

Chapter 794 The Cruz Family's Side Branches

Sometimes statements could be made without much thought, but for the listener, they could hold deeper meaning.

Loraine's admonishment was that Marco should be more open and not hide anything from her.

But this made Marco begin to think about all the things he had kept from Loraine over the years. As a result, his response was somewhat stiff.

Luckily, Loraine didn't dwell on it at all. Instead, she sighed inwardly. She couldn't help but think that Marco had become much more sensitive since his fall from grace.

Perhaps her words had struck a chord in him and awoken some secret concern of his.

Loraine couldn't help but pity him in his current state. She vowed that she would be patient and gentle with him, and try her best to be very understanding with him.

"Marco, no matter what you think, I've never had any thoughts about your change in status," she assured him, speaking straight from her heart. "Perhaps I might have said some things that you misunderstood, but please believe me, I've never meant any harm. If I mistakenly hurt you, you should let me know."

As far as Loraine was concerned, the current Marco was a man who had cautiously entered the Torres family, bending over



backwards to accommodate their demands, and by this time, had nothing left to lose.

She felt relieved that her family had accepted him, but she also felt helpless seeing how much he was willing to endure to avoid causing trouble.

Marco, on the other hand, was momentarily taken aback by Loraine's statement. He wondered what had caused her to bring up this issue. But he soon realized what she was trying to do and his heart became filled with warmth. Clearly, Loraine was tending to his emotional well-being.

He stared at her as a rush of emotions flooded into his chest. He felt as if he should confess everything to her immediately; let her know that he was the CEO of Solar Company, and that he had not meant to lie to her...

But then, he remembered how Loraine had expressed an unfavorable opinion of the Solar Company's CEO the previous night.

And also, he knew how much she despised being lied to.

If he were to reveal his true identity to her now, Loraine would undoubtedly be furious!

With these thoughts in mind, Marco had lost his usual decisiveness and was left hesitating and wondering what to do.

He couldn't bear to tell her the truth because he was too scared of what would happen if he disrupted the status quo.

He felt perhaps he should wait until Loraine had a better opinion of the Solar Company's CEO before confessing to her that he was the CEO.

After mulling over this for a long time, Marco finally made up

his mind, but Loraine's phone suddenly rang.

Loraine knew that the call probably had something to do with the hospital. "Sorry. I have to take this," she apologized and answered the phone. The call was actually from Ariadna.

Marco, who had been trying to change the subject, felt relieved and said with a smile, "It's okay. Go ahead."

As Loraine put the phone to her ear, she could hear Ariadna's distressed voice from the other end of the line. "Lorrie, the test results are out, and the hospital has prepared a treatment plan, but Mr. White says the surgery requires hematopoietic stem cells that match mine."

After saying this, Ariadna fell silent, and Loraine could almost imagine her head hanging in disappointment, looking utterly crestfallen.

This thought made Loraine's heart ache so much. She knew that finding a matching hematopoietic stem cell would be an incredibly challenging task. Out of everyone, perhaps only immediate family members could offer a suitable match.

But Ariadna had previously told her about the situation of her family. The main branch of the Cruz family had dwindled down to just herself. The extended family was even more bereft of descendants.

After a while, Ariadna added in a whisper, "Tillie has already contacted our family. The main branch is trying to figure out a solution, but I know the chances are really slim."

Her silvery voice had a melancholy note that just couldn't be concealed. "The main branch of the Cruz family is already small, and now I'm causing them so much trouble. I don't like this," she moaned pitifully.

As Loraine listened to her, she couldn't help but feel helpless. They had come this far and the surgery was already about to happen, only for them to encounter this sudden and unexpected setback. From all indications, Ariadna seemed to have an incredibly tough fate.

But still, Loraine wouldn't do or say anything to dampen the poor girl's spirits. Instead, she said comfortingly, "I think there's still hope. Even if the main branch has no one left, there are still relatives from the Cruz family's side branches. There will definitely be someone who will be a match and will be willing to save you."

Ariadna broke into a smile and her voice gained some strength. "Lorrie, you're amazing," she gushed. "How on earth did you know? They've indeed found some of my relatives from the side branches of the family, and I heard that some of them are willing to help. One of my cousins, who lives in Vagow, is among them. His name is Grady."

