

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft)

Chapter 431

"Jeff, I underestimated you."

Reid's eyes turned dark. His voice was low.

He really had underestimated Leander. Otherwise, he would not have let Albert make the first move.

After the Southern Shore battle, people said Leander was unbeatable. Rumor had it that he killed eleven Transcendent Realm practitioners in one fight. Most of those stories came from young disciples. Only the veteran masters from the four major elite families of Highcliffe had actually seen it.

Those younger ones tended to exaggerate out of admiration. Reid had assumed Leander's real power was only slightly above that of a Blaze Transcendent.

But he was wrong. Leander had killed one with ease. That single mistake had cost the Bloody Palm Sect dearly. They had lost one of their strongest.

He waved his hand to signal Elliot to back off. Elliot was still shaken after watching his companion die. He did not dare to step forward. He moved quickly to the mountain wall.

"Jeff, I'll see for myself how strong your martial arts really are."

Reid already knew Leander's strength had reached a level he could not ignore. His body began to glow with golden light. Energy gathered tightly around him. His innate vitality burst out like a river hanging across the sky.

"Rise!"

He made a sweeping motion. The air reversed direction and pulled up countless tables and chairs.

The broken furniture seemed alive. The pieces joined together with stones and dirt. A huge swirling tornado formed.

Everyone there was a martial practitioner. Otherwise, they would have been pulled in. No one relaxed. They each used their inner strength to stay rooted so they would not get dragged away.

The tornado started only a few feet wide. It soon grew to thirty feet across and several stories high. It covered half of the cave.

Inside the Dual Meridian Sect, dust and debris filled the air. Even the sunlight coming through the hole above looked twisted and dim.

"So this is the power of an Infernal Crown Transcendent?"

Wyatt murmured the words. He was stunned.

He was now an Ember Transcendent. If he went all out, he could fight like an Infernal Crown Transcendent. Even so, he was shaken.

With one motion, Reid had stirred up heaven and earth to create a storm like this. It was far beyond anything Wyatt could understand.

"Jeff, take my move. Let's see how strong you really are."

Reid pushed his palm forward. His eyes flashed coldly.

The massive tornado spun toward Leander. It was aimed at him and everyone behind him.

If Leander dodged, the others would take the full hit.

Maybe Clara and Wyatt could survive it. The rest could not. The strongest among them was Darius. He was only an elite Martial Sovereign. They would all be torn apart.

Reid had forced Leander into one option. He had to take the blow.

Leander gave a faint smile. His eyes showed pure contempt.

Did Reid really think he would not see through it?

"If you want me to take it head-on, then I'll do as you wish!"

He did not waste any movement. He lifted his pale hand and threw a punch.

Leander gathered his true energy. His fist glowed blue as his physical strength merged with it. A wave of crushing force shot forward.

Boom!

An invisible wall of energy rose in front of him. It was taller and wider than the tornado. It pushed straight ahead.

No matter how fast the tornado spun, the wall stood firm. The storm started to retreat under the pressure.

"What?"

Reid narrowed his eyes. He raised his right hand and summoned another tornado. He sent it forward.

The second tornado hit from behind the first. The force doubled. Both crashed into Leander's barrier with overwhelming strength.

Leander did not step back. He held up one hand as if holding up the sky. His gaze stayed steady. The invisible wall kept moving forward.

"How can his power be this solid? Why can't I break through?"

Reid felt shocked.

Earlier, before Leander made a move, Reid had not even sensed his presence. Now he could feel the strength of a true master.

Leander was only mid-tier Transcendent Realm. He was two tiers below him.

Reid was a true Infernal Crown Transcendent. He stood at the top of the realm. Everyone below that stage was like an ant. Infernal Crown meant supreme and unmatched power.

By all logic, Leander should not have been able to stand against him. Yet Leander not only held his ground. Reid was getting pushed back.

"D*mn it!"

Fury filled his chest. The innate vitality around him surged and shook the air. His potent energy gathered into his right fist. It condensed into a glowing energy

orb.

"Break!"

He threw the punch. The orb shot

out

than the eye could follow.

It pierced through both tornadoes

and slammed into Leander
invisible barrier.

It felt like a drill striking solid steel. Sparks burst everywhere. A harsh screech filled the cave.

Even with all that power, the wall did not move. Not even a crack formed.

"How is this possible?"

Reid stared at it. That punch had used eighty percent of his strength. It still could not scratch Leander's energy wall.

He steadied himself. He lifted both hands toward the sky and shouted.

"Crimson Execution!"

Everyone looked up. The golden light around Reid faded and turned red. The energy shot upward and formed a massive blood-red hand more than sixty feet wide.

The giant hand hung overhead like a demon's claw. The pressure pressed down before it even moved.

Even Clara and Wyatt felt their hair stand on end.

The power of an Infernal Crown Transcendent was beyond anything they could grasp.

Elara's eyes wavered. Fear settled in her chest.

If that hand struck, the mountain would collapse.

Everyone inside would die.

"Can he stop it?"

She looked at Leander with worry.

The light dimmed under the falling hand. Leander stood there with one hand in his pocket. He acted as if it did not matter.

He rubbed his nose and laughed.

"I thought you'd surprise me, but it looks like the so-called Shadowrealm Sect isn't much after all."

He shook his finger. He looked disappointed.

"With your level, you're still weaker than Galen. I really gave you too much credit."

Reid froze. He did not understand why Leander mentioned Galen. Leander gave his answer with action.

He drew back his left hand and threw a light punch.

"Trinity Strike Technique, Second Form-Devourer."

As the punch went out, Reid's pupils shrank. He felt as if a giant beast dozens of feet tall had opened its jaws to swallow him whole.

His blood-red hand shattered at once. The destructive force hit his body and blasted him into the sky.

Blood poured from his mouth along with bits of crushed organs.

With one punch, an Infernal Crown Transcendent had fallen.

He could not believe it. How could Leander, with only Ember Transcendent strength, hit that hard?

He did not know that in Highcliffe, when Leander fought Galen, Leander had held back out of respect.

Leander did not hold back against Reid. The Bloody Palm Sect had killed many people. Leander showed no mercy toward someone like him.

"We won."

Everyone from the Dual Meridian Sect cheered. Their faces lit up with joy.

Even Wyatt smiled. Behind his smile was deep awe.

If Leander could defeat an Infernal Crown Transcendent so easily, then just how strong is he really? Higher than Infernal Crown Transcendent?

Elara crossed her hands. She was about to thank Leander for saving them. She then saw his eyes narrow as he looked toward the clouds.

She followed his gaze.

A figure appeared high above them.

It was a young Western man. He stood on a cloud. His black coat showed his tall, lean frame.

He reached out and grabbed Reid by the back. He held him in midair.

"Jeff, do you remember me? I told you I'd take your life within five days."

He gave Leander a faint smile. His white teeth showed.

"Now, time's up."

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Chapter 432

In the sky, a man stood on a cloud. His hand was gripping Reid's back and holding him up in the air.

"Jeff, I've come for you. Your life belongs to me."

He smiled in a warm way, yet there was no emotion in his eyes.

The sudden turn of events shocked everyone in the Dual Meridian Sect. They had just been celebrating Leander's victory over Reid. Now this stranger appeared out of nowhere and their hearts sank again.

Daphne narrowed her eyes. Her face changed as she recognized him.

He was the same Western man they had seen outside the airport that day. She had

no idea how he found this place or how he knew Leander was here.

"Son of Judgment? Fergus Lynch?"

Leander looked up at the sky. His expression stayed calm.

As soon as he said those words, Wyatt's face turned pale.

"What? Son of Judgment?"

He had stayed calm even when Reid, an Infernal Crown Transcendent of the Bloody Palm Sect, showed up. Hearing that title broke his composure. His face twisted with fear.

Fergus' eyes were cold. His smile was faint.

"Jeff, I didn't come here for you. I came to collect a debt from the son-in-law of the Dual Meridian Sect. I didn't expect to find you here."

His gaze shifted from Leander to Wyatt.

"Lord of Umbral, anyone who takes something from the Arbitration Office must pay the price. I'm here today on behalf of the Arbitration Office to collect what you owe."

Everyone in the Dual Meridian Sect turned to stare at Wyatt in shock.

"The Arbitration Office?" Clara looked confused. "Wyatt, what deal did you make with them? Why are they coming after you?"

As a Transcendent, she knew exactly how terrifying the Arbitration Office was. It was a worldwide organization with immense power. The Dual Meridian Sect could not stand a chance even if they combined all their strength.

Wyatt lowered his head a little. He could not meet her eyes.

In the sky, Fergus sneered. "Wyatt, you used to be one of our elite Arbitrators. Twenty years ago, you came to us on your own and asked for power and resources to help you advance. Have you forgotten that?"

