

## Chapter 866 You Are The Guests

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Florence already saw herself as the future matriarch of the Cruz family. And today's banquet was prepared in the name of the Cruz family, which made everyone present to treat her with utmost politeness.

Florence's ego became even bigger with all the flattery and compliments from the crowd. Now that she was the center of the attention, she thought Marco should be sensible and not dare to go against her.

However, Marco still didn't take her seriously and kept refuting her.

Seeing his disrespectful behavior, Florence's face darkened, but at the sight of the coldness in Marco's eyes, she couldn't help but refrain herself from confronting him.

After a while, Florence managed to hold back her anger and comforted herself.

Marco's reputation would be ruined at the end of the banquet anyway. By then, no one would dare to offend her anymore. She only needed to endure it for now!

Casting a cold glance at Marco, Florence sneered, "You're really a stubborn man. Let's wait and see what will happen!"

After saying that, Florence turned around and was about to leave, only to see Grady walking towards them.

A smile took over Florence's angry expression, and she called Grady over, her tone full of confidence.

Grady saw Florence waving at him and walked toward her. As he approached, his eyes caught Marco. At first, he was confused, but the next moment, he clearly heard Florence's exaggerated words that were blaming how rude Marco had been to her.

In fact, Grady knew Florence very well. How could he not know what was going on? But instead of retorting, he chose to stay silent.

After listening to her continuous grumble, Grady persuaded the ladies to leave and then turned to Marco and Jimmie.

Pressing his lips, Grady greeted them, "Marco, Jimmie." Despite Grady's polite tone, his expression seemed quite distant.

Marco gave a slight nod. On the side, Jimmie's lips curled up as he took a look at Grady. His eyes held mockery as if saying, "Let me see how you are going to twist the truth."

Grady's breathing stopped for a second. The responses of the two made him feel embarrassed.

Marco and Jimmie were his acquaintances whom he had admired in the past. Facing them now, Grady felt not only inherently self-conscious but also ashamed and angry of being looked down upon.

He took a deep breath and forced himself to stand straight. He said in a deep voice, "Marco, my mother is hot-headed. She might be harsh, but please don't take it to heart."

Grady's line was nothing but a poor lie. Both Marco and Jimmie didn't say anything, leaving him quiet for a while. Considering

his bright future Florence had described these days, he plucked up courage and continued, "Marco, in fact, if you want to come in, just tell me. There's no need to sneak in."

Hearing the sarcasm in his words, Marco looked up at Grady with a slight sneer.

Although he used to think that Grady was weak and incompetent, he was a kind and honest man. But to his surprise, Grady had changed and become so evil.

Thinking of this, Marco didn't feel like talking to Grady anymore. He just said coldly, "No, thanks. I'm here with Loraine."

He didn't want to have anything to do with the Cruz family, so he didn't want to tell others that Clifford had specially invited him.

Jimmie also said, "Grady, you have become really arrogant. Do you think you are a big shot of Vagow now? Whoever Loraine brings as her partner has nothing to do with you at all. Even if I want to bring someone in, it is none of your business, isn't it?"

Grady was livid. He turned his head away and didn't reply to Jimmie, but he felt jealous in his heart.

Marco came here to accompany Loraine as her partner.

The feeling of guilt that Grady had just now quickly disappeared and was replaced by the jealousy. Right now, all he wanted to do was to talk down on Marco and gain his self-confidence. He had to prove that he was a more qualified partner for Loraine than Marco.

Grady's eyes darkened immediately. His tone betrayed his anger as he said coldly, "Anyway, you can't humiliate my mother in public. After all, my mother is a member of the Cruz family. It's impolite for you to do this!"

Florence nodded her head vigorously and agreed with her son, saying in a rather angry tone, "This is a banquet held by the Cruz family. We are the hosts and you are the guests. Don't you think you should listen to the hosts and show some respect?"

Marco sneered at the arrogant mother and son who looked so much alike. Not wanting to talk with them anymore, he simply ignored them and walked forward.

Just now, Marco didn't notice that Loraine and Jennie had gone far. He didn't know if they had entered a room to talk. If he stayed there, he would only hear Florence's and Grady's meaningless words, which only wasted his time. He'd rather look for Loraine and stay with her.

Florence and Grady put on airs, but everything seemed to be in vain and have no impact on Marco. Seeing Marco's indifferent behavior made them really furious.

