

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1824

Calvin said, patting Terry back with a smug grin. "Don't worry. I've already pulled some strings for you. No matter how you perform, you're getting in as one of Mr. Thornton's inner disciples. You're set for life, kid!"

Terry looked to be in his early 20s, full of arrogant energy. His hair was dyed a loud cherry red, he had a nose ring, and his whole vibe screamed street punk.

He snapped, "I've told you like 50 times already. Stop patting my head in public! Why the hell can't you get it through your thick skull? Hands off. It's my time to shine!"

He strutted into the center of the hall, chest puffed up, and took the spot right next to Zachary. Then, he shot Zachary a sideways glance, filled with disdain and contempt.

Calvin beamed with proud satisfaction, saying to those around him. "Terry is definitely going to blow everyone away today!"

Someone sneered coldly. "Mr. Peck Senior, everyone knows exactly what Terry is capable of. Coming here to participate in the selection today is just asking to be laughed at."

Another person mocked, "Mr. Peck Senior, you barely made it to Goldridge alive, nearly kicked the bucket yourself! And your little brat? If he actually becomes one of Mr. Thornton's inner disciples, I'll live-stream myself eating dog poop!"

Calvin's face turned red with rage. "What the hell did you just say? What's wrong with Terry? You think he's worse than yours? Screw it, I'll say it loud

and proud: I've paid my way through the back door at headquarters! Even if he doesn't score well, I've got enough cash to buy his way into the inner circle!"

That shut up the hecklers quickly, their faces stiffening with frustration. Everyone knew Terry was a spoiled rich kid from Goldridge who did nothing but party and stir up trouble. However, the Peck family had deep pockets and solid connections, so getting an inner disciple position for their son was actually quite possible.

Someone could not help but sneer, "Mr. Peck Senior, you're only tough when you're showing off outside! Who doesn't know your real status? If it weren't for Victoria holding up your reputation, you and this bastard son of yours would be worth nothing. You'd only be fit to beg in Goldridge!"

Calvin grinned, completely unfazed. "I love people like you. You're jealous but powerless to do anything about it. Victoria's a badass, and I'm riding her coattails. Deal with it! What are you going to do about it? Bite me? I'm just lucky, and it's eating you all up inside!"

Behind them, Andrew sighed and rubbed his forehead. Calvin was the so-called head of the Peck family, yet he had absolutely no shame, dragging that embarrassment all the way to Goldridge.

Victoria might be impressive, but what did that have to do with Calvin? He was just basking in someone else's glory like it was his own.

Andrew wondered if Victoria even knew Calvin had a mistress and a secret son tucked away here in the city. Then again, it was their family business. He decided it was not his place to get involved.

There were only five open slots for Jerome's inner disciples.

The selection was simple: over 30 participants would battle each other in

matches. The first round would weed out the weak links.

Jerome's trusted right-hand man, Alex, walked into the center of the hall and began calling names.

"You and you! First match!"

"You two! Second match!"

"You two! Third group, and the loser's out!"

"Fourth group!"

"Fifth!"

The pairings were quickly sorted. Since the number of participants was odd, one guy ended up without an opponent and automatically advanced to the next round. He was a muscular young man with his arms folded, looking around with an expression like everyone else was beneath him.

Whispers started buzzing through the hall.

"That's the guy they call the top of Mr. Thornton's outer disciples. Looks like the title fits."

"That's Joseph from the Yeager family, one of Goldridge's oldest clans. They say

he's nearly reached martial king level. Freakishly talented!"

"Yeah, that guy's definitely moving on to the next round."

Many of those present were nodding quietly, clearly impressed.

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At the front, Matthew Yeager, the family head, stroked his beard and laughed.

"Appreciate your patience, gentlemen. Joseph will try not to disappoint."

Calvin muttered jealously, "What's the big deal? Terry will blow past that punk someday."

Meanwhile, Andrew was not paying much attention to Joseph. His focus was on Zachary's matchup, and he felt a wave of frustration.

Of all the people, Zachary got paired with Terry. Since only one of them could advance, there was no getting around it. Zachary was going to have to take him down.

Chapter 1825

Zachary furrowed his brows, clearly frustrated. He did not want to choose Terry as his opponent since they were both from Gabo Creek province, and whoever lost would be a real loss for their side.

Down below, Calvin was stunned at first. Then, he sneered coldly and said, "Zachary, tough luck going up against Terry. You're screwed."

Zachary spoke steadily, "Mr. Peck Senior, I have no desire to hurt Terry. Do you think there's still room for negotiation between us?"

Calvin let out a mocking snort. "Negotiate my ass! Mr. Thornton himself arranged this match-up. I can't do anything about it, and frankly, Terry doesn't know how to hold back anyway. If something happens to you, well, bad luck. Don't go blaming anyone."

Zachary's face darkened. He thought Calvin was seriously full of himself. He had only given a kind warning because he was afraid of crippling Terry, but judging by the other party's attitude, he was sitting pretty and even mocking him.

"Hey, are we fighting or not?" Terry was already losing his patience.

With one hand on his hip, he stared Zachary down with a sneer. "I started training at three years old. Since childhood, I've studied under martial arts masters in Goldridge. You're no match for me, so be smart about it and forfeit now, get lost. Otherwise, when I beat you to a pulp in a minute, you'll have to pay your own hospital bills!"

Zachary looked toward Andrew below.

Andrew stepped forward and said flatly, "When it's all out in the open, skill is the only thing that matters. That's the rule of the arena. If you want to become one of Mr. Thornton's inner disciples, you have to fight your way up yourself. A man who trains shouldn't waste time whining, just go for it!"

Zachary straightened his posture, energized by Andrew's words. He looked Terry in the eye and said firmly, "No hard feelings."

Then, with a sharp exhale, he lunged forward with a powerful punch. To be fair, Terry was not all bark. He quickly stepped back, shifted his stance, and engaged in a flurry of exchanges with Zachary.

Calvin turned toward Andrew's side of the hall with a smug grin.

"Andrew, backing Zachary et

Terry is a fool's move. He is

most promising of the entire Peck family. Zachary's just a brawler with no pedigree. He's done for!"

Andrew did not even look at him and replied flatly, "We'll see who ends up on the floor: Terry's footwork is a mess, clearly from too much

drinking and flirting around set

women. In fact, he's just like you. He's truly your son."

Calvin's face twitched with rage as he barked, "Watch your mouth! This is Goldridge, not Blumedale! I've

spent years building ties with then et

most powerful families here. Don't blame me if things get ugly because of your stupid arrogance!"

Back in Blumedale, Calvin had not dared to lay a finger on Andrew. After all, Andrew's network in Gabo Creek ran deep, rivaling that of the Peck family.

And more importantly, Victoria had always treated Andrew with special regard, even borderline affection. All Calvin could do was seethe with jealousy.

But now, they were in a different city. Away from Gabo Creek's sphere, Calvin's sense of superiority was suddenly surging. He finally saw an opening to put Andrew in his place, and he was not going to waste it.

Andrew glanced at him, expression flat. "If you want to step up, Mr. Peck Senior, I'd be happy to accommodate."

There was only so much Calvin could tolerate out of respect for Victoria.