Clara stared at him in disbelief. Wyatt bowed his head even lower and spoke in a bitter tone. "Clara, I'm sorry. You and I practiced the Dual Insight Technique together. My progress was not as fast as you thought. I wanted to help you take revenge on the Bloody Palm Sect, so I found another way. I went to the Arbitration Office and offered myself as one of their arbitrators."

Everyone in the sect was stunned. None of them expected Wyatt, who had always been loyal to them, to have joined the Arbitration Office for their sake.

Leander finally understood why Wyatt knew so much about the Arbitration Office and why he had so much intel. Wyatt had once been one of them.

Wyatt's body trembled. He lifted his head and glared at Fergus.

"The Arbitration Office helped me advance. I served as an Arbitrator for more than ten years. I never disobeyed a single command. I paid back everything I owed. Why are you still after me?"

His tone carried anger and confusion.

Fergus stayed cold.

"More than ten years?" He smirked. "Wyatt, the moment you joined the Arbitration Office, you should have known that once you enter, you belong to it forever. You think ten years of service can pay back all the resources we spent on you. That is foolish. You escaped from us a few years ago. We let you live only to give you time to breathe. Today, as the Son of Judgment, I'm here to sentence you."

As soon as he finished, his killing intent exploded. The younger cultivators felt as if they had fallen into a world filled with blood and slaughter.

"This is a mental illusion!"

Some of the stronger ones stayed awake. The rest were trapped inside the hallucination and could not escape.

Wyatt trembled. He felt a wave of spiritual strength crash straight into his mind. He had no way to stop it.

When his eyes met Fergus', he felt himself being pulled into a black hole. His mind sank deeper and deeper. Pain tore through his head. His spirit was close to collapsing.

A spiritual strength cultivator!

That thought flashed through his mind. He still could not resist. His vision blurred, and he could barely stay conscious.

"Wake up!"

A deep voice burst inside his head.

His blurry vision cleared. His mind jolted awake.

He turned to Leander with shock and gratitude. He knew the voice came from Leander. Leander had pulled him out of the illusion.

"Hm?"

Fergus slowly descended. He fixed his eyes on Leander with a hint of surprise. Discover more novels at

"I didn't expect you to be a spiritual master too."

In the West, people like him were called spiritual masters.

Leander gave a faint smile. "Wyatt still owes me a deal. If you want to kill him, you'll have to ask me first."

Fergus landed about thirty feet away. His expression shifted into curiosity.

"Good."

"I heard plenty about you on my way from the West. The Iron Sovereign Jeff. You are a worthy target. Today, I'll kill you first to wash away the Arbitration Office's shame. The traitor can wait until later."

He stopped looking at Wyatt. All his focus shifted to Leander. The air between them began to twist.

Reid, who was still being held by Fergus, started to wake up. Leander's punch had knocked him out. He slowly regained consciousness while the two spoke.

When he saw Fergus facing Leander, joy flashed across his face.

"You want to fight Jeff, and I want to destroy the Dual Meridian Sect. Why don't we work together?"

He stood beside Fergus and felt the powerful energy coming from him. It was far stronger than his own.

He knew he was not a match for Leander. Fergus was. If Fergus could keep

Leander busy, he could wipe out the sect himself.

Even though Leander had injured him badly, an Infernal Crown like him was still much stronger than ordinary cultivators. Even at thirty percent of his strength, he believed he could destroy the entire sect.

"Oh? You want to cooperate?"

Fergus tilted his head toward him.

"Of course. You just need to hold off Jeff. The rest—"

Before he could finish, Fergus raised his hand. His fingers closed around Reid's throat with lightning speed.

A loud crack rang through the air.

Everyone watched in horror as Fergus twisted Reid's head clean off. Blood sprayed into the sky.

Gasps spread across the crowd. Wyatt and Clara widened their eyes in shock.

Reid was an Infernal Crown. Even

without a focus on body training, his body was far stronger than most! could survive a sniper bullet without getting hurt.

Fergus tore him apart with his bare hands. That showed how terrifying his physical strength was.

"Trash like this from the East thinks he can work with me?"

Fergus did not even blink after killing him.

He tossed Reid's body aside and turned back to Leander. A wave of spiritual strength surged out of him like rippling water.

Leander kept his calm expression. Spiritual strength spread through his eyes. The two forces collided head-on inside the Dual Meridian Sect's compound.

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Chapter 433

Boom!

A loud explosion suddenly rang out. No one knew where it came from or what had shattered. The sound was sharp and clear, and it shook everyone's eardrums.

Between Leander and Fergus, a violent gust of wind surged through the air. It swept up everything nearby, pulling in broken stones and shattered wood. The debris was ground into dust, leaving nothing intact.

The two of them barely moved. The storm shot upward into the sky, and the entire range shuddered as if the land itself were struggling to stay steady. What had been a peaceful place now looked like a barren desert with dust flying everywhere.

"What powerful spiritual strength!"

Wyatt shielded the members of the Dual Meridian Sect as they stepped back. His face was filled with shock.

After reaching the Transcendent Realm, he had gained some understanding of spiritual strength. But because he had no method to train it, he could only touch the surface and never go deeper.

Now, the clash between Leander and Fergus seemed to open a door for him. He finally understood what true spiritual strength was.

The moment Fergus released his spiritual strength, Wyatt almost lost control of his own mind. That alone showed how strong Fergus was.

Yet Leander was able to stand his ground. That meant Leander was also a spiritual master.

The two forces clashed sharply. Wind roared through the area. Then Leander took a single step forward.

In the space between them, everyone could faintly see a nearly invisible ripple line dividing them. When Leander stepped forward, that line moved an entire yard toward Fergus.

Fergus' expression changed, and his heart trembled.

"This guy's spiritual strength is incredible. Isn't he an Eastern fighter? How does he know how to use spiritual strength?"

He knew that spiritual strength and martial arts were not the same thing. They both came from strength, but the paths to obtain them were completely different.

For most people, reaching great success in either martial arts or spiritual strength alone was already rare. Mastering both was almost impossible.

Each cultivation path demanded complete focus. A fighter who tried to train both body and mind at the same time often failed to reach a high level in either.

His own spiritual strength came from the blood essence of children that the Arbitration Office collected for him. With help from the 16 Supreme Arbiters, his body had been shaped to master both arts.

But Leander's power shocked him. Leander was not only strong in martial arts, but his spiritual strength was even stronger. It was hard to believe someone like him could exist.

Fergus looked young, but he was almost thirty years old. Leander, however, was not even twenty. In terms of talent, Fergus had already been surpassed.

The more gifted Leander seemed, the stronger Fergus' killing intent became.

As the Son of Judgment, he refused to let anyone more talented than him live. He wanted to destroy Leander completely.

He suddenly released a burst of spiritual strength and broke the deadlock. Then he raised one hand and drew the surrounding air toward him to form a spiral of power. "Airsplit Slash!"

His hand turned into a blade, and he swung down at Leander.

That slash looked like a steel blade falling from the sky. The force was sharp and heavy. When it landed, it split a stone wall dozens of feet tall clean in half. Half the mountain dropped under that single strike.

If Jesund's former sword master Enderman had seen this, he would have bowed in shame.

A red streak of energy flashed across the sky. Leander stood below it. As the blade energy was about to hit his head, he flicked his finger.

A sharp clang rang out. The massive red blade cracked from the tip, and the fracture spread like a spider web. The next moment, it shattered in midair.

Fergus' attack was completely broken. He stayed calm and pulled his hand back. He gathered another wave of blood energy in his palm and pointed at the air.

The space around them rippled, and he threw a punch. The blood energy burst outward and spread like ink in water. It turned the air crimson as it surged toward Leander.

It looked as if a red curtain was about to fall over Leander and trap him completely.

Leander gave a small, mocking smile. He joined his fingers into a sword shape and sliced through the air.

The red curtain tore apart along the line of his fingers. Then Leander raised his hand again.

A deep dent formed in the sky where his palm struck. The blood energy that had gathered into the curtain was forced together and then ripped outward from the center until it burst into countless pieces.

Fergus had attacked twice in a row, but both strikes were easily blocked.

He did not attack again right away. Instead, he smiled faintly.

"No wonder the Arbitration Office lost to you twice. Jeff, I underestimated you."

Leander's face stayed calm as he shook his head.

"To be honest, I overestimated you."

As soon as he spoke, he threw a punch.

It looked ordinary, but the moment it went out, the space between them split open like a tunnel. A glowing fist imprint formed in the air.

The

force was so heavy that even the air began to crack.

That punch carried enough power to crush mountains.

Fergus' eyes widened. He had not expected Leander's punch to come so fast. In the blink of an eye, it hit him square in the chest.

He grunted in pain. His feet sank into the ground as his body slid backward. He smashed through a mountain wall, breaking it apart. He crashed straight into the open sky outside.

This mountain space had always been sealed off from the outside world, but Leander's punch tore a hole large enough to never close again.

Fergus flew back more than thirty yards and crashed through three thick rock walls before he finally stopped.

