

## **Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)**

### **#Chapter 1821 - Read Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren) Chapter 1821**

More guests were arriving at the great hall. Andrew and Zachary did not draw attention to themselves and simply found a quiet corner to stand in.

Those who came later were seated according to rank and status, with the powerful and renowned taking seats in the front rows on both sides of the hall. The small fry naturally stood in the back.

People in the martial world loved this kind of unspoken hierarchy. It was how they showed rank and status.

Zachary pointed toward a stocky man with a round belly who looked like he was in his third trimester. "Captain, that's Riker Lamar, the leader of the Hidden Dragons."

Andrew looked over and saw Riker sitting squarely in his seat. He was short and broad, with an oddly oversized head that made him look almost cartoonish.

Though he looked comical, his slightly closed eyes occasionally flashed with sharp light. Anyone could tell he was a ruthless expert who had mastered internal martial arts.

Zachary pointed toward another guest and grinned. "And over there, Captain... See that delicate-looking pretty boy? That handsome guy isn't simple at all! He's the young president of Onyx Serpents! He's Rowan Maddock, known as the Vicious Serpent, though I don't know why this pretty boy has such a feminine name when he's clearly got the goods!"

Andrew shot him a look. "Did you forget to clean your eyes this morning? That so-called 'pretty boy' is a woman in disguise. Since she's female, having a feminine name is perfectly normal, isn't it?"

Zachary blinked. "Wait, what? Rowan's a woman? She's cross-dressing? How can you tell?"

Andrew smirked. "Years ago, I treated her for something... So yeah, I've known about it for a while. She loves playing dress-up to keep people guessing. Classic bait-and-switch."

Zachary snorted. "So, Captain,

you've... touched her? I heard she was born with some sort of winter's essence skin cold like snow, untouched by mortal blemish. People say her whole body's icy cold, even her inside. Sleeping next to her would supposedly feel like resting against a slab of cool marble, guaranteeing the best sleep of your life."

He added, "And if you actually managed to, well, go further, they say you could draw out her feminine energy to boost your masculine energy and skyrocket your cultivation."

Andrew gave him a deadpan stare. "I've never heard of that nonsense. All that dual-cultivation stuff isn't that simple, no matter what fantasy novel you read. Where are you even getting these ridiculous ideas?"

Zachary scratched his head and grinned foolishly. "Everyone around Goldridge knows about it! I've been here a few times, and all the martial artists here covet Rowan! She's got that whole androgynous look, hard to tell if she's male or female, and her innate winter's essence body makes her seem like the perfect partner for cultivating power."

Andrew shook his head as he listened, gazing from the back toward the first row at the white-robed Rowan holding a fan, face smiling, looking very dashing.

Anyone who wasn't blind could tell she was cross-dressing as a man. In terms of looks, she indeed had an aloof beauty, with a temperament somewhat similar to Chantelle's in different ways.

However, Chantelle's naturally frigid temperament kept people at a distance. Meanwhile, Rowan had more ethereal charm, giving people the illusion that she could be admired from afar but not approached intimately.

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Sitting beside Rowan was an elderly man with white hair but a youthful face.

Zachary introduced him as Gabriel Ackermann, leader of Crimson Alliance, nicknamed "Lightning Sword".

Most of the expected people had arrived, and the great hall was becoming slightly noisy. Even at this point, the core figure, Jerome, this top-tier big shot, had yet to make an appearance.

Zachary muttered, "Strange, could Mr. Thornton have been delayed by something today?"

Looking at Andrew, Zachary proactively explained, "Mr. Thornton might hold a powerful position and sit high on the Titan List, but he's actually a pretty down-to-earth guy. Even outer disciples used to be able to see him pretty easily, and he's never one to put on airs or show up late. So whatever's going on today is definitely a first."

Andrew had also heard of Jerome's reputation, knowing he was widely respected. It was not just because of his martial arts skills, but also his approachable nature and elder-like demeanor.

There were even rumors that when Jerome was young and traveling the martial world, he was bullied by some brat. The kid had climbed up a tree, and when Jerome passed underneath, he pissed right on Jerome's head.

Not only did Jerome not get angry, but he wiped the urine from his face and gave the kid in the tree a thumbs up, praising the child's boldness and spirit, saying he would surely achieve great things in the future.

Just then, the noisy hall suddenly fell silent. The people seated near the front quickly shifted to the sides. All eyes turned toward the main staircase at the back of the hall, including Andrew's.

A group emerged from the far end, and leading them was a middle-aged man in a long robe, his face square-jawed and composed, with a warm and gentle smile.

Zachary's expression shifted into reverence. "Captain, that's my mentor, Mr. Jerome Thornton, the leader of our entire Gabo Creek region's Martial Union." Andrew remained calm while secretly observing this man.

Jerome came to the central main seat and raised his hands. "Apologies for the delay, everyone. I had some matters to handle and came a bit late."

The martial artists who had been grumbling earlier all immediately responded with hearty laughs and respectful nods.

"No worries, Mr. Thornton! You've got a lot on your plate. We totally understand!"

Another said, "You're the pillar of the Southern Martial Union! You could've shown up next year and we'd still be waiting!"

"I even brought a tent, Mr. Thornton. I'll camp out here for a week if I have to, just say the word!"

Andrew broke into a sweat. These rough-around-the-edges fighters were unexpectedly entertaining. They rambled on without a hint of embarrassment, each louder than the last, joking like they were at a street fair instead of a formal gathering.

