secrets, Damir became the butt of everyone's jokes. He was inwardly seething but tried to hide it, responding with a cold, arrogant sneer, "So what? Unlike you, I've learned a lot from the Cruz family over the years. I know how to follow the rules!"

Damir continued with a mocking tone, "If you're so keen on learning the rules, maybe your cousin can teach you. He grew up in the head of the family's house, even went to a top university. He's not only smart, but he is also humble and demonstrates respect towards his elders. He'd be a great teacher for you, so you don't end up embarrassing yourself and the Cruz family."

Damir was referring to his son, Lamont Cruz, who bore the Cruz surname instead of sharing Damir's last name.

Talking about Lamont made Damir visibly proud, and he stood a bit taller.

Marco, listening to Damir brag about his son, just chuckled and asked, "He does sound impressive. Where does he work?"

Damir, puffing up with pride, replied, "My son Lamont is at Novatech, part of the Cruz family's businesses. He climbed to a management position on his own merit, not just because of our name."

Some in the crowd looked skeptical at this, while others seemed curious about Marco's reaction. Someone even joked, "Marco's just returned. He's hardly ready to lead the family business. Maybe he should go learn from Lamont for a bit."

Marco just gave a small smile, glanced down, and sent a message on his phone.

Damir seriously addressed the person who had made the suggestion, saying, "You know, Lamont has a strong dislike for those who depend on connections and favoritism. If Marco comes at him with that kind of arrogant, patronizing attitude, he's not going to stand for it."

While he was in the middle of bragging about the significant profits his son had generated for the Cruz family and taunting Marco with a hint of sarcasm, his phone suddenly rang.

Damir picked it up and saw Lamont's name on the screen. He raised his eyebrows in surprise and answered the call with confidence, activating the speakerphone. He turned to the people around him, smiling, and said, "Ah, Lamont is always thoughtful and dutiful. He must have some good news and wants to share it, showing his respect for me."

But before he could finish, he heard Lamont's voice, filled with urgency. "Dad, where are you? There's a crisis at my company, and I need your help to sort it out fast!"

Caught off guard, Damir heard laughter from those around him.

Lamont, unaware of the situation, continued on the phone, complaining angrily, "I've been cut out of a deal I was working on! And it's been taken over by a new enterprise in Zodiac! Dad, they're called Solar Company. You've got to do something about them, maybe even use the Cruz family's influence to scare them off. It would be amazing if we could just take over their company!"

Damir's face drained of color as he realized what Lamont was up to. He was flustered, trying to end the call, but then he noticed a shadow looming over him.

Marco was extending his hand towards him. Then Damir's hand was firmly held down, unable to move.

Damir's face flushed with anger. He itched to give Marco a piece of his mind, yet he feared Lamont might blurt out something more outrageous. Grinding his teeth, he barked into the phone, "What on earth are you saying? I'm lost! Cut out the nonsense and mind your own business!"

Caught off guard by the scolding, Lamont paused, then retorted angrily, "Dad, why act like you don't understand? Weren't you the one who took advantage of the Cruz family's name to take over a bunch of companies? Sure, Solar Company has some international clout, but it's barely made a dent in our home market. Can't you give me a hand like you did before?"

Chapter 889 Misconduct

Lamont's audacious claim, expressed over the phone, shattered the image Damir had painted of him in front of others as a talented, thoughtful, and dutiful individual who despised dependence on connections and favoritism.

Now it seemed Lamont was actually a useless and impolite person who was always irritable. He always went to his parents to fix things for him when they didn't go his way.

The Cruz family didn't mind raising a few wastrels. However, if any of them did something that endangered the well-being of the family, it would be a different story.

The Cruz family members present were all intelligent and shrewd individuals. Upon hearing the words that came out of Lamont's mouth, their expression became grave.

Damir had earlier boasted, saying how Lamont had acquired many enterprises for the family at a discount. However, after hearing Lamont speak, it was clear he had obtained those enterprises through the use of strong-arm tactics.

This would have made the Cruz family known for bullying and earned them many enemies and a bad reputation.

Even Clifford's expression darkened upon hearing all that was said. The Cruz family was over a century old and had a long-standing reputation. Their reputation was valued above all other things. Otherwise, they wouldn't have made use of the rules and etiquette to subdue Marco when he arrived.

Relying on the strength of the Cruz family to bully small and

medium-sized enterprises for short-term gain caused long-term damage to the reputation and brand. Over time, the damage caused would outweigh any monetary damage they could have incurred.

Lamont had done this kind of thing countless times under Clifford's nose without him knowing, yet here Damir was boasting proudly about Lamont's supposed success.

Clifford stared at Damir with an unsightly look on his face. Damir immediately broke into cold sweats. He wanted to go on his knees and beg Lamont to stop talking, but he could not because Marco restrained him and Clifford watched him. He dared not make a sound to alert Lamont. His mouth went dry as he listened to more of what Lamont had to say.

Lamont, on the other end of the phone, was oblivious to Damir's plight and unaware of the danger present. All he thought about was that he didn't receive the assurance Damir usually offered.

This seemed to make him madder, and he swore a few obscenities. He calmed down a little after this and said, "Alright, alright. We'll talk about the acquisition later. However, a woman from the Solar Company must be taught a lesson. She is an arrogant bitch. I'll treat her like the bitch she is..."

Marco hung up the phone before Lamont could finish speaking. He had heard enough of Lamont's obscenities for a day. His face had a murderous look on it.

Marco knew Lamont was talking about Doris. He wouldn't let this father-son duo get away with insulting one of his people like that.

He stared coldly at Damir and said sarcastically, "Your son sounded really promising."

Damir's bloodless lips moved like those of a fish out of water, and he trembled and slumped to the floor.