Wyatt's eyes lit up. Leander's strength was overwhelming. When Reid had taken one punch from him earlier, he had been severely injured.

Even if the Son of Judgment were stronger than Reid, he would definitely be hurt now.

He turned to look at Leander but froze. Leander was not moving. He was staring at his own fist with a faint look of surprise.

A thin layer of blood energy covered his knuckles and faded slowly into the air.

Fergus' laughter echoed from the broken cliff.

"Interesting! Since I became the Son of Judgment, it's been a long time since I met someone who made me take them seriously."

He raised his head slightly. His five fingers curled into a fist as a terrifying surge of energy burst out of him.

His shirt tore apart. Streams of red light flowed from his body and wrapped around him. They formed a strange crimson armor.

Despite taking that punch, he was completely unharmed.

"Jeff, you're the first person to ever see my Blood Armor Form. Today, all of you will die here!"

As soon as he finished speaking, his muscles began to expand. His arms, legs, and chest grew larger. His height shot up from six feet to over ten. He looked like a giant.

The blood armor covering his body expanded along with him, and his aura kept rising.

"Blood Net Formation, rise!"

As his deep voice rang out,

countless blood-red threads shot

into the air. They connected one after another and formed a massive net that covered the entire mountain where the Dual

Mendian Sect was

S Wor

located.

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Chapter 434

A low hum filled the air.

The sky split apart as countless red threads intertwined and formed a huge web that covered the entire mountain where the Dual Meridian Sect stood.

"Is that a formation?"

Wyatt's eyes widened as she stared at the dense red web above. A chill ran down her spine.

The Dual Meridian Sect was not that large, but with the surrounding mountains and the hidden valley, the area covered almost ten acres. Fergus moved only once, and that massive formation already covered everything. That kind of power was terrifying.

A formation usually needed time and preparation. It required specific materials and points to anchor the spell.

Fergus had done it instantly. He created a formation in one move that spread across thousands of square feet. Even the Judie family, known for mastering formations, might not have been able to match that.

"Blood Net Formation?"

Leander narrowed his eyes and looked at the red web falling from the sky.

"That's right. It's the Blood Net Formation."

Fergus stepped onto the blood web and pressed it down faster. His face twisted into a cruel smile.

This formation came from his pure and evil blood energy. It was not as complete as other formations, but its destructive power was just as strong.

The blood taken from hundreds of children held strong corrosive energy that could swallow everyone below.

"Jeff, maybe you can dodge this formation, but the people behind you and everyone in these mountains can't."

"They're already trapped inside its range. Once it activates, their blood and flesh will be devoured completely. In the end, they'll turn into thick blood for me to absorb."

This was how the Arbitration Office worked. This was the power of a Son of Judgment.

There had once been three hundred candidates for that title. Each one had been chosen from around the world and had held exceptional talent. In the Astria martial world, they could rival top prodigies like Claire, Ethan, and Daphne. Some were even stronger.

The Arbitration Office gathered all three hundred of these talents into a sealed trial ground and forced them to fight and outsmart each other. Only one survivor earned the title of Son of Judgment.

Fergus had fought through blood and fire to the end. He was then soaked in the blood of hundreds of children and empowered by the strength of the 16 Supreme Arbiters, which made him what he was now.

He could be called human, but also something beyond human. By devouring others' blood and flesh, he could grow even stronger.

The group of young prodigies trembled. Their faces showed pure fear.

Death itself was not the scariest thing. What terrified them was dying in such a cruel way. Their bodies would melt and turn into energy for someone else.

Everyone looked at Leander. He was the only one who could stand up to Fergus. If he failed, they were all trapped like fish in a barrel.

Leander looked at the red web dropping closer and suddenly laughed.

"You make it sound impressive."

He shook his head. He looked calm and dismissive.

"This is just a fake formation made from blood energy. It's not even a real one, and you dare to brag in front of me?"

"Oh?" Fergus' face changed slightly.

His formation was not perfect, but even a master who specialized in formations might not have noticed its flaws. Yet Leander had spotted them right away.

Even so, Fergus did not look worried. He threw his head back and laughed.

"Ha!"

"Jeff, so what if you know it's fake? This formation was made from the blood of hundreds of children. Do you really think you can break it?"

As he spoke, the massive web finally covered the mountain completely. Even Leander was inside now. There was no way out.

Seeing that, Fergus felt overjoyed. Once the Blood Net Formation was sealed, even ten Infernal Crown Transcendents could not escape being devoured.

A few birds flew by and brushed against the red web. Several dull pops followed, and their bodies exploded into blood mist.

The blood turned into liquid and soaked into the web. It became a part of it. It was horrifying to watch.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, what should we do?"

Wyatt looked pale as she felt the strong devouring force from each red line.

If they had any chance of survival, it was only through Leander.

Everyone else looked at him and waited for his decision.

"What should we do? Break it, of course."

Leander glanced at Wyatt and smiled.

"Break it?"

Wyatt's eyes narrowed. The formation carried a devouring force so strong that even a Transcendent Realin practitioner would dissolve the moment they touched it. She had no idea how anyone could break something like that.

A loud crack came from the ground beside Leander as he shot up like a rocket straight toward the red web.

Daphne kept her eyes on him. Everyone watched closely to see what he would do.

While he was still in midair, Leander threw a punch.

"Trinity Strike Technique, first move. Soulbreaker!"

His punch created a massive fist shadow that stretched more than thirty feet wide tore through the sky and slammed toward the center of the web.

That was the web's densest point. If he could break that, the entire formation would collapse.

A sizzling sound filled the air as his attack hit the center. It sounded like water splashing onto hot oil.

The huge fist shadow melted in front of their eyes and disappeared completely.

"Hahaha!"

Fergus laughed wildly.

"Jeff, stop wasting your effort. Under

ine

this Blood Net, everything melts! UPDATE FROM

Flesh blood and even innate vitality will dissolve completely. You want to break out? Keep dreaming!

The people below went pale. Even Leander's punch had not worked. They wondered if they were all doomed.

Leander's attack failed, but his expression stayed the same. He kept moving upward.

"Can't break it, huh?"

He moved closer and closer to the web's center. A faint smile formed on his lips. Fergus' eyes lit up. If Leander touched the web, the corrosive power would devour him right away. His blood would make Fergus even stronger.

Just as Fergus grinned in excitement, Leander reached out his hand.

His long and pale fingers looked like claws from the sky as he grabbed the center of the web in front of everyone.

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Chapter 435

Snap!

Leander slammed his hand, smooth and pale like polished jade, right onto the center of Blood Net. Everyone around him froze, their expressions a mix of shock and disbelief.

Sizzle!

White smoke curled up instantly, and the sound of droplets hitting hot oil echoed through the room again.

"Ander!" Daphne's eyes went wide, and her voice was barely a whisper.

Even the others down below felt their hearts skip a beat.

Leander actually touches Blood Net with his bare flesh. Isn't he just asking for death?

Everyone expected Leander to instantly melt by the blood net, but Fergus, hovering above, suddenly tensed.

"What?" His eyes locked on the scene. Leander's long fingers clenched the center of the blood net, and the blood energy surged violently, ready to consume his palm completely.

But no matter how violently the blood energy raged, Leander's hand didn't even flinch. The color didn't change, and there wasn't a single cut or mark.

"How is this possible?" Fergus' pupils shrank in shock.

Every single thread of this Blood Net Formation is forged from the purest blood of virgins. Its corrosive power is unmatched. Even in the Arbitration Office, where strong fighters are everywhere, hardly anyone could dare touch it with their own body. They have to find other ways to break it. But Leander? He's facing the blood net with just his own flesh, and somehow, the blood energy can't even scratch him. A body at this level- how terrifyingly powerful must it be?

Leander's face was a blank mask, showing no hint of joy or sorrow. Then, in an instant, his fingers curled tight, and every joint and muscle in his body erupted with raw power, surging in waves like the claws of an ancient dragon.

Rumble!

A shockwave radiated outward from him. With a single hand, Leander lifted what should have been an impossibly massive blood net, stretching over thousands of square meters, holding it aloft as if it weighed nothing.

"Whoa..."

Countless eyes went wide, jaws dropping. Leander looked like some kind of savior, his flesh and bones standing shoulder to shoulder with the divine.

"How is this even possible?" Even Fergus's expression changed drastically. He hadn't expected that his first attempt at the Blood Net Formation would achieve nothing. Worse, he was now witnessing someone resisting the devouring force of the blood net with sheer physical strength, holding it up with their own body.

"What kind of freak is this guy?" Fergus's expression darkened, but he didn't panic. If anything, he became sharper, his blood energy flaring out like a crimson sun, illuminating the battlefield.

"Take him down!" He stomped into the center of the blood net, clashing with Leander in a vicious up-and-down force, trying to crush Leander and the net together.

Crack!

