

Versatile Superstar: Rise In Hollywood Chapter 8

It took a minute for the judges to stop feeling the emotions that Aiden had added into the song. Soon, the white light died down and the judges finally came out of their stupor.

Andrew was the first one to speak.

“If I’m being honest, this was the best performance we have seen till now. It was simply amazing with all your voices coming together.”

At his praise, the whole group cheered. Even Aiden was now smiling a bit. The aftertaste of the song still hadn’t left him and it was also because he felt like he had overcome a level in his singing.

“I have mentored a lot of singers and seen them make amazing albums. With that experience, I could say that the way you have sung this song, it could definitely be a title song for an album.”

Getting praised by Steven was a big deal and it seemed like he was genuinely impressed by the performance.

“The chorus... You changed it? Who wrote that?”

Everyone’s eyes settled on Aiden as Steven asked. He held the mic close to his mouth and answered.

“It was me.”

“You performed your original in the first round too. You have good talent.”

It was Alyssa who went next, her words particularly praising Rachel.

“The start of the song was exactly like it should have been but I think it really picked up after the chorus, particularly Rachel. Your ability to hit the high notes and your elegant voice really elevated the song to a next level.”

“Yeah, Michelle was great too, especially in the chorus. I feel like your voice is unique and the only thing that you lack is experience.”

Andrew said, then turned to Aiden.

“Aiden, I noticed it during your first performance too but your voice leaves a lingering aftertaste which is really rare. I don’t think anyone else would have ended the song better.”

“Thank you.”

“Everyone else too, you all did your roles to perfection. All in all, it was a great performance.”

Eric and Sam high-fived each other hearing that. It seemed like even a magical scenario like a whole group qualification was within their grasp.

“Give us a minute to announce the results.”

It was the first time that the judges had taken time to discuss. It just meant that they weren't sure about who would qualify. All of them were really good.

One of the cameras zoomed in at the judges table while the other recorded the expressions of the contestants. Only Rachel and Aiden looked a bit composed among the heavy tension in the air.

“Okay, we are ready to announce our decision.”

After a while, Steven said and the tense atmosphere just doubled as it clenched the hearts of all the contestants. Eric gulped beside him and Michelle's hands were shaking.

“It was not an easy decision with all of you singing so well but in the end, we were of the same decision that Rachel was the best out of you all.”

All the focus was suddenly on Rachel who was beaming a smile, making people think she was confident about winning from the start. But only Aiden who was standing close to her knew that she was also really tense about the results due to her shaking shoulders.

“So, Rachel will qualify.”

Aiden and the others clapped for her as Alyssa announced the result. But it was then that Andrew smiled.

“But the performance was too good for us to only qualify one person. There would be one more from your group who will qualify.”

His words immediately gave a ray of hope to the four contestants who were already walking the road of sadness and despair.

‘If I'm not selected, then it's truly over for me.’

Aiden thought as he took a deep breath to calm himself. He knew that by the praises of the judges, it was either him or Michelle who would go to the next round.

Eric and Sam were good but they were still slightly lacking and had no special things about them.

“Actually, for the second person, we were quite conflicted. We thought any of you could qualify but we decided on someone who earned a bit more points thanks to the additional skills.”

Aiden blinked his eyes hearing that.

“Aiden, you are going to the next round. Congratulations!”

A sigh of relief came out of his mouth hearing those words. For a second, he had thought he would be disqualified but he had somehow passed the second round.

“Thank you.”

“You deserved it.”

After that, it was really over. Although he and Rachel have qualified, the other three haven't. Soon as they walked out of the stage, Michelle started crying.

It seemed like she was holding it back in front of the judges.

Sam quickly left the set in anger and frustration. It seemed like he didn't want to talk to anyone and was really disappointed with the results.

Aiden felt a bit sad about him but he knew this was just the nature of reality shows. If he had not qualified, maybe he would have been like him too.

Only Eric handled it maturely as he left after congratulating Aiden and Rachel, even promising to cheer for them.

All in all, the second round ended with Aiden surviving. But the system notifications after his performance were the ones that pleased him the most.

[You have been a part of a special performance that has managed to enamoure the judges. Substantial experience has been granted.]

[Your Composing skill has increased by one level.]

[The proficiency of the song 'Close' by Cyro has increased to 83% from 78%.]

Although his singing level had not increased, Aiden was pretty happy with getting a level in his Composing skill.

He knew that gaining singing levels wasn't easy and it takes a lot of time to really get the required amount of experience.

He just hoped that his skill level would increase quickly as the competition went on because it was going to be harder and harder for him to survive otherwise.

'This year's contestants are really monsters.'

Marlo thought as he looked beside him. A man with a grey beard and black hair was standing next to him with a smile on his face.

His name was Gary Benjamin and he was one of the producers of X-Star. Both of them had watched Aiden's group performance from backstage.

"What do you think, Gary? I think that was the best group performance till now. I don't think any other group would top that."

Marlo asked and Gary nodded his head.

"I'm hoping someone will top that. If anyone could top it, then the show's rating will just soar."

"Even without anyone topping it, just this performance would be enough." Marlo noticed Gary in some sort of thought and immediately shook his head. "Are you already thinking of using this performance as promotion material?"

"You know me well after working together for two seasons."

Gary smiled like a shrewd businessman. For him, contestants were money and it was important to keep the viewers interested by giving them bits of the talent that would be showcased on the show.

After thinking how he could use the performance, he replied.

"First of all, we could use it as the teaser for the second round. And after the episode airs, there will surely be demands for this cover. So, we will put it on the MeTube channel and make an audio version for music websites. If we promote it a bit, it should gain at least ten to twelve million views."

In a short time, Gary had already finished thinking of ways to earn money from just this performance alone. This was one of his skills and it suited a producer too.

Marlo just didn't like him looking at teams contestants as nothing but money and ratings.

"By the way, Aiden, try to focus on him till the third round. It's good if he makes it to Star week but I think we can get a lot of content out of him even if he doesn't. I saw some of

the footage you took of him and his story is interesting. Moreover, him coming from a third world country already gives a rags to riches feel. The audience loves that.”

Marlo already had a feeling that Gary was going to say that. He made a wry smile.

“Apparently, he himself doesn’t want us to use his story in that way. Something along the lines of wanting his talent to speak for him and not his story.”

A small laugh escaped Gary’s mouth hearing that but seeing Marlo’s serious expression, he coughed and explained.

“His talent is speaking at least till the third round. Only after that voting comes into the picture and it depends on popularity. And if he reached there, he would thank us.”

Gary said with utmost confidence and left Marlo to go speak with the music director. He had a feeling that this season of X-Star will break all of the ratings.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.