As Marco left, Jimmie followed him, a smile never dropping from his expression. As he walked past Grady, he patted him on the shoulder and said jokingly, "If you are really the host of this banquet, you should be on that stage."

Looking at the direction where Jimmie was pointing at, Grady saw Clifford, who looked like a real big shot with all his men surrounding protectively as he walked towards the stage in the center of the banquet hall.

Grady immediately realized that Jimmie was mocking him, indicating that he was just an outsider who couldn't make a decision.

Grady's face flushed with embarrassment, but he couldn't say anything back. The embarrassment turned into depression and then to annoyance.

If it had been in the past, he would never have said those words. However, ever since the Cruz family in Zodiac came to Vagow, Florence had been telling him that he would become the sole heir of the family.

Florence's words had convinced him to some degree. Besides, he had this hidden desire to have Loraine as his partner for life. With all these things combined, gradually, Grady started absorbing the fact that he would be the future head of the Cruz family in his heart and brain, eventually behaving like one.

Then, in terms of status, why couldn't he outshine Marco?



## Chapter 867 Joyous News Of The Cruz Family

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The moment Clifford arrived, the room's atmosphere burst into excitement. Everyone stood up and crowded toward the stage to catch a glimpse.

Marco paced swiftly through the crowd, his brow furrowed as he searched for Loraine.

Many attendees recognized him and after their initial surprise, began to whisper and speculate about why he was here.

A few murmured that Marco was the Ariadna's savior, causing a mix of reactions. Some were disdainful, some were sighing that he was lucky, and even a few were sarcastic.

While the crowd whispered secrets, they didn't bother to hush their voices. Marco caught every word.

Yet, he ignored their chatter, his mind set on finding Loraine without delay.

At the Cruz family's event, Clifford's arrival stirred a deep unease in Marco. He felt calm only when close to Loraine.

A voice tinged with sarcasm reached Marco's ears, mocking, "Loraine's lost her sight. She's head over heels. The Universe Group's going down just like the Bryant Group did!"

When Marco heard the insult hurled at Loraine, he stopped and shot an icy look at the gossip among the crowd.

The gossip was petrified upon noticing Marco's stare. Feeling guilty, he quickly hid back into the crowd in a downcast manner.

Marco dismissed the petty gossip with a huff and resumed his search for Loraine, undistracted.

At that moment, an excited cheer erupted near the stage. Clifford had made his appearance.

Clifford of the Cruz family in Zodiac, once deemed unapproachable by Vagow's people, was now graciously standing on stage, his laughter resonating elegantly. The crowd buzzed with a newfound sense that the Cruz family was more approachable than they thought.

Clifford's soothing voice filled the venue through the loudspeaker, saying, "I appreciate you all for attending the Cruz family's banquet despite your busy lives. First of all, I have joyous news to share. My daughter has triumphed over her long ailment."

The crowd offered their congratulations to Clifford. Meanwhile, Marco finally spotted Loraine.

As expected, she and Jennie went into a room. They just came out after the talk.

Holding Loraine's hand, Jennie looked somewhat taken aback, having just processed some surprising information. She murmured, "Had you not mentioned it, I wouldn't have sensed anything amiss with the security guard. The Cruz family's affairs are intricate. Be careful and try not to get involved."

Loraine agreed with a nod. She had overheard Clifford's announcement and the crowd's responses. She then remarked, "However, Ariadna, Clifford's daughter whom I've mentioned before, is unlike the rest of the Cruzes. She's genuinely kind-



hearted and pleasant. I will introduce you to her if I have a chance."

Jennie nodded and tapped her nose, looking puzzled. From her outside perspective, she noticed some details that Loraine might have overlooked.

Leaning closer, she whispered to Loraine, "Do you think Clifford organized this lavish banquet just to celebrate his daughter's recovery, as he claims?"

The banquet was a grand affair, drawing in all notable families from Vagow. Even if the so-called celebration was just an excuse, it was too exaggerated.

After a moment's thought, Loraine replied uncertainly, "The Cruz family is influential. Perhaps they just prefer grand gestures."

Jennie gestured towards Clifford on stage, who was still speaking. "He mentioned 'first of all,' which means there's more to this event. This banquet isn't just a simple celebration. And if it's really a party to Ariadna's recovery, why isn't she here yet?"

Loraine felt a shock of realization. Jennie's observation made her see what had been off.

They were told the party was in honor of Ariadna, but she was nowhere to be seen.