A brittle, overstrained sound split the air, even causing fractures to appear in the surrounding atmosphere. Yet no matter how Fergus poured his power in, Leander stayed unmoving, holding the blood net higher and higher, yard by yard.

"This is impossible!" Fergus's eyes darkened. He stomped hard at the center of the net, then flipped into the air, leaping ten yards upward.

"Skybreaker Step!"

His single foot descended like a hammer, all his energy focused into that strike. A blood-red glow flared around it. The crowd saw a massive footprint plummet from the sky, like an ancient elephant crushing the earth, capable of shattering worlds.

Boom!

A deafening crash exploded, blood energy and a violent shockwave bursting outward. The upward surge of the blood net finally halted.

"Is Sovereign Ashcroft about to fall?" Wyatt's gaze tightened, a heavy feeling settling in his chest.

Leander is holding the devouring force with his bare body, which is already an immense burden. On top of that, he has to support the blood net to keep everyone below from being swallowed. The pressure of both tasks stacked together would have crushed anyone else long ago. And now, Fergus stomps down with a strike beyond divine-level mastery, like an elephant smashing the sky. I can't even begin to imagine the sheer force Leander is enduring.

The shockwave faded, revealing Leander's form in the sky.

Everyone craned their necks. Leander still floated, foot on an empty air, holding the blood net high. Even the force of that titanic stomp, enough to fracture the atmosphere, hadn't budged him an inch.

Fergus hovered midair, locking eyes with Leander's cold, deep stare. His expression hardened, a mix of disbelief and caution.

"Jeff Ashcroft... What the hell are you? Are you... already a god-level being?"

Skybreaker Step was the signature move of one of the 16 Supreme Arbiters of the Arbitration Office. At its peak, it could shatter space and collapse the world Fergus hadn't mastered it fully, but it was already a monumental strike. Yet even with all his power, he couldn't move Leander.

"You call yourself the Son of Judgment, huh? Just a fancy title. To me, you're nothing but an ant!" Leander lifted his head, a cold smile curling his lips.

"Break!" he said softly, flicking his arm.

Slash!

The massive blood net split from the center, ripped open by Leander's bare hands.

"Let me show you what true devouring power is!"

As the net tore, Leander sneered, grabbing both ends of the ripped blood strands.
"Nirvana Energy, devour!"

Rumble!

A blue light exploded from his body. The huge blood-red net seemed drawn by some unseen force, reversing and shrinking at a speed visible to the naked eye.

From the perspective of those below, Leander looked like a black hole, sucking every blood strand around him into his body.

"D*mn it!" Fergus's pupils shook with anger. He tried to reclaim the blood net, hoping to reroute the energy back, but to his shock, every strand of blood energy ignored him, rushing madly into Leander instead.

"Fergus, thanks for the energy boost!" Leander smirked, a vortex of power spinning faster around him.

His self-created Devourer's Ninefold

Path could consume any type of power in existence and convert it into Primordial Energy, pure and immense. Good, evil, useless-t didn't matter. Once absorbed it became his own.

The blood net Fergus created contained massive life energy, each strand forged from the life of living beings. Leander had never bothered to use such energy for himself. But the Arbitration Office had cruelly sacrificed hundreds of children to create this blood power, planning to use it for evil. Leander couldn't allow that.

Rather than let these energies empower wickedness, he would take them for himself, turning the tables on the Arbitration Office.

"Jeff Ashcroft, stop right now!" Fergus roared, sensing his blood power draining. New novel chapters are published on

He smashed a blue crystal vial, unleashing a torrent over his body. His aura surged violently.

"Doomlight!" Wyatt said, voice steady. He knew Fergus was now gambling with his life.

Rumble!

Fergus swung both blood-colored whips through the air. Leander didn't flinch. The whips hit him, only to be absorbed instantly, unable to harm him at all.

"Jeff Ashcroft!" Fergus shouted across the sky. He stomped, a shockwave launching him through the clouds, landing directly before Leander.

"Die! Demon Strike!" His fist retracted, glowing red, infused with innate vitality strong enough to carve mountains and split rivers. He aimed squarely at Leander's chest.

"Hmph!"

At that instant, a soft laugh echoed.

Bang!

A fist as pale as white jade shot forward at supersonic speed, arriving before

Fergus's strike.

Crack!

The fragile sound of breaking bones rang out. The layer of Blood Armor covering Fergus shattered completely.

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Chapter 436

Crack!

Fergus, well over three meters tall, took Leander's blow square on the chest.

A shockwave tore across the sky. Blue light danced over Leander's fist. Fergus glowed with the same blue aura and was blasted backward like a fired shell.

As he flew, sharp snapping noises crackled from his body. The Blood Armor Form coating him began to fall apart at a pace you could actually see. Piece by piece, it disintegrated, and then it finally burst apart with a thunderous sound.

Fergus sailed back dozens of yards before his feet slammed into empty air, and he forced himself to stop.

His mountain of a body hung there in midair and cast a massive shadow. Still, every set of eyes was fixed on Leander.

That layer of Blood Armor Form covering Fergus's skin - most people did not really know what it was - had earlier absorbed Leander's punch and left him unscathed. It was clearly incredibly tough, not something ordinary.

And yet, within minutes, Leander landed another punch and tore the Blood Armor Form to pieces. People watched in stunned fear.

"What a frightening power," Wyatt said, his eyes narrowing. He had heard about Fergus's Blood Armor Form back when he worked at the Arbitration Office.

People say that armor is forged from countless drops of blood and carries an overwhelming power to devour and defend. It is unbelievably tough and supposedly indestructible. Even an average Martial Practitioner wearing it can take a full-force strike from an Infernal Crown Transcendent without suffering a scratch. But now Leander throws a single punch and shatters the Blood Armor Form. I can barely wrap my head around it. If Fergus didn't have that layer of armor protecting him, would Leander's punch have outright crushed him?

Fergus hovered in the sky, staring at the shattered Blood Armor Form as it drifted away. For a long time, he was unable to form a reaction.

That Blood Armor Form had been forged from the blood of hundreds of boys and girls. Its power was pure. It protected him. It reduced damage. It could even swallow the force of incoming attacks.

With his cultivation level and that armor's defense, even if ten Infernal Crown Transcendents had attacked him at once, frantically striking from all sides, he would not have taken a scratch.

Inside the Transcendent Realm, Fergus had been sure no one could beat him. He had never imagined any Transcendent-level opponent could smash through his Blood Armor Form.

But Leander had done precisely that. With a single, brutal punch, he shattered the armor. The strength behind it left Fergus stunned and unable to make sense of what he'd just seen.

Leander floated with one foot on the void, lifting his arm casually. "Without that Blood Armor Form, that punch just now would have seriously crippled you. If you wanted to kill me, maybe the Chief Arbitrator of your Arbitration Office, or even the Supreme Arbiter, might have a slim shot. You? Not even close."

As this era's Son of Judgment, this was Fergus's first time coming out to hunt since he took the role. He had not expected Leander, his target, to look down on him so openly.

"Jeff Ashcroft, you have some nerve!" Fergus bellowed, his voice shaking the sky. Blood energy exploded from his body again. It was not as thick and syrupy as before, but it still glinted so fiercely it stained half the heavens red.

"You are not qualified to make the Chief Arbitrators or His Highness move," he continued. "I alone am more than enough to cut you down." His eyes flashed with a kind of mad light. "You think breaking my Blood Armor Form means you can gloat?"

Fergus let out a low, guttural sound. He clenched his fists until the veins stood out and muscles bulged. In plain sight, his body swelled at astonishing speed. Already over three meters tall, he shot up another segment. He reached five meters in height.

"Blood Demon Body," he growled. The sound carried like a decree. Every inch of him glowed a vivid, bloody red. Underneath that crimson surface, black currents roiled. He looked as if his frame were forged of adamantite alloy.

"Jeff Ashcroft, that Blood Armor Form was only my basic defense," Fergus said. "You broke it. So what? This is my true, greatest power."

The words barely left his mouth before he became a streak of blood-red light that tore through space. In the blink of an eye, he closed almost a hundred zhang and stood in front of Leander.

"Body breaking the sound barrier?" Leander narrowed his eyes.

Fergus had grown massively before. His strength had increased, but his physical power had never been anywhere near enough to break the speed of sound.

Now, though, he was smashing through speed limits with his bare body. He was faster than sound. His flesh had ascended to a level no one had seen before.

Boom.

Fergus's over five-meter frame

hurtled forward like a small

mountain. The impact shattered the

sound barrier like a supersonic

fighter et cutting the sky and

dragging a long, roaring contrail behind it. Find the newest release on

Smash.

Leander had no time to raise a defense. Fergus's arm, hard as forged metal, struck him square in the chest.

A thunderous crack rang out. Leander flew backward, slammed into a mountainside, and a cloud of dust and debris exploded up where he hit.

"Ander!" Daphne's face went white, and she leapt to her feet.