"Grady?" Loraine asked in surprise, unaware that the man beside her had suddenly sat up straight, his gaze intense and his ears perked up.

"Yes," Ariadna confirmed. "They'll bring him over for a compatibility test soon. But I've never met him before, and I'm a bit scared. I feel like I'm causing too much trouble for him, Lorrie. What should I do?"

Loraine chuckled and sighed. She couldn't help but admire Ariadna's empathy and kind-heartedness.

Most people would eagerly seize any opportunity to survive regardless of how it affected others, but Ariadna was here feeling embarrassed about inconveniencing others!

"Don't worry," Loraine assured her. "It's normal for you to be

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worried and nervous. But I know Grady, and I'll accompany you
tomorrow. You have nothing to worry about."

But as Marco heard this, he involuntarily furrowed his brows.



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Chapter 795 Compatibility Test

Marco had never forgotten about Grady.

Back when there were rumours of Loraine's so-called boyfriends, apart from Rowan and Wesley, Grady and Cayson were also in the mix.

Though the first two, who were actually her family members, turned out to be false rumors, Cayson and Grady were genuinely interested in Loraine.

But in Marco's eyes, Grady was nothing short of a weak and ineffectual man who had allowed his family to bully Loraine.

Grady had caused quite a lot of trouble while he was pursuing Loraine. One of the most notable examples was when he audaciously proposed to her.

Even Marco hadn't officially proposed to Loraine yet, so what gave Grady the confidence and audacity to try it?

A surge of anger coursed through Marco as he thought of all this. The fact that Loraine would meet Grady again worried him a lot.

It wasn't that he feared that Loraine would be swayed by Grady; rather, he was concerned that Grady might pester her once more, thereby causing her unnecessary distress.

Though these thoughts were running through his mind, Marco's face remained calm. Eventually, he spoke up. "The



doctor mentioned that I should start rehabilitation exercises. How about I accompany you to the hospital tomorrow?"

Loraine thought it over and agreed with the idea. She didn't want Marco to go out alone, so this arrangement was perfect as far as she was concerned.

The following day, Loraine drove Marco to the hospital.

Outside Ariadna's ward, a few people were already waiting, including Florence and Grady. Evidently, judging from her extravagant dressing and makeup, it was clear that Florence was keen on seizing this opportunity to curry favor with the main branch of the Cruz family.

Loraine vividly remembered the times in the past when Florence used to make things difficult for her, so when Loraine saw her, she didn't even greet her.

She just went straight into the ward to look for Ariadna. But to her surprise, Ariadna wasn't there. A nearby nurse explained to her, "The patient has gone for compatibility test. She'll be back in a while."

Loraine nodded in understanding. It was at this point that Grady, who was at the entrance, noticed her presence. Immediately, his eyes lit up.

Ever since Florence offended her, Loraine had deliberately distanced herself from Grady.

He had initially reached out to her a few times, but when he sensed that she was avoiding him, he couldn't help but feel guilty and decided not to bother her anymore.

As a result, it had been quite a while since the last time they saw each other.

Grady's admiration and adoration for Loraine were evident in his eyes. Despite the fact that so much time had passed, his feelings for her hadn't diminished. If anything, he found her even more beautiful and elegant now.

Florence, on the other hand, had noticed Loraine by now and was busy looking at her with a calculating and contemplative expression on her face.

She felt no guilt whatsoever for her actions in the past. In fact, she had long since pushed those deeds to the back of her mind.

Right now, as she stared at Loraine, her gaze resembled that of someone appraising a valuable commodity.

And clearly, she seemed to be quite satisfied with this commodity.

Loraine had recently been in the spotlight again due to the fact that Universe Group just got recognized as an advanced enterprise. Judging by how much Loraine cared for Ariadna, a member of the main branch, it seemed that her relationship with the Cruz family was also quite good.

Florence made quick calculations in her head. Grady had always been fond of Loraine, and since Ariadna, a member of the main family, had a good relationship with Loraine, Grady's chances of becoming the heir of the Cruz family would greatly increase if he could marry Loraine.