It was only now that Loraine realized she had overlooked this. She was nearly involved in every step of Ariadna's intricate surgery, so she saw no issue with the banquet for Ariadna. Yet, from the sidelines, Jennie spotted the crucial issue right away.

Loraine felt deep down that the Cruz family's plans might involve Marco in some way.



Her hunch wasn't baseless. Marco's restlessness and the Cruz family's odd behavior towards him were telling signs.

Loraine grew anxious and worried for Marco. She gently tapped Jennie's hand and whispered, "I need to find Marco. Stay here, and don't wander off."

Just then, Clifford took the stage and announced, "We have more thrilling news today!"

He left a suspenseful gap, making the audience eager. Silence fell as everyone anticipated the revelation.

Meanwhile, Florence was quietly delighted, convinced her predictions were about to come true.

She speculated that the Cruz family of Zodiac might either expose Marco's dark secrets and expel him or name the next family successor.

If true, her time in the limelight was just around the corner!

As the crowd's curiosity peaked, Clifford declared, "The head of the Cruz family has found his long-lost son!"



## Chapter 868 The Truth

There were few seconds of silence before commotion broke out. Everyone started expressing their surprise about the issue.

What? The son of the head of the Cruz family?

Compared with Ariadna, he was obviously more eligible to inherit the fortune of the family!

Some people who knew some secrets about the Cruz family began to tell the younger people around them. In the past, the head of the Cruz family found it difficult to inherit the family fortune. Also, his son had simply gone missing. But unexpectedly, after a long time, the son was found.

To everyone's utmost surprise, he was found to be in Vagow!

Many attendees were very regretful. It would have been great if they had known about his true identity earlier. They would have cultivated a much closer relationship with him then. However, the Cruz family had hidden the news too well for such a long time!

Each person's reaction was different. Florence and Grady in particular looked pale and hopeless.

This news might not make much difference to others, but to them, it was devastating to say the least.

Still in shock, Grady's bloodless lips trembled ceaselessly.

He could now see that the dream Florence had for him was shattered to pieces.

Florence, on her part, was driven to despair. From the moment the Cruz family secretly selected its heir, she felt sure that they would win. After all, even if Ariadna eventually recovered, she was just a girl. But now, a man — not just any man but the son of the head of the family — had been found!

This was a case of a man inheriting what rightfully belonged to him. So, there was no way they could fight him over the issue of the inheritance.

Florence was pretty much in disbelief even till now. How come there was no rumor about such important news?

And apparently, Clifford didn't seem to give a damn about the reaction of the audience. Standing on the stage, he went on, "Today, the son of the head of the Cruz family is present at the banquet. It will be my pleasure to announce his identity and introduce him to you all."

People began to look around curiously, trying to guess who in the crowd could be the son of the head of the Cruz family.

If he was already their acquaintance, then their future would be nice and promising!

As for Florence, the moment she heard the announcement, she looked around reluctantly, thinking that she still might have a chance. If the person was currently present at the banquet and he had a bad reputation, then he would stand no chance.

He would have serious problems trying to persuade the elders of the family to accept him as the heir. And then at that point, there was a possibility that Grady might still be able to inherit the family fortune.

Marco, on his part, felt bothered by the noisy crowd. From the look on his face, it was clear that he wasn't very happy.

After listening to the announcement, he could now understand Clifford's plan. The reason why the party was so grand was because it was prepared for him.

This made Marco feel very worried. He had to find Loraine as soon as possible!

It was almost like telepathy. Just as he began to think of finding Loraine, he suddenly looked back subconsciously.

Loraine, who stood a little distance away, also saw him and locked eyes with him.

It was almost as if the crowd between them no longer existed. With a smile on his face, Marco breathed a deep sigh of relief. Loraine also felt relieved and looked happy.

Then they both got up and began to walk towards each other.

But just then, the light at the venue suddenly went dim.

People began to panic, but Clifford, who was still on the stage, comforted them with a smile. "Hi everyone, please don't panic. All the guests present here today are friends of the Cruz family. Each person was strictly screened. The Cruz family attaches great importance to the son of the head of our family. Hence, we must keep an eye on his every move at all times."

When Marco heard this, he became anxious. He quickened his pace and almost ran to meet Loraine. This party was indeed a trap set for him!

But just as he was about to come face-to-face with Loraine, a beam of light shone directly on him.

He was only two or three steps away from Loraine. He had attempted to stretch out his hand to hold Loraine, but he

stopped because of the sudden spotlight that shone on him.