"Sovereign Ashcroft!" Wyatt and the others shouted in shock.

Leander had been winning his punch had already broken armor and nobody expected the tide to turn so suddenly.

"His body broke the sound barrier. This Fergus has he perfected the Blood Demon Body?" Wyatt's pupils shrank. As far as he knew, the Blood Demon Body was a body-cultivation art created by one of the Arbitration Office's 16 Supreme Arbiters. The legend said that a person could move mountains and fill seas fillseas with a gesture. Their body could smash through the void and withstand

heavenly lightning.

Fergus, the current Son of Judgment, had apparently inherited that Arbiter's technique. If his body had already broken the sound

barrier then even if the Blonet

Demon Body had not truly reached final perfection, it was very close. Content

Rumble.

The mountainside where Leander had struck exploded outward. A fierce wind swept the dust away. A figure stepped out.

"Hm?" Fergus's gaze flicked. He stared into the distance. Leander stepped forward through the dust. Not a scratch marred him. His clothes were intact. No holes. No tears.

"What?" Leander's eyes narrowed, and his expression changed.

He had thrown his whole weight into that charge. At supersonic speed, empowered

by the supreme might of the Blood Demon Body, he could have shattered a heavy armored tank with a single smash.

He could have brought a speeding train to an abrupt halt. Yet Leander was completely unharmed.

"Is Sovereign Ashcroft okay?" Wyatt stared, incredulous. Leander had been slammed dead on by Fergus. That kind of force would have pulverized bones in an instant if Wyatt had been struck.

Even someone as formidable as Reid, a Transcendent of the Infernal Crown, would have their innate body defenses broken and be grievously injured on the spot.

But Leander walked away like nothing had happened. He had no wounds at all.

All eyes followed him as he strode into the air. "You were not the only one with body-cultivation tricks."

He looked at Fergus, who wore an expression full of doubt. A mocking smile tugged at Leander's lips.

"Devourer Form, activate!"

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Chapter 437

"Devourer Form, activate!" Leander planted his feet a little wider, and a blue glow burst from his body.

Unlike Fergus, when he used Blood Demon Body and ballooned in size, Leander showed no change in volume. His bones and skin had grown clear and crystalline instead. They looked like cut glass.

Every vein and meridian stood out, visible across his body. They could even see the blood flowing through them, a slow, ribbon-like current under the surface.

This was Leander. It was the second time he had opened Devourer Form.

"Showy tricks!" Fergus finally snapped back to himself. He sneered and slammed his foot down, breaking the sound barrier with his body again.

Breaking the sound barrier with flesh and bone hit the organs hard. It was like subjecting them to an acceleration beyond what a body should bear. Organs would tear and shatter. Injury followed immediately.

However, the Blood Demon Body was rugged beyond belief. It was an elite body-refinement technique. One of the 16 Supreme Arbiters had forged it. It was already past ordinary bodily limits.

Given Fergus's condition, he could break the sound barrier with his body a dozen times without worrying about the strain.

A long trail of exhaust followed him, thundering 'tut-tut.' His right fist was clenched. It was the size of a car tire. He launched it forward.

His punch poured out raw force. Blood energy roiled. It carved a dark tunnel through space straight toward Leander's chest.

Leander floated high with no sign of dodging. He stood tall with his hands behind his back, motionless.

Boom!

Fergus's punch hit Leander squarely.

A ripple of power spread outward from Leander. Several birds that happened to fly nearby dissolved into red mist and drifted down.

But Leander did not move an inch. He did not even step back.

"This is impossible!" Fergus's pupils shrank.

"Blood Demon Body. That's all you've got?" Leander wiped a speck of dust from his chest. A sharp light flashed in his eyes.

"I'll show you what real physical power looks like."

He stepped off and shot forward in a streak of blue. He, too, broke the sound barrier with his body. His movement was faster and harsher than Fergus's.

A jade-like fist struck Fergus's chest while Fergus still hadn't reacted.

A muffled groan escaped Fergus. Blood spat from his mouth. He was slammed backward.

Leander's punch did not pause. Speed erupted again. He closed in on the retreating Fergus and struck him with another blow.

Smash!

Fergus barely managed to cross his arms in a desperate block. Leander's fist hit. At the first contact, Fergus heard the sickening crack of bone.

Snap!

Both of his arms snapped in midair. His organs suffered massive trauma. He was blasted back again and flew like a shell, slamming into the ground.

A thunderous boom split the earth. The ground split into two. Dust swallowed Fergus's body.

Whoosh!

Leander did not stop. He became blue light once more and dove straight into the dust cloud.

In a few seconds, a dark figure shot up through the dust, roaring with bloodlust. It was Fergus. A blur of a fist slammed into his chest and sent him flying.

Wyatt's face went white. He kept sucking in cold breaths.

Blood Demon Body had terrified him before. But he never expected Leander's body-cultivation arts and raw physical power to be even stronger than Fergus's. It was a one-sided stomp.

The wind tore through the air. Leander burst out of the dust, and this time he did not chase. He hovered in midair.

Fergus finally stopped. He was panting, his mountain-sized frame trembling. Blood kept dripping from the corner of his mouth.

"How is this possible? You really became a god-level being?" he demanded, staring

at Leander. He watched as the blue light rippled across Leander's skin. Every inch looked translucent and radiant. Fergus's expression kept shifting.

"I'm not a god-level being yet," Leander said, hands in his pockets, voice cool. "But I'm not far off."

"What?" Fergus stared, shocked. He could not believe it.

A god-level being meant unstoppable power and rock-solid defense. They could raise the earth and split the seas. Throughout history only a handful had reached that level. Even the Arbitration Office, full of masters, had only one who had advanced to a god-level being by focusing on body-cultivation: Your Highness. No one else had done it.

The Blood Demon Body Fergus cultivated was passed down from that very Your Highness. When perfected, it could rival a god-level being, shrug off armor-piercing rounds, and face missile strikes head-on.

Even half a step from true god-level power would let Fergus break the sound barrier and unleash terrifying destruction. He could cleave mountain ranges and tear the atmosphere.

Still, he never imagined Leander's body arts would outclass him.

Leander's physical resilience had exceeded Fergus's imagination. No matter how he struck, he couldn't faze Leander. Meanwhile, Leander could move with a gesture and leave Fergus coughing blood and broken limbs. It was unbearable.

"Jeff Ashcroft, what kind of freak are you?" Fergus's eyes narrowed. The fire in his heart had been snuffed out.

He had played his four trump cards: Blood Demon Body, Doomlight, Blood Armor Form, and Blood Net Formation. Against Leander, though, it felt like facing an impossible mountain. There was no crossing it. No end in sight.

He could even sense that Leander hadn't used his full strength.

Jeff Ashcroft, when I return to the Arbitration Office and perfect the Blood Demon Body, I will come back for you. I will wipe this shame clean, he thought. Red energy flickered under his feet and began to gather, slowly coalescing into a blood-colored disk.

This was his unique blood-shield technique. Using sanguine power as the medium, he could travel a thousand meters in an instant. He was ready to escape.

The proud Son of Judgment chose to run.

"Trying to run?" Leander said with a sudden, light laugh.

A chill ran down Fergus's spine. Facing Leander felt like having no secrets at all.

Leander seemed to see every thought.

"You threatened to kill me before. Big talk," Leander continued. "Now you want to run. That is not how this works. have already killed a lot of people from the Arbitration Office
Losing

peop would not matter

Consider this a gift to the 16

Supreme Arbiters."

Leander's tone was indifferent. He raised his right hand into a punching stance. Behind him, potent energy surged like a wild tide, as if it had ripped a dimensional seam and separated him and the others from the world.

This is bad, Fergus thought. The blood energy under his feet surged faster and formed the huge disk. New novel chapters are published on

The disk appeared. Fergus was about to step onto it and vanish.

"You cannot get away," Leander said without pity or joy. He threw the punch.

"Trinity Strike Technique, Third Form, Earthshaker!"

For a moment, the heavens and earth trembled. Wind and force roared. Potent energy tore through the air like a mountain flood. It collapsed into a waterfall that poured down from the galaxy above, swallowing Fergus whole.

The power of that one punch shook the world.

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Chapter 438

The Trinity Strike Technique was Leander's evolution of the "Devourer's Ninefold Path," condensing the Nine Forces in his body into three ultimate moves.

The first move was Soulbreaker. Second was Devourer. Up until now, Leander had only ever used the first two, but today, he unleashed the third.

It wasn't that he hadn't wanted to. The third strike was just too devastating. Before he perfected his Devourer Form, his body couldn't handle it. But now? Now his Devourer

Form was complete, and with his cultivation reaching the Transcendent Realm, delivering this strike was effortless.

The third move was Earthshaker. At the right level of power, Leander was confident he could punch through the void itself, even if the universe were standing in front of him. That was the raw might of the final move in the Trinity Strike Technique.

