The Integrated Man

B Alan Bourgeois · Opening excerpt · 1 of 2

Derrick Maddox stood tall in the center of the mid-sized auditorium, its walls pulsing softly with the ambient lighting chosen by his design team. The glow was intentional—neither sterile nor over-the-top, but steady, masculine, grounded. A crowd of nearly six hundred men, spanning decades in age and a rainbow of racial and cultural backgrounds, sat in rapt attention. Each had paid good money for this seat, to hear Derrick deliver what many considered to be the gospel of modern gay masculinity.

He wasn't just another motivational speaker. He was the flag bearer of a movement—a reclamation project for men who were tired of being told their strength was a flaw, their discipline a disguise, their masculinity a political liability.

"Gentlemen," Derrick began, stepping forward with the grace of a practiced orator, his voice carrying with natural ease into the microphone pinned discreetly to his tailored lapel. "We've been told we must fit in a box, labeled by society and, just as often, by our own community. I'm here to tell you—masculinity is not a vice to be tamed. It is a virtue to be honored."

A murmur rippled through the room, the first subtle note of connection. Not explosive applause—Derrick's audiences didn't engage in that hyperbolic behavior—but thoughtful, approving nods. The kind that said: Yes, this man speaks to my experience.

Reading sample — continued

Derrick continued pacing, the heavy wood floorboards beneath the industrial carpet softening his deliberate footfalls. His movements were precise—two steps, pause, shift his weight, meet someone's gaze in the third row, pivot, and deliver a hard truth into the open air.

"We've allowed ourselves to be caricatured," he pressed on, his voice tightening just enough to underscore conviction without tipping into aggression. "Turned into punchlines, entertainment for the masses—dancing mascots for straight amusement."

His left hand lifted in a small, open-palmed gesture, inviting agreement. A few voices murmured "yes" and "exactly" in quiet affirmation.

Behind him, the high-definition screen projected an understated visual—images of nature's raw, unfiltered strength. Majestic mountain peaks under dusky skies, a lone wolf staring directly into the lens, the rhythmic crash of Pacific waves against unyielding coastal cliffs. It wasn't gaudy or cliché—it was primal, real, elemental.

Derrick moved smoothly into the core of his doctrine. Discipline. Dominion. Devotion. Three pillars that had, in many ways, built his empire. Each segment of the talk peeled back layers for his audience, challenging them to cultivate their physical resilience, master their inner world, and remain steadfast to higher callings—whether those be fatherhood, entrepreneurship, spiritual enlightenment, or artistic creation.