Loraine, who was outside the circle of light, felt surprised and confused. She looked at Marco in a daze, as if this was the first time she had seen him.

From the spotlight placed on him, it was pretty clear what was going on. But Loraine still could not believe it.

Meanwhile, a complacent smile had appeared on Clifford's face. He felt he had taken control of the whole situation. He looked at Marco from afar as if to say, "I'm the winner!"

Pretending to be proud of Marco, he announced to the crowd, "I guess you're familiar with this man. His name is Marco, the lost son of our family that we just found!"



## Chapter 869 His Only Family

Everyone was shocked. Not a single soul had anticipated it.

Marco was the son of the head of the Cruz family?! The same person who they all demeaned?!

Everyone in attendance knew Marco. He was popular for making the Bryant Group a giant in the Vagow business scene. He just happened to be unlucky and crashed from stardom when it was revealed in a scandal that he was a 'bastard' and not a member of the Bryant family. Then he got kicked out.

They had all believed that his life would become miserable after that but were all shocked when he became Loraine's boyfriend and was favored by the Torres family.

The way he had climbed up the social ladder pissed everyone off.

They all thought there was some kind of mistake. How was it possible that Marco was a part of the Cruz family?

All those who had wronged Marco were frightened. They thought he was going to seek revenge.

The lights were turned back on, and every single person standing around him promptly stepped aside. No one dared to approach him.

Numerous eyes filled with envy, jealousy or resentment, were fixed on him. On the other hand, Marco's gaze was fixed on Loraine. His eyes held a trace of guilt and panic as he watched her.

His greatest fear was Loraine finding out his true identity. She despised the Cruz family after all. His heart would break into a million little pieces if Loraine showed the slightest bit of disgust or disappointment on her face.

Loraine couldn't believe her ears. Her eyes never left Marco's as she replayed Clifford's words in her head. What Clifford said was the answer to all the questions that had haunted her for so long. The more she thought about it, the more things began to make more sense. All the dots were being connected, there were so many little details that she didn't pay attention to back then.

No wonder Marco was somehow the perfect find for Ariadna's bone marrow transplant. Both of them were from the same family. He was Ariadna's uncle's son who went missing. Tillie must have known that Marco and Ariadna were related. That was why she begged Marco the way she did to donate his bone marrow. She wanted to prove that Marco was related to the Cruz family.

Was Marco aware of his identity at that time?

Loraine sighed. There was no way he wouldn't have known.

He was acting nervous and worried at the hospital. She had thought that he was acting that way because of the surgery.

But as she thought about it again, she realized how stupid it was to think that way. He didn't even let out a single cry of pain when he injured his leg terribly. He'd acted like it was nothing but a small bruise. That sort of person wouldn't be scared of surgery.

Her eyes never left his. Panic flooded his entire face. It was as if her heart had been stomped on repeatedly. Her emotions began to overwhelm her. He had deceived her...



She took small steps backwards. All the promises he had made her began to seem like lies.

Everyone was making comments here and there but all Marco could think of was preventing Loraine from walking away from him. He hurriedly pushed his way through the crowd and grabbed her wrist, silently pleading for her to stay by his side.

Loraine didn't know what to do. She hated the fact that he lied to her but at the same time she was trying to see things from his point of view.

"Loraine. I said it before and I'll say it again, I love you. You are my only family." Marco gave her hand a gentle squeeze.

It wasn't the right time or place for him to say that but he desperately needed to prove his sincerity.

All their happy moments together flashed through Loraine's mind. It was true that he had lied to her, but he had also proven his love for her countless times. He always risked his life for her. She was the reason he was injured.

Loraine stopped retreating. She opened her mouth to say something as Clifford pushed through the crowd and walked up to them.

Clifford's face morphed into a frown as his gaze landed on their joined hands. He hated how vulnerable Marco was acting because of Loraine. He had paved the way of glory and wealth for Marco, but there he was, acting like a fool.

Clifford blamed Loraine for this. In his opinion, she was too cunning. After mingling with her, Ariadna became defiant and Marco completely lost interest in power and wealth.

Clifford let out an annoyed scoff and pretended to look affable.

Chapter 869 His Only Family

 +120 Points at most

"Marco... the master of Cruz family is no other than my brother. I'm your uncle. Your father is currently very busy with business at Zodiac. He specifically asked me to bring you home. He has been dying to see you and now that your identity has been revealed, it's the perfect opportunity for you to return home."