When he struck, the sky beside the Dual Meridian Sect's Hidden Haven split with jagged lines of energy. The blood-red aura beneath Fergus shattered instantly under the punch's overwhelming force.

A torrent of violent, potent energy surged, completely swallowing Fergus.

Above, all that met the eye was a dazzling blue light, radiant and mysterious. Leander stood in the middle of it, like a war god bathed in divine brilliance, proud and unyielding, his feet planted on heaven and earth alike.

Below, every gaze froze. People couldn't move. They couldn't speak.

Leander's punch was too terrifying. The sheer power poured down like a storm, crushing everything in its path. Even from below, they could feel every inch of that sky saturated with raw, primeval energy. If even one martial arts master had touched it, they would have been shredded in an instant.

"What a terrifying punch... so utterly domineering!" Wyatt stood there, shaking.

Had that strike landed on the Dual Meridian Sect itself, Hidden Haven would have been reduced to dust. A single punch capable of leveling mountains-that was the kind of power they were witnessing.

The blue light lingered for what felt like tens of seconds before gradually fading. There, in the sky, Leander stood alone. Smoke rose slowly from the spot where Fergus had stood moments before.

"One punch... turned the Son of Judgment to ash?" Wyatt gasped, staring at the curling smoke, caught in his throat. Even knowing the destructive force in theory, seeing it firsthand was another level of shock.

"Iron Sovereign?" Elara murmured softly, and her eyes flickered. She had always thought of herself as top-tier among the young generation, proud that she had reached the Martial Sovereign Realm at just eighteen. But now she finally understood what it meant to be truly outclassed.

While she was quietly congratulating herself for entering the Martial Sovereign Realm, Leander had already stomped across the heavens, challenging the strongest factions. Even the likes of the Arbitration Office or War God Sanctum had been defeated by him.

While she was scheming to reach the Transcendent Realm, Leander had already dominated it. More than fifteen transcendent cultivators had died at his hands. That was the difference.

Daphne's eyes twinkled. She smiled, breathtaking and proud. This was her man. No matter how fierce the battle, he always stood in the end.

The Clarkes' siblings exchanged stunned looks, still struggling to process the overwhelming impact. It was hard to believe that this world-shaking Iron Sovereign had once been the quiet youth who rowed boats for them. If they told anyone, ten out of ten people wouldn't believe it.

"Son of Judgment?" Leander clenched his fist lightly, lips curling with disdain.

He could feel that Fergus's power had exceeded the Infernal Crown Transcendent. Even Galen and Reid together wouldn't have matched him. But in the end, Fergus fell to Leander.

Watching the smoke rise, Leander's eyes were indifferent. Then he noticed it.

A tiny red speck of light flickered at the spot where Fergus had died.

And then, a voice boomed from the red light. "Who dares kill the Arbitration Office's Son of Judgment?"

The sound was like a storm mixed with thunder, shaking the heavens. The surrounding kilometers trembled violently. Whoever this voice belonged to had to be terrifyingly strong.

Leander narrowed his eyes as the red light exploded into a figure.

It looked like a middle-aged man, handsome, hands behind his back, robes flowing elegantly. Yet the single horn on his forehead added an unsettling, mysterious edge.

"Spirit Avatar?" Leander's eyebrows shot up in surprise.

To manipulate a divine or spiritual presence into a split form required cultivation far beyond the ordinary. This level of mastery was needed to surpass even Origin. Leander himself couldn't do it. Within the Arbitration Office, only the sixteen Supreme Arbiters—who had never revealed themselves—were capable of such a feat.

Wyatt below let out a terrified scream. His face was frozen in pure panic.

"You killed Fergus?" The Spirit Avatar scanned the crowd before locking eyes with Leander.

"I did," Leander said calmly, regaining his composure.

"The Arbitration Office sending him

to hunt me was clever," he continued, a slight smile tugging at his lips. "Killing me removed your biggest threat, displayed your might to the world, and made Fergus famous in one strike. Get three things done at once. Brant strategy!"

Leander folded his hands behind him, shaking his head lightly. "He really was at the peak of the Transcendent Realm, nearly invincible. But he ran into me."

The blood-red spirit raised its brows slightly, as if to memorize Leander's face. "So it's you... Jeff Ashcroft. In just over a year, you've cut down countless Arbitration Office elites, earning our attention. Yet I've never seen your true form until now."

The anger in the spirit's voice vanished, replaced with calm. "Jeff Ashcroft, we underestimated you. Even Fergus couldn't touch you. But don't think this means the Arbitration Office is helpless. Our strength is far beyond your imagining. Even the Dragon Emperor of your Astria was crushed by all sixteen of us. You're nowhere near that level yet. Not even close to warranting our full attention."

Leander laughed lightly, flicking his fingers. "If the real you were here saying that, it'd carry weight. But a Spirit Avatar alone? Not enough."

The blood-red spirit remained expressionless. "Jeff Ashcroft, just know this. In the long river of human civilization, anyone opposing the Arbitration Office meets only destruction. Next time... it'll be your death."

Leander rubbed his nose, clearly annoyed. "You talk too much."

With that, he swung his right fist, shattering the spirit into nothingness.

As the shadow dissolved, its rage and disbelief were clear. It hadn't expected Leander to act so decisively. THIS CHAPTER IS UPDATE BY find~novel~net

Leander didn't pause. He moved like a streak of light, landing before Wyatt. "Sovereign Ashcroft, you... You just destroyed a Supreme Arbiter's avatar..." Leander waved them off. "Don't worry about that. My deal with the Dual Meridian Sect is done. Now it's time you pay up. Take me to Dragon Gate!"

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Chapter 439

"Take me to the Dragon Gate."

Leander's eyes grew darker as he stared straight at Wyatt. He was never the kindhearted type. Everything he did came with a purpose, and he always had his own reasons for stepping in.

He had helped the Dual Meridian Sect deal with the Bloody Palm Sect partly because he couldn't stand watching that Bloody Palm Sect run wild and terrorize the Shadowrealm. But more importantly, the Dual Meridian Sect had something he wanted.

On his way here, he had already spotted claw marks carved into the stone walls. All of them belonged to four-toed wyrm beasts. Deepcoil Dragon carried pure-dragon ancestry, so they counted as wyrmkin too. Leander was almost sure those marks came from a Deepcoil Dragon.

Even if they weren't made by one, the claw prints alone proved that some beast with pure-dragon ancestry lived in this Hidden Haven. The sect even had a legend about a Dragon Gate, which meant they probably held information he couldn't afford to miss.

The members of the Dual Meridian Sect finally recovered from the shock of seeing Leander obliterate Fergus. Clara and Wyatt exchanged a look and both nodded.

Wyatt cupped his fists and bowed deeply to Leander. Everyone behind him followed his lead. Even the guards and the inner hall attendants joined in, not to mention the elders and heirs.

"Thank you, Sovereign Ashcroft. You saved the Dual Meridian Sect from a disaster." Wyatt continued, "Dragon Gate is a secret we never reveal. But after what you've done for us, we'll honor our promise. We'll take you to it."

He straightened up and gestured toward the path. "This way. We can talk inside."

With so many outsiders in the hall, he couldn't reveal anything publicly about something as guarded as the Dragon Gate.

"Alright." Leander nodded and gave Daphne a small smile. She understood immediately and hurried to follow him.

He had only taken a few steps when he paused and turned to the Clarkes' siblings.

"If you want people to recognize you... If you want the Steelblade Hall to rise again... relying on someone else won't get you far. You both have enough strength to bring honor to your own hall. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

He didn't wait for their reaction. He simply took Daphne's hand and disappeared down the long corridor.

Aria stood frozen for a moment, his words echoing through her chest. Then she suddenly lifted her head, as if something finally clicked.

"Right. Our Steelblade Hall wasn't even known in Edgemontale back then. Dad built everything step by step. He never relied on anyone. So why should we? If he could do it, so can we."

She smacked Grant on the shoulder, her expression firm and bright with determination. "Grant, let's head back. Keep training. One day, we'll make sure people across Astria know the name Steelblade Hall."

Grant nodded even though he clearly didn't fully understand. Then he got up as well.

Aria looked in the direction where Leander had vanished. Gratitude stirred inside her, mixed with a quiet ache.

"Jeff Ashcroft, I'll remember you for the rest of my life." She whispered it under her breath before turning away with Grant and leaving the Dual Meridian Sect behind.

The rest of the crowd exchanged looks, unsure whether they should stay or leave. What was supposed to be a simple selection event for a son-in-law had spiraled into chaos and drawn in forces far beyond their league.

A harmless gathering of young talents had turned into a battle between transcendent powerhouses. The people who came hoping to become the sect's chosen groom now sat in awkward silence, unsure whether to laugh or cry.

As Leander walked farther away under the elders' guidance, Elara finally snapped back to herself.

A spark flashed in her eyes. Then she lifted her hand and removed her silken veil. The moment her looks appeared, the entire hall seemed to brighten.