As for Ariadna... Florence's eyes grew colder as she thought of the young girl. If she had a choice, she wouldn't want Grady to save that sickly girl.

But his presence today was necessary as part of an attempt to curry favor with the main branch. But even if Ariadna were to survive, it wouldn't matter.

The Torres family, being one of the most prominent families in Vagow, had deep roots. As long as Grady was able to get married into the family, even the main branch of the Cruz family would have to take him into consideration and he might have a chance to compete for the position of heir, thereby gaining the inheritance.

After weighing the benefits in her head, Florence now looked at Loraine as if she was a gold mine. Her gaze was practically filled with greed.

Before long, she approached Loraine and said to her in an affectionate tone, "Lorrie, you're here too?"

The way she called Loraine's nickname would make anyone who didn't know better think that they had a great relationship like that of a prospective mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

But those who knew the history between the two of them could remember how Florence had made things difficult for Loraine at the Cruz family dinner.

Hearing Florence ask her such a question now made Loraine's expression turn cold. She hadn't forgotten how Florence had once pressured her and even allowed her distant relative to insult her.

Had it not been for the timely arrival of Marco, who saved her, her life would have hung in the balance.

Yet, Florence acted as if none of that had ever happened, shamelessly pretending to be affectionate towards her.

Loraine felt a wave of disgust rising inside her. But at the back of her mind, she also knew Florence's intentions. So she looked away and tried to ignore her.

But Florence didn't seem to feel embarrassed by this at all. In fact, her face was lit up with a wide smile, and she tried to reach for Loraine's hand as she went on in an affectionate tone, "You came here because you knew Grady was coming for the compatibility test, right? Oh my, you're so considerate. On behalf of Grady, let me say thank you very much!"

Grady blinked when he overheard this. Like Florence, he also believed that Loraine had come because of him. His face flushed, and he stuttered, "Loraine, th... thank you for caring."

But when Marco heard this, his face darkened in anger. Even though he was standing right there with Loraine, the mother and son treated him as if he was invisible. They weren't just ignoring him; they were deliberately putting on a show that was meant to serve as a message to him.

He wondered how these two could even dare to carry out such a mission.

His irritation grew as different scenarios began to play out in his head. And to think that they claimed Loraine had come here because of Grady...

Provoked by these thoughts, Marco stepped forward and shielded Loraine by putting her behind him. "Sorry, but Loraine is here with me. That has nothing to do with you," he told mother and son in a firm tone.



Chapter 796 Contempt

When Florence first noticed Loraine earlier, her mind was solely occupied by her plans and ambitions concerning Loraine. As a result, she didn't pay any attention to Marco, who was standing right beside Loraine.

As for Grady, his focus was entirely on Loraine. That was why he had also failed to notice Marco's presence.

Marco, exuding an aura of dominance, wrapped his arm around Loraine's waist, and gave the mother and son an icy glare.

Both Florence and Grady were not happy with his presence. In fact, Grady's face was even beginning to turn slightly red from anger.

In the past, Grady might have swallowed his dissatisfaction due to Marco's imposing and domineering figure. But now, things were very different.

Marco was no longer the high and mighty CEO of Bryant Group.

Being a member of one of the Cruz family's branches with a chance to inherit the family's legacy in the future, Grady felt that he had already surpassed Marco. So he summoned up courage and returned Marco's glare.

"Marco, what are you still doing with Loraine?" he questioned with a sneer. As far as he was concerned, now that Bryant Group had gone bankrupt, Marco had no right to be with Loraine anymore.

In fact, he regretted not approaching Loraine as soon as Bryant

Group fell apart.

He was sure that if he had acted earlier, Marco wouldn't be with Loraine today. In his eyes, Marco had nothing left, except for Loraine. And unfortunately, he wouldn't give her up so easily.

Marco, on his part, didn't respond to Grady's question. But his silence spoke volumes, and it seemed that since there was no protest from Loraine and she was even allowing him to hold her, these were clear indicators of her position.

Grady observed this with a mixture of jealousy and bitterness. He wondered if Loraine was truly back with Marco now.

Even till this point, Marco remained totally silent.