Marco gave Loraine's hand a reassuring squeeze. "Mr. Cruz. No offense but, I've told you I'm not going back. I am not leaving the woman I love."



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## Chapter 870 Don't Bother Me Again

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The bystanders exchanged surprised glances.

Did Marco imply that the Cruz family had already located him, but he turned them down?

It was baffling. How could someone who had faced bankruptcy reject an offer from a prestigious family like the Cruz family?

Clifford, attempting to maintain a mild demeanor, could no longer conceal his discontent.

He believed that once Marco's identity was exposed, and he used the leverage of family ties, Marco would have no choice but to return to the Cruz family with him due to public pressure.

His plan was simple: bring Marco back to Zodiac, fulfill his brother's wishes, and wash his hands off whatever happened to Marco afterward.

But, to Clifford's surprise, Marco stood his ground and publicly refused him!

A stern look crossed Clifford's eyes as he urged, "Think carefully before you answer. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance that many dream of! Don't let it slip away on a whim!"

Several people in the crowd nodded, their eyes welling up with tears. In an instant, Marco was designated as the heir to the prestigious family. If they were in his place, they'd have readily accepted. So, what prompted Marco to decline?

After a short pause, Clifford added, "Joining the Cruz family means becoming their heir. Think about it. This is Zodiac's Cruz family, far surpassing the influence of Bryant family!"

A young man hurriedly said, "Marco, don't be foolish. There's no need to hesitate to seize this chance to become an influential figure. We're talking about the Cruz family of Zodiac!"

Everyone voiced their opinions, with some persuading Marco to say yes, while others discussed the benefits of joining the Cruz family. Yet, no one dared to ridicule Marco for his decision.

Now that his true identity was out in the open, nobody had the nerve to tease him anymore. Wouldn't that be going against the Cruz family?

In the crowd, Florence stood there, utterly astonished, her mouth agape and eyes wide as saucers.

She wished it was all a bad dream, praying to wake up soon. Why did Marco's origins come to light before Grady could take control of the Cruz family?

It could have been anyone else but Marco as the missing son! Why did it have to be him?

Recalling her past actions towards Marco, Florence couldn't help but grow pale with regret.

She felt foolish. She had assumed that the Cruz family was investigating Marco due to some blood type issue, never imagining that Marco was connected to the Cruz family by blood.

In that instant, it all clicked for Florence. Now, she understood why her husband had always insisted she cultivate a close friendship with the Bryant family and continually show respect



to Marco. It appeared that her husband had been aware that Marco might have a connection to the Cruz family all along!

But she couldn't blame herself. She was just a distant relative of the Cruz family, left in the dark by her prematurely deceased husband.

The situation had irreversibly changed. Now, it wasn't just about Grady competing to lead the Cruz family; it was unclear if they'd even maintain a position within it!

Grady's feelings were complex.

While Florence mourned the loss of potential power, Grady felt genuine sorrow.

He gazed in bewilderment at Marco in the crowd, hand in hand with Loraine. He couldn't help but ponder whether he'd be willing to forgo his claim to the Cruz family's inheritance for Loraine if he were in Marco's shoes.

Grady suddenly realized he had no answer to this. Besides, such a comparison held no weight anymore.

The verdict was clear. Marco was the rightful heir, not him.

Grady felt thoroughly defeated by Marco.

After Marco's identity was revealed, it sparked a variety of schemes among the crowd.

Those who had once ridiculed Marco during his tough times now found themselves worried, whereas those who had a strong bond with him were thrilled and made earnest attempts to convince him to embrace his role as the eldest son of the Cruz family.

Yet, his rejection baffled everyone. How could someone be so

indifferent to power and wealth?

If they were in Marco's shoes, wouldn't it be a perfect scenario to inherit the Cruz family's fortune and marry Loraine, creating a win-win situation?

Amidst the collective puzzlement and the persuasive voices of the crowd, Marco remained silent. He drew strength from the warmth of Loraine's hand in his. Only she could give him the comfort and courage to decline the Cruz family.

He had always yearned for the warmth of family affection. When he learned he wasn't a Bryant family member, he daydreamed about his biological parents discovering him one day.

However, after committing to Loraine and seeing the true nature of the Cruz family, Marco abandoned such an idea.

Facing Clifford, Marco spoke firmly. "I have my own family now, and I have no interest in the Cruz family. I've never been a part of that household, so there's no reason to return. Mr. Cruz, don't bother me again."