"Everyone, I apologize for the fright today. The Dual Meridian Sect faced a crisis, but thanks to Sovereign Ashcroft, we survived. Since the danger has passed, our selection event will continue. Whoever manages to defeat me will become our future son-in-law and cultivate the dual arts with me."

The moment she spoke and revealed her looks, the hundred or so young prodigies in the hall perked up again.

Elara scanned the crowd with calm indifference. She had seen Leander's strength. After witnessing someone like him, none of these so-called geniuses from Astria stirred even the slightest interest in her anymore.

...

Wyatt and Clara led Leander and Daphne into a secluded stone chamber where they usually cultivated.

Wyatt offered Leander the main seat. Leander didn't decline. He sat down comfortably.

"So, are you ready to tell me where the Dragon Gate actually is?" His spiritual strength had already swept through the whole valley. It was searching for any hidden structures.

But so far, he had found nothing out of the ordinary. Still, the old records confirmed that a flying dragon had once descended here. Locals had witnessed it, so the rumors weren't baseless. Follow current novels on

Wyatt and Clara sat opposite him. Wyatt spoke first. "To be honest with you, the Dragon Gate isn't here."

Leander's eyes narrowed. His expression cooled as he shot them a sidelong look.

"Then maybe you'd like to explain the countless wyrm traces carved into your sect's stone walls."

Clara let out a long breath. When she spoke again, her voice cracked like someone finally admitting a painful truth.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, the Dragon Gate really isn't in the Dual Meridian Sect."

She paused, her tone softening into a childlike confession.

"Our sect descends from the

Eastborn Royal Line of the

Shadowrealm. My father was killed by the Bloody Palm Sect's Lord Lloyd Not long before the chaos broke out, he handed me a jade stone. He said it was the key to a Hidden Haven, a place holding an enormous fortune.

"He told me that if I ever needed help, I should take the jade to the Aorinth Peaks in Edgemontale. There would be a dragon there waiting to avenge me. I knew I couldn't fight the Bloody Palm Sect, so I fled with the jade.

"When I reached the Aorinth Peaks, I used it to open a massive iron gate.

"I didn't realize until then how terrifying the world could be. A black dragon appeared. It walked on four scaled claws. With just one breath, I couldn't even move.

"To build my dual cultivation sect, I did something reckless. I made a wish to that dragon. I didn't expect it to understand me. But it did. It flew out of the Aorinth Peaks and into the Central Realm. It wiped out every enemy in our way and circled the place I chose for our sect like a guardian.

"Then about six or seven years ago, something happened. The dragon suddenly dropped from the sky. It fell, rotted away, and died. That incident was reported everywhere. People called it the Harrowside Fallen Dragon case."

"What?" Daphne gasped. "So that's what really happened?"

She turned to Leander. He looked thoughtful.

After a long moment, he spoke, "So the real Dragon Gate isn't here. It's in the Aorinth Peaks."

Wyatt and Clara both nodded without hesitation.

Leander rubbed the bridge of his nose, remembering Christopher's phone call.

Isn't that the very stretch of land they call Edgemontale—the place where all those strange signs keep popping up?

He sank into thought again, eyes darkening with a new possibility.

"Could the Dragon Gate be connected to the strange treasure that surfaced this time?"

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Chapter 440

At the Edgemontale, in the Knoxs' Ranch.

Edgemontale's stretch of land held the Knoxs Ranch, a place everyone in the region knew by name. It was a massive spread, close to three thousand head of cattle and sheep roaming its pastures. One ranch alone kept nearly a fifth of the entire Northwest's meat supply.

The Knoxs had always been the open-door sort. Labron Knox, the man running the place, carried himself with an old-school swagger, the kind people associated with legends and wanderers. He'd built an enormous canvas camp on the edge of his property. Anyone passing through could count on a fire, good liquor, and roasted meat, as well as a place to rest and feel human again.

Folks started calling the Knoxs' Ranch the Hero's Homestead. The name stuck, spreading far past Edgemontale until it became known throughout all of Astria.

Right now, a middle-aged man in a purple-gold coat stood just outside the ranch fence. Hands clasped behind his back. Calm as a mountain. That man was Labron himself. In the last half month, he'd taken down Atlas of the Leynthall Family with his signature technique known as the Knoxs' Thirteen Shots. The victory shoved his name straight onto Astria's power rankings.

His sleeves drifted with the wind as he watched an off-roader rumble toward him.

The vehicle carried a military plate. Three middle-aged men stepped out once it stopped. Each one moved with the posture of someone who had spent a lifetime sharpening their body. Their steps were steady. Their eyes hid a dangerous light.

The moment the three men touched the ground, Labron stepped forward. Then, without warning, he cupped his fists, dropped to one knee, and bowed to the black-haired man leading the trio. "I, a successor scholar, greet Master Seth."

A man ranked among Astria's strongest actually lowered his head. The look on his expression held nothing but reverence.

Dozens of ranch hands froze in place. Not one of them understood what they were seeing. Three strangers arrived out of nowhere and somehow made the man who ruled Edgemontale's fields kneel on sight.

"Little Labron, I only gave you a few pointers back then. I'm nowhere near worthy of being called your master. Stand up."

The man looked about the same age as Labron, but there was a weight behind his voice that made the years between them feel wide. Calling him little Labron stunned everyone within earshot.

Labron stayed exactly as he was, fists pressed together. "No. Maybe it was only a few words to you, but to me it changed everything. Without what you said that day, I would still be stumbling around with no direction. I never would have reached Astria's strong list. Now that you and the two seniors have come all the way to Edgemontale, I have to show my respect."

He rose, then motioned for the three to follow him. No pretension. No empty polite talk. Everything he said came straight from his chest.

Labron might have earned his place on Astria's power rankings. People called him a martial arts master everywhere he went. But he knew the truth. In front of these three men, all of that meant nothing.

These three were the real thing-true Transcendent Realm experts.

The first figure, Seth Warner, had a name in Astria's martial world that barely carried weight, but his skill? That was a whole other story-deep, unfathomable, and impossible to measure.

Seth rarely showed up inside Astria itself. Every time news of him surfaced, it was from battles against top-tier fighters overseas. His power was immense. Back then, he ruled the scene with his 'Twin Scythes,' earning the nickname Sky Mantis among the elite of Eastern and Westeria.

Twenty years ago, Labron had run into Seth once. At the time, he was just a young martial novice. Seth, though, had thrown him a few words of guidance, enough to send him skyrocketing through the ranks and eventually standing at the very peak of Edgemontale.

It wasn't until later that Labron realized Seth wasn't just a practitioner with extraordinary skill. He was also a core member of Astria's most powerful martial organization, the Shadow Division.

With Seth's level of mastery, the two men walking behind him could only be peers—fighters of equal standing.

After hearing Labron speak so earnestly, Seth just shook his head with a smile. "Kid, you're stubborn as hell."

He gestured toward the two men behind him. "Let me introduce them. These are my colleagues. This is Kenneth Baker, and that's Keith Baker. Together, they're called the Armored Duo. Their skills? On par with mine, no doubt about it."

Labron's expression shifted. He bowed deeply to both men in respect.

Kenneth and Keith, however, only gave a cool reply, "Hmm." Their air dripped with arrogance.

Labron didn't mind. He immediately ushered the three into his private tent, which was already set up with fine wine, roasted meat, and a few exotic women performing seductive dances.

The three of them didn't flinch. Their expressions stayed calm, and their eyes were straight ahead.

Seth took a sip of wine, swallowed slowly, then finally spoke. "Little Labron, the reason we're here in Edgemontale? We need you to handle something for us." Labron's expression grew serious. He waved at the singers, letting them leave first. With just the four of them inside, Seth continued, "This is official business." Labron's look hardened slightly, and his demeanor grew heavier. "Official business?" I know full well that all three of them are core members of the Shadow Division. Usually, even one of them showing up is enough to shake things to the core. And now, all three of them are here together—just how important must this be?

Seth drained his cup and said, voice low and steady. "Little Labron, we need you to do something. The Aorinth Peaks, that's your territory. Over the next week, I want you to lock it down completely. No one gets in. Anyone who tries, stop them."

Labron hesitated for a moment, then nodded.

Aorinth Peaks wasn't small, but Labron had more than a thousand people under him. Posting a guard every fifty meters, he could shut the place down completely without a doubt.

He paused for a few seconds, then remembered something. "Master Seth, your visit... is it because of the anomaly showing up in Aorinth Peaks?"

Seth didn't hold back. He nodded.

"This time, an anomaly has appeared in Edgemontale. It's a sign that a Supreme Treasure has manifested. Judging from the intel on this anomaly, this treasure isn't just any relic. It's so extraordinary that even the Transcendent Realm might go insane trying to claim it. Historically, this has only happened four times. Every single time a Supreme Treasure showed up Countless masters from Eastern and Westeria swarmed in. The scene turned chaotic, triggering a massive upheaval. And now... this is the fifth time!" Seth's voice flickered with intensity.

