

Versatile Superstar: Rise In Hollywood Chapter 24

“I hate it.”

Rachel muttered as she stared at Aiden. The latter sighed with a wry expression. Although Rachel didn't like being in this situation with him after the last broadcast, his feelings were also mutual.

“I don't like it either.”

“Then, ask the judges to change the pairing.”

“I would have if I could, and if you want to, you can ask them yourself.”

They both knew that even asking the judges or program team to change the pairing won't do anything. The program team might even be smiling, thinking of the ratings when this will air on the broadcast.

After all, the last episode broke records and Rachel and Aiden were discussed the most on social media.

‘I can't keep bantering with her. We need to practice.’

The song they had received was a pop song titled ‘Stay’. It was sung by a British duo and was very popular, with over 200 million views on MeTube.

The problem with popular songs was that most people would already know them, so they would compare the original to the one sung by the contestants, which meant that they needed to correctly use their skills to make a difference and make it memorable.

Moreover, in a battle round, both the contestants needed to sing the same song simultaneously, meaning there needed to be a bit of chemistry and connection between them to make the song better.

It was up to the judges to decide who would go ahead, but if they both kept bantering with each other, they would mess up their performance before it even began.

Aiden didn't want that, especially when he was already at a disadvantage with the massive disparity between their singing levels. Rachel was on another whole level.

‘Uh, I need to talk it through and calm her down as we can go ahead with the practice.’

He thought and glanced at Rachel, who just had a frosty expression on her face. It was hard to know what she was thinking, but Aiden didn't care about that. He first has to clear the misunderstanding.

“Uh, I wanted to clarify something about the last episode.”

“What?”

She glared at him, remembering the comments she had read on the internet. Recalling them only frustrated her more.

“I didn’t say anything like what was shown in the episode. And it’s a huge misunderstanding.”

“What do you mean?”

Aiden wondered how to explain it but did not have enough patience so he decided just to talk straightforwardly.

“That clip of mine saying you are great. It’s edited. I didn’t say anything like that, nor did I think anything like that. It’s all fabricated to spice up the show.”

“But I saw the clip. Everyone di-”

“Have you ever heard of Devil’s editing?”

Aiden interrupted her words, and, hearing that, Rachel fell into some thought. Then thinking of his behaviour towards her until now, it really didn’t seem like Aiden had a crush on her.

She had heard about how reality shows used their contestants, but it was the first time she was experiencing it.

“Okay, I understand that. But people are still talking about me, assuming I’m dating you. What about it?”

She asked, and Aiden already had a reply prepared for that.

“Nothing about it. I am sorry, but I can’t do anything about that. People are talking even more about me, and neither of us can do anything about it. It’s a reality show, and as we are appearing on TV, people will talk about us. All this will automatically die down once the show ends.”

He ranted out, and Rachel’s body shook slightly as she took in those words. He was right, very right.

It seemed like she had unnecessarily gotten angry seeing the reactions online. In addition, her mom had called her yesterday asking if it was true and was very suspicious, which had gotten her even more incensed.

But suddenly, she felt her anger cooling down.

Still, there were some doubts in her mind. She needed to clear them out.

“So, you don’t have a crush on me?”

“I don’t have a crush on anyone. And do you think I’m stupid enough to get a relationship on X-Star? It’s a singing reality show, not a dating one. I’m here to win the competition, not get into a relationship. Moreover, even if I want to get into a relationship, I won’t at this point in my life.”

“Hmm, then our thoughts are mutual. I am also not here for any drama. While I have my reasons, do you mind sharing yours?” She asked, finding his words a bit strange.

“I have bigger things to do, and a relationship will drag me down at this point. Now, can we practice?”

He sighed, and although his words didn’t entirely convince her, Rachel still nodded her head.

Currently, they need to focus on the next round. Everything else was just secondary.

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‘I’m very nervous.’

Aiden thought as he leaned back on the sofa. He was currently backstage as his performance was about to come. The round had already started with some contestants having even performed in front of the judges.

He thought that he had gotten better at controlling his nerves as the competition moved. But he realised that the fear of elimination was still gripping his heart very tightly.

After all, he was directly facing off against Rachel. It was hard to say if he had any chance, just depending on their skills.

But he knew that the system didn’t show the whole reality.

‘Rachel’s singing level might be way better than mine, but it doesn’t mean she would sing at that level every single time.’

Aiden had been thinking hard about this for a few days, and this was his verdict. After all, the system was just showing the skill level, but a performance contains effort, proficiency in the song, how one was singing it and many other important factors which would then determine how the person performs.

That's why he still had a chance, albeit a small one. P.A.N.D.A N.O.V.E.L

"Our performance is next."

As he was in his thoughts, Rachel suddenly walked right up to him and said. Nodding his head, he stood up and followed her on the stage.

Some members of the audience cheered when they saw both of them. Both Rachel and Aiden had gotten a few fans in their time on the X-Star.

"Hi, how are you two?" Andrew asked, smiling at them. He was the judge who would always try to portray a positive attitude towards the contestants.

"We are fine," Aiden replied, keeping the mic close to his mouth.

"Any nervousness? You two are some of the most popular contestants this year, and only one of you will go forward. Does that make you scared?"

"It does a bit. But in the end, the best one of us would go ahead."

"Yeah, it's not something we can do anything about."

They answered, and with that, the small talk ended. Andrew gestured to start the performance.

The lights on the stage dimmed as both of them took their positions. Soft electronic music started flowing in the background.

'I need to think about music rather than failing.'

Aiden repeatedly muttered in his mind like a mantra, and it seemed to have worked. As soon as he felt music, he forgot all about his worries.

Just focusing on giving out a good performance.

The first verse was his, and Aiden needed to sing it in a low tone while trying to focus on the diction. He had already practised it a lot, and he automatically started singing after ten seconds into the song.

"All I ever wanted was a peaceful life."

"Days passing, with you by my side."

"I know it was my fault, not becoming what you want."

“But I hope you are happier now. I hope you are sunnier now.”

It was a type of song with a very flashy beginning. With fast but meaningful lyrics, catchy music in the background and the singer’s skills, the song tried to literally force itself in one’s head.

Strangely it worked very well.

Rachel, who was moving her legs with the music, started the second verse.

“Without you, I know I’m a mess.”

“I don’t even know how to explain, but I know I was the one to make you stressed.”

“Still, I can’t forget about you every time you are away.”

“I feel like asking you to stay.”

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As the second verse ended, the lights on the stage started shining with neon lights as a spotlight illuminated them. The electronic music coming out of a keyboard joined hands with a bass and a guitar.

It was then that both Rachel and Aiden prepared for the chorus.

“Ohhh, baby, I really want you to stay.”

“Hold you under the shining ray(s).”

“But I know I need to hold my feelings because I don’t have a say.”

“Still, I know it would be best if you could stay.”

Both of them stretched the last part, and as they tried the note higher and higher, Aiden struggled with it, but he still pushed through as he was able to see white light coming out from them.

The true performance was just starting.

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//DreamNote//

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