After all, from the mere fact that he and Loraine were standing together, their compatibility was very evident. This was by all means the most powerful response he could give. If not that they were just waiting for Ariadna to return, he and Loraine wouldn't have lingered a second longer in the presence of this naughty mother and son.

Meanwhile, Grady felt highly insulted by Marco's silence, and it made his face turn crimson. Yet, as he continued to stare at Marco, the deep-seated awe he held for Marco washed over him once again. As a result, he went completely silent and didn't dare say another word.

Florence, on the other hand, remained silent as she stood there, quietly sizing Marco up.

She remembered how, when she learned of his expulsion from the Bryant family and their subsequent bankruptcy, she had initially reveled in schadenfreude. Afterwards, she quickly distanced herself from them and completely cut all ties she had with the Bryant family.

Previously, she knew that there was some connection between the branch of the Cruz family and the Bryant family in Vagow. But unfortunately, Grady's father had passed away without having a chance to explain the details of this connection to her. So she had assumed that it was merely a connection that was formed as a result of the fact that the Bryants were influential at the time.

Hence, when the Bryant family finally fell from grace, she abandoned them without any hesitation.

So, for a long time now, she hadn't heard any news about Marco. The most recent mention of his name in her hearing had been at a tea gathering when she overheard some people joking about him. It was said that Marco, once a towering figure, now relied on a wheelchair due to a leg injury, and that he could barely move around on his own.

Even though Marco wasn't in a wheelchair right now, she could see that he was leaning on Loraine – an indication that he might have some difficulty with his legs.

With a cynical smile on her face, Florence taunted him, "Marco, your leg seems to be getting better, but you're still not as capable as you used to be. You have to rely on a woman just to stand."

After making this sarcastic comment, she turned her gaze to Grady and said, "But my son is very different. He's young, handsome, and healthy, with a promising future ahead of him. Any woman with clear eyes would choose Grady without thinking twice. Isn't that right?"

Emboldened by Marco's current status, Florence didn't even bother to hide what was on her mind. Her words clearly implied that Loraine would be very stupid if she decided to stick with Marco.

Loraine understood the insult, and her face darkened in anger. How dare Florence say such mean words to her man?

Immediately, Loraine stepped forward to shield Marco and said with a fake smile on her face, "Perhaps many would choose Grady, but count me out. You can take Grady and go look for those who will be willing to choose him."

When Grady heard this, his face turned pale.

Florence too was both shocked and angered by Loraine's response. And she retorted instantly, "Loraine, don't deceive yourself. Do you think Marco is really worthy of you now? With a background like yours, you should aim to be with someone of equal status!"

She paused for a moment and then went on, "Though the Torres family may not be as prestigious as the Cruz family, you're the only one in Vagow who can match Grady. When Grady finally rises to fame in Zodiac, you'll also benefit from it."

Marco glanced at Florence disdainfully. He couldn't help but find her words amusing.

She had just said that he was relying on Loraine to help him stand because of his leg injury. But what she was actually insinuating was that he was now penniless and was clinging to Loraine because he was seeking to access benefits from the Torres family.

Nevertheless, he would not explain himself to anyone. Instead, he said to her, "Do you think anyone from the Cruz family in Zodiac has any connection to your family? Your fantasies are very funny. As for Loraine, I can assure you that she has no respect for idle and privileged second-generation rich folks. You should know that, or don't you?"

Chapter 797 Sad Grady

As he listened to Marco's scathing remarks, Grady's face turned red and he clenched his fists in fury.

There was no doubt that Marco was referring to him!

He knew he was not as capable as Marco and could not take responsibility for the family business for the time being, but that didn't mean that he was good for nothing. He just never had such an ambition in mind before.

With red eyes, he looked at Loraine, hoping that she could speak up for him. But Loraine didn't even look in his direction.

Wait... Did Loraine also think the same thing that Marco said about him? he wondered.

With this bitter realization, Grady shouted angrily, "Marco, your attitude towards my mom is too rude!"

Marco looked him up and down and replied with a sneer, "She was the first one to be rude."

"I... I know my mom has gone too far," Grady stuttered. "And I apologize for that. But she is my mother. You can't speak to her like that! Even if you are in a bad mood because of what has just happened, you shouldn't have spoken like that."