Once seated, Jerome smiled and addressed the crowd. "Today's a good day. I'm opening my doors to take on a few inner disciples. There won't be any long speeches. Let's get straight to it."

The entire hall perked up at once. Everyone knew how rare Jerome's inner disciple spots were. You did not need a speech to prove it; just look at the turnout.

For most families, getting their kid into any martial school was already a huge accomplishment, like sending a rural kid to a good public high school.

But landing a spot under Jerome?

That was the equivalent of getting into an elite private prep school with the sky-high tuition. It guaranteed status, resources, and a future filled with possibilities.

No wonder major families like the Pecks were practically clawing at each other to get their descendants into his training hall.

However, just as Jerome was about to proceed, a voice suddenly rang out. "Hold on a moment!"

The interruption jolted everyone in the hall, and even Andrew turned to look.

Who the hell had the nerve to cut in at a moment like this?

Jerome was literally the host and the leader of the Martial Union. Anyone trying to steal the spotlight now had to either be completely fearless or just really asking for a beatdown.

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The one who suddenly interrupted was a tall, imposing man in black with a cold, stern face.

Zachary's expression grew serious. "Captain, this man is called Henry, and he's also from the Fischer family. He's the top dog from the Fischer family stationed at this headquarters."

Andrew made a sound of acknowledgement and said coolly, "His physical techniques should be very solid."

Zachary smiled bitterly. "Henry is the most domineering and fierce person in the Fischer family. What's even more terrifying is that he has reached the pinnacle of martial arts. There are rumors that he once challenged Jerome, wanting to replace him.

"But later, by the narrowest of margins, he lost to Jerome. However, that was five years ago. Now, Henry has probably improved significantly and likely has the strength to shake Jerome's position as the leader."

At that moment, Jerome, seated at the front, asked calmly, "Henry, what is it you need?"

Henry stood there, arms crossed, face still indifferent. "Nothing much. I wouldn't dare make a fuss. I just wanted to ask if you're in good condition."

Jerome's tone was flat. "I'm in perfect health. No need to worry about me."

The older man standing beside him, Alex Wallace, snapped with a sharp tone, "What's that supposed to mean, Henry? Are you hoping that Mr. Thornton kicks the bucket sooner rather than later?"

Henry remained composed. "I didn't say that. I wouldn't dare. But if he's fine, then that's all that matters."

Alex's face turned red with fury. "You little punk! Anyone listening would think you're plotting treason! Mr. Thornton's been holding the entire Southern Martial Union across Holtrien steady for years. I know there are some who secretly aren't satisfied. That's fine. If you've got a problem, just step forward and say it!"

No one spoke up. Everyone remained silent.

Scarlett's hoarse laughter rang out. "Mr. Wallace, why get so worked up?" Mr. Fischer just asked what everyone else was wondering. Didn't Mr. Thornton just survive an assassination attempt?

"Those bastards from Eastonia don't play fair. They're absolutely shameless! We were just worried that Mr. Thornton had been hurt more than he let on."

Jerome raised his hand, and the room's focus shifted back to him. After a short pause, he said, "It's true that I was injured during the match with the Eastonian master, Alvaro Henderson.

"But they're only minor wounds, nothing serious. As for the poisoning that happened afterward... Let's just say it's still under investigation. We can't say for certain it was the Eastonians."

Alex, clearly the impulsive type,

could not hold it in. His face turned

red again. Mr. Thornton, the truth is right in front of us! It was those sore-loser Eastonian swine! That old bastard Alvaro couldn't stand being beaten and tried to take revenge afterward.

"Otherwise, why would we find a rare and deadly poison like Braundville's Frostblossoms at the celebration banquet?"

However, as soon as he finished, Alex suddenly shut his mouth.

Jerome had given him a cold, warning glare that clearly told him to stop talking.

Zachary leaned closer and whispered, "Captain, what's Braundville's Frostblossom?"

Andrew replied calmly, "It's a natural poison used by ancient Eastonian warriors, perfect for assassinations and sneak attacks. Just a drop is enough to take down an elephant."

Zachary cursed. "Those Eastonian cowards! They're absolutely despicable. Good thing Mr. Thornton's cultivation is strong enough to survive it!"

Andrew shook his head but said nothing. Jerome definitely did not look like someone who was unaffected; it was just that not many people could tell.

From then on, no one dared interrupt again. The inner disciple selection examination officially began.

Watching the contestants getting ready and stepping into the center of the great hall, Andrew turned to ask Zachary, "You've taken the second pill, right?"

Zachary replied, "Not yet. I wanted to wait until it started before taking it."

Andrew shook his head. "Don't wait.

Take it now. Pulling out a

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seventh-grade Divine Pill in front everyone will only draw attention. Take now, quietly. That way, no one will notice. Trust me, the medicinal power of a seventh-grade pill is far beyond your expectations. Taking it early won't affect your performance. It'll only boost it.'

Zachary lit up with excitement. "Got it. I'll do as you say, Captain!"

After swallowing the pill Andrew had given him, Zachary instantly felt a surge of energy. He walked boldly toward the center of the hall and

joined the group of hopefuls lined up

for the trial.

At the front, Calvin leaned down and patted his illegitimate son, Terry Peck, on the head.

"Terry, go on now."

The Novel will be updated first on this website. Come back and continue reading tomorrow, everyone!