Marco turned to Clifford and asked, "Is this what you want me to learn about family rules?"

If looks could kill, the look on Clifford's face would have murdered Damir and his son. What made him even madder was the calm and strategic manner in which Marco had gained the upper hand.

Clifford wanted to explain that not all members of the Cruz family were like that and that Damir and his son were an exception. Before he could say anything, Marco said, "If all the members of the Cruz family are like that, then I don't think I'll be coming back. It makes me sick."

Clifford could see how everything that had happened forced Marco to such a conclusion. He forced a smile and said, "This will be dealt with, Marco. The Cruz family will not condone this behavior."

He then turned to Damir and said, "Get this scum out of my sight! Make sure all his businesses are investigated, and find out what else his son has done that could be detrimental to the Cruz family. Get to the bottom of this!"

Everyone's attitude towards Marco seemed to change after this episode. They no longer looked down on him as they did in the beginning.

Marco had been at a disadvantage when he arrived, yet he had remained calm and composed and had turned the table on his opponent. Anyone wanting to oppose him now would have to think twice before doing so.

Most of the people present were concerned about defending

their own interests. Seeing that they could gain no advantage from the situation, they all smiled politely, exchanged polite compliments, and found excuses to leave.

Clifford smiled politely as he saw them off. When they had all left, a tired sigh escaped his lips, and he said, "Marco, I've been so consumed with Ariadna's illness that I haven't had time to oversee the family's affair. I never thought it would create a loophole for someone to slip through and make you unhappy."

His demeanor then changed, and he once again became an elder as he lectured Marco. "Why did you choose to resolve your grievances in public? Why couldn't you resolve it in private? You're the oldest son of the Cruz family and should have the well-being of the family at heart. Matters that could damage the reputation of the family should be handled with caution."

"I don't think Marco did anything wrong," a male voice said, coming from the general direction of the door.



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Chapter 890 Master Of The Cruz Family

The voice carried a steady, commanding tone, tinged with an air of authority, like someone accustomed to being in charge.

Marco and Clifford turned towards the source and saw a tall, slender man in his middle years walking in with purpose.

His eyes and brows bore a striking resemblance to Marco's. Just a glance from his composed gaze seemed to weigh heavily on those around him.

He seemed more restrained and mature than Marco.

Upon seeing this man, Marco instantly realized why Tillie had identified him as the head of the Cruz family.

He shared not only Melvin's looks but also his demeanor. Side by side, nobody would question their relationship.

Melvin was known as the most astute and brave leader the Cruz family had seen in a century. His youth was marked by struggles, leaving behind tales that resonated among the elite circles in Zodiac.

Moreover, Melvin was his biological father.

Sometimes, the bond of blood was so profound. Marco hadn't felt it over the phone, but now, standing before Melvin, he felt a rush of emotions.

Was this man truly his father?

What were the reasons for keeping him in Vagow?

Did Melvin ever miss him?

Marco's yearning for familial love welled up inside him. Yet, it quickly faded.

Melvin merely gave him a brief, emotionless glance.

There was no joyous reunion, no thrill of rediscovery.

Marco quickly sobered up, suppressing the fleeting hopes that had just arisen. He reminded himself his return wasn't due to a father's longing, but rather the family's need for an heir.

When Clifford saw Melvin, his face lost color and he became noticeably more respectful. He greeted, "Melvin, you're back."

Melvin's eyes flickered over Clifford, filled with an unreadable emotion, as if silently asserting his dominance.

Clifford bent down with sweat on his forehead.

His deep-seated respect for his brother was ingrained. No wonder he had been so startled in the hospital by Marco's resemblance to Melvin.

Then, Melvin's expression softened, and his eyes looked away. He pretended to be relaxed and said, "Clifford, you've not handled things well this time. What went wrong?"

Clifford's nerves were on edge again. He cleared his throat and admitted with a hint of guilt, "Melvin, I've been a bit distracted because of Ariadna's sickness... But I deeply care about our family, so I hope Marco will be careful."

Melvin nodded, appearing contemplative. He laid a hand on Clifford's shoulder, showing concern. "I've heard Ariadna hasn't

been too happy since her return. Is she all right?"

Clifford's expression stiffened as he replied respectfully, "She's just throwing a fit. Nothing to worry about."

Melvin's smile lingered, yet his words were decisive. "We're brothers, so it's natural for me to be concerned about what's going on around you. We're fathers too. I know how you feel. You should stay home and look after Ariadna for a while."

Clifford was shocked and looked up. "Melvin, I..."

"Clifford, you know how I am. I don't need to say more. Once you've sorted out today's mess, we'll talk."

Throughout, Melvin's expression remained calm, but his authority was unmistakable.

Clifford, looking pale, couldn't muster a response and left in a state of confusion.

Marco observed with a cold detachment. Melvin had casually decided Clifford's fate. Clifford, usually so bold, seemed unable to defy him, like a mouse in the grip of a cat.

The dynamics of power were strikingly clear.

Melvin wielded his power effortlessly, even against his closest family.

Marco quickly deduced why Melvin had stayed away until now, not appearing during Damir's provocations or Clifford's warnings.

In the eyes of the Cruz family head, his son was no different from his brother, both needing lessons in respect.

Melvin caught Marco's gaze and said with a smile, "Do you

think I'm too harsh on my own brother?"

After a brief pause, Marco answered calmly, "It's not that harsh."

In Melvin's position, there was nothing wrong with that.

After all, without such firm hands, he couldn't maintain his leadership.

Hearing this, Melvin burst into laughter and complimented, "You truly are my son!"

He looked at Marco, still smiling, and advised, "Since you're my flesh and blood, let me give you some advice - end things with that woman in Vagow as soon as you can."