Being the coward that he was, he was using his mother as an excuse to vent his frustration.

This made Marco dislike him even more. "I have been driven out of the Bryant family, and now, I have no power to rely on. So

you think you're superior to me. That's why you dare to talk back to me, huh, Grady?" he growled.

Grady didn't know what to say. His words were choked in his throat and his face was red. Even though what Marco had said was exactly what was going through his mind, he felt extremely embarrassed to be exposed like this.

When Florence saw that Grady had been completely suppressed, she got very angry.

She didn't understand why Marco was being so arrogant when he had nothing.

She quickly pulled Grady behind her and shouted at Marco, "You bastard! Grady was nice to you because he's kind-hearted and thinks you're his friend. How dare you say such things to him?"

Her hatred for Marco was practically unlimited, and it had only increased when she heard him insulting Grady.

When Grady's father was still alive, he had repeatedly told Florence and Grady to maintain a good relationship with the Bryant family. He even deliberately taught Grady to respect Marco.

This was why Grady was still so submissive to Marco even though he didn't have to!

Since Grady's father was no longer alive to take the blame for this, Florence turned all her anger on Marco.

As a result of a mixture of both old and fresh grudges, Florence couldn't stop herself from continuing to shout at Marco, "The Cruz family and the Bryant family used to be on good terms, that's why I used to give you some respect. But now, it turns out that you are not a member of the Bryant family at all. You're nothing but a bastard, so you deserve no respect! How

dare a bastard like you yell at us? Who gave you the audacity to even try it?"

Hearing Florence calling Marco a bastard was too much for Loraine to bear.

Immediately, she stepped forward and retorted angrily, "Mrs. Cruz, this is a hospital. You're not supposed to make trouble here. If you say something rude again, I'll have to ask you to leave."

Subconsciously, Florence went silent. But she was still furious, and just when she was about to lash out again, Grady stopped her with a shake of his head.

He knew what kind of person Loraine was. He knew she would carry out her threat if she was pushed to it. It would be a great shame if he and Florence were driven out, so it was better they kept quiet and not annoy Loraine any further.

But deep in his heart, he was very sad and disappointed in Loraine because of her behaviour.

He looked at her with a sad expression on his face, as if he was silently blaming her. But unlike before, Loraine didn't comfort him or help him get out of this embarrassing situation.

On the contrary, she returned his look with a cold stare filled with disappointment.

After staring at him for a while, she said to him, "Grady, I really appreciate the fact that we have a common interest in antiques. But this is just the appreciation of a friend. I've always treated you as my friend and brother, and nothing else. Maybe my behaviour in the past has caused some misunderstandings, but let me explain everything clearly to you right now. I love Marco, whether or not he is a member of the Bryant family. Even if he has nothing now, he still has me. From

the beginning, I've loved only him and no one else."

Lorraine's confession shocked Grady. He looked at her in total astonishment and speechlessness.

But with a smile on her face, Lorraine continued, "I think you're at least capable of separating right from wrong. Do you think what Marco did just now was wrong? If you were in his shoes, would you be nice to the person who insulted you?"

Since Grady used to be her friend, Lorraine had tried her best to tell him what she had in mind without hurting his dignity.

After listening to her, Grady felt very ashamed. He knew it was Florence who had started the quarrel, but he had challenged Marco anyway, not wanting to look weak in front of him.

Though Grady was too ashamed to speak right now, Florence, on the other hand, didn't feel embarrassed at all. Instead, she shouted angrily, "That's impossible. How can you choose Marco? He is..."

But before she could finish the statement, she suddenly heard a rebuke, "Mrs. Cruz! Why are you screaming here? You're making a scene!"



Chapter 798 A Similar Face

The person who had just rebuked Florence walked over with a long face, looking very angry.

Loraine was surprised to see that it was Tillie.

Ariadna was undergoing an examination, so Tillie had come out to wait. But she heard shouting going on outside Ariadna's ward and this angered her.

She was even more angry when she saw that the troublemaker was actually from a branch of the Cruz family in Vagow.

She felt that if other people saw a member of the Cruz family making such an ugly scene, it would certainly ruin the reputation of the entire family.

But being the hypocrite that she was, Tillie had already forgotten that she had once made a scene that embarrassed the Cruz family. Nevertheless, she came over to meet Florence and asked her hotly, "What do you think you're doing shouting out here like this? In fact, how dare you do this?!"

Though this side branch was not very close to Ariadna's family, they were still relatives. Hence, when it became known that Ariadna needed stem cells, Grady was immediately contacted because Tillie didn't want to lose any chance to save her.

But Tillie didn't expect that they would be so troublesome. She couldn't help but think that they were ill-bred, unlike the dignified main branch of the Cruz family.

Tillie looked at them disdainfully, clearly showing how

disappointed she was.

Nevertheless, she felt that even though they were noisy and not even members of the main branch of the family, she could not allow others to disrespect them because that would mean that the Cruz family was the one being disrespected. So she decided that she would teach a lesson to the person that was quarreling with them.

But when she turned to challenge their opponent, she saw that it was Loraine.

Tillie's eyes widened in shock.

So Loraine was the one Florence was arguing with?!

Thankfully, she had scolded Florence first, not her opponent!

But still, she was scared. What if Loraine decided to make Ariadna pay for Florence's stupidity? She was really scared that Loraine might take back the surgical robot now that it was most needed.

Before she came over, she had vaguely overheard them talking about the Bryant family, which was a bit familiar to her.

At this point, she noticed that there was a man standing beside Loraine. When she turned to look at him, she was shocked.

It was Marco.

Tillie had seen Loraine and Marco together before. At that time, she found him strangely familiar. But since the matter was very important, she didn't dare to make a wild guess, even though she felt that he looked like someone else she knew.

Now that she had met him again, she still felt exactly the same way, but she didn't dare to draw any conclusions.

Tillie wouldn't dare to offend Marco and Loraine for any reason. Instead, she turned her attention back to Florence and asked her in a cold tone, "By the way, what exactly is going on here?"

Florence frowned. She thought that Grady was seen as important and much needed by Ariadna, so she wondered why Tillie was talking to them like this.

Nevertheless, she said in response, "It's just that this bastard who was kicked out by the Bryant family offended us. I wanted to teach him a lesson, but I didn't expect that he would have the guts to argue with me. Tillie, this man doesn't show any respect to the Cruz family at all."

Tillie knew that Florence wanted her to deal with Marco on behalf of the Cruz family, but she decided to ignore her.

She had tried before to oppress these two using the power of the Cruz family, but it had failed woefully. Loraine and Marco were not scared of the Cruzes at all.

But what caught Tillie's attention was the beginning of Florence's statement.

Tillie didn't pay attention to news, nor did she keep tabs on matters concerning the Bryant family. But now, she had realized something.

That Marco was not a real member of the Bryant family!

If this was true, then perhaps what she had in mind could be correct after all! But first, she had to be absolutely sure.

Holding back her excitement, she asked Florence, "What do you mean by saying that he's a bastard?"

Florence thought that Tillie didn't know Marco's current

situation, so she hadn't tried to help her and Grady. Shrugging her shoulders, she replied in a proud tone, "You've been taking care of Miss Cruz in the hospital all along. I guess that's why you haven't heard of it. Marco is not a member of the Bryant family! Maybe he's the son of a homeless man, but he's certainly not a Bryant."

"You're still talking nonsense, eh?" Marco growled at Florence menacingly.

Tillie, on the other hand, was quiet and deep in thought. She fixed her gaze on Marco for a while. She couldn't help but feel that his face was similar to that of a big shot in the Cruz family.

In fact, his temperament made her even more convinced that he resembled the Cruz family member she was thinking about.

If this was actually the case, then what Florence had said was very disrespectful and ignorant. It was crazy and ridiculous to compare a big shot with a homeless man.

Immediately, Tillie scolded Florence, "Shut up!"

But Florence thought she was talking to Marco, so she also glared at him.

In return, Marco frowned. He had learned how unreasonable Tillie was and he thought she was going to threaten him with the power and influence of the Cruz family.

But to their surprise, Tillie turned to Florence and said in a serious tone, "The Cruz family never gave you license to be rude to other people. So, shut up!"