"That's why we were sent here—to keep an eye on this area. The goal is to get the treasure before it fully manifests, so we can prevent Edgemontale from plunging into

chaos. Word is, there's unusual activity in the Transcendent Realm all over the world. At least a dozen Transcendent Realm figures are moving this way. On top of that, quite a few International Combat Units experts seem to have shown up. One wrong move and it could erupt into a full-blown multi-front battle. By then, Edgemontale itself would turn into a battlefield!"

Labron's jaw dropped. He realized the situation was far more serious than he had imagined.

A single Transcendent Realm warrior already packs terrifying, destructive power. One punch, one strike, can slice a hundred-meter-tall building clean in half. Now imagine a dozen of them going at it-what kind of cataclysm would that unleash? Edgemontale is mostly desert and wasteland. If these dozen Transcendent Realms start tearing each other apart, will any of the remaining green oases even survive? As the four of them were talking, the expressions of Seth, Keith, and Kenneth suddenly shifted.

Whoosh!

A fierce wind sliced across the ranch, whipping up clouds of dust. Cattle and sheep scattered in panic, chaos erupting everywhere.

The four of them stepped out of the tent and saw a woman standing just outside Knoxs' Ranch. She wore a crown, her features exquisitely refined, exuding nobility. In her hand was a uniquely shaped staff. She glided toward them, each step light and deliberate.

Seth's pupils constricted immediately. "Storm Goddess... Kaina?"

No sooner had she appeared than heavy, earth-shaking footsteps echoed. The ground trembled with each thud.

Kenneth turned his head and saw a towering figure hundreds of meters away-a man over two meters tall, dressed in bizarre attire, striding forward. Each step sank deep into the earth, leaving impressions like a giant walking across the land. "That's... Toru the Raging Bull?"

Then, a series of sharp, slicing sounds tore through the air. Several more figures descended from the sky. They looked up, their expressions shifting again.

"Grand Arcanist... Faegor!"

"Crimson Enchantress... Orianna Vale!"

"Hexmaster..."

One legendary name after another rolled off their tongues. Seth, Kenneth, and Keith went through a rapid cycle of shock, disbelief, and finally numbness. There were more

than twenty influential figures in total, each a member of the Transcendent Realm. The weakest had the strength of an Ember Transcendent, but astonishingly, about eighty percent of them were top-tier International Combat Units warriors. [READ LATEST CHAPTERS AT find~novel~net](#)

Finally, a flash of rainbow light and a streak of jade-colored energy shot through the air, forming two figures.

One stood atop a ring of fire, her entire being radiating flames, a mesmerizing Western beauty wrapped in scarlet light.

The other was impeccably upright, unnervingly handsome, with a sharp and commanding physique. Clad in noble armor, he carried an air of absolute authority.

After seeing them, Seth's earlier shock transformed into utter dread and fear. "Flame Goddess... Halia! God of Madness... Khaedor!"

His voice cracked. Even speaking was a struggle.

These two had suddenly appeared, and they were none other than the top two-ranked peak experts of the International Combat Units.

Behind them, Labron drew in a sharp breath, swallowing hard. He already sensed it - Edgemontale was about to be completely turned upside down.

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Chapter 441

Halia had been abandoned by her parents when she was a child. Later, a cruel couple adopted her. Her adoptive mother hit and kicked her every day and forced her to do hard labor. Her adoptive father let his sick desires grow without limit and violated her.

In that painful and humiliating life, she awakened her ability as a metahuman on the day she became an adult. She gained a strange power to control fire. She could create fire on her own and burn steel.

That day, she burned her adoptive parents to ash with one look. The entire mansion collapsed. From that moment on, the humiliated girl, Halia, disappeared. The world gained an undefeated powerhouse known as the Flame Goddess.

Halia had never trained in martial arts or any mystical arts. She rose as a pure metahuman. She relied on her firepower and defeated countless strong opponents. She later rose to second place on the International Combat Units and became a terrifying world-class fighter.

Khaedor had come from the Skarovian army and fought in World War Two. He once destroyed a thousand-man fascist unit on his own. He blocked a Gatling gun with his bare body and stayed unharmed. His name shook Westeria.

He later left the army because he was too violent and killed too freely. After that, he caused a huge bloodbath near the North Sea. He wiped out eight towns in a single night and took tens of thousands of lives. His cruelty became legendary.

Skarovia sent heavy weapon units after him many times. They even sent fighter jets and tried carpet-style attacks, yet he escaped again and again. The martial world was shaken. Countless world-class fighters respected him as number one on the International Combat Units. His title as the God of Madness held for twenty years.

These two people had the word "god" in their titles. It showed their place at the top of the International Combat Units.

They were listed as first and second, yet everyone knew their strength stood on the same level. They were the most powerful and the most destructive names on the entire list.

Anywhere in the world, once either of them appeared, disaster followed. Major nations marked them as top-level threats. They were seen as criminals who could wipe out a small country.

When the two of them arrived, even the three Transcendent Realm fighters known as the Sky Mantis and the Armored Duo froze on the spot. THIS CHAPTER IS UPDATE BY

"Twenty people are on the International Combat Units. I can't believe nine out of ten showed up. What in the world..."

Seth's hand shook. His heart trembled.

He understood that the relic appearing in the northwest would attract world-class fighters, yet he never expected a shock of this scale.

Every person here had the power to destroy a town. The first- and second-ranked, Khaedor and Halia, had enough destructive force to make major nations wary.

If all these fighters gathered, even Agylae, Astria, Skarovia, and the Europa Union would feel pressure.

Now they all gathered in the northwest. How could the land not shake?

The other top fighters on the International Combat Units arrived on foot. Only the God of Madness, Khaedor, and the Flame Goddess, Halia, flew in. Their entrance showed their superior status.

Halia wore a bright red dress and showed half of her long, pale legs. She looked down and locked her eyes on Seth and the Armored Duo.

"Sky Mantis, Armored Duo, you Transcendent Realm fighters from Astria's Shadow Division always remind me of the old days."

Her voice sounded unreal. It sounded like she was present yet also speaking from far away.

Once this top-ranked Overlord spoke, the other strong fighters turned and looked at Seth and the other two.

The three Shadow Division fighters tensed up. Their expressions grew heavy.

Ten years earlier, a small event happened in southern Astria. A rare liquid called Verdant Dew appeared. The government blocked the news and sent Shadow Division fighters to move it, yet the news still leaked in the end.

The ones in charge back then had been these three. The people who came for the Verdant Dew were handled easily by them, yet at the final moment, they ran into Halia.

She used one move. All three of them lost. They had to watch her take the Verdant Dew away. That memory never left them. It remained a shadow in their minds.

Seth was the most experienced among them. He steadied himself and said, "Halia, last time you stole the Verdant Dew born from our land. This time, what do you want?"

He knew how dangerous she was, yet he served the Shadow Division. He still held his pride and questioned her.

"Stole?"

Halia stepped on a trail of fire and gave a soft laugh.

"The three of you joined forces and could not block a casual move from me. How do you have the nerve to

call that stealing? If we are being honest, that was taking it by force."

Seth's face went pale. His voice grew lower.

"Halia, don't think you can do
whatever you want just because you
rank second on the International
Combat Units. This is Astra. If
needed, the army will act and
suppress you with full force!"

Once he said that, the gathered Transcendent Realm fighters all changed their expressions.

Astria was one of the three strongest nations. Its military force was terrifying. Even Transcendent Realm fighters could not take on a major nation's whole army.

During wartime, many Transcendent Realm fighters died from heavy artillery. That was why major nations remained the rulers of Earth.

Halia brushed her bangs aside and gave a mocking smile.

"Army action? Stop putting on a show. If the army were really going to get involved, why would the Shadow Division only send the three of you?"

Seth and the other two froze and stayed silent.

It was true. In peaceful times, it was rare for any nation to deploy the military. Astria would not act just because world-class fighters gathered.

This trip to the northwest depended on the Shadow Division alone.

D*mn it!

Seth cursed in his heart. His confidence faded.

"This Knoxs Ranch was known as the most welcoming place in the northwest. People even called it the Hero's Homestead. We'll stay here then."

Halia gave the three men one last uninterested glance. Then she smiled and turned into a flash of fire. She entered one of the guest tents.

Khaedor never spoke from start to end. He never looked at anyone. He did not care at all. He followed Halia into the tent.

Once the two Overlords left, the other Transcendent Realm fighters also moved toward the largest guest tent in the ranch to rest and drink.

Soon, the field emptied, and only Seth and the others remained.

Labron finally snapped out of it. He looked at Seth with worry.

"Master, this trip to the Aorinth Peaks might..."

Seth nodded and let out a

long

discouraged sigh. "I never expected one relic to draw so many world-class fighters. Not even the director expected this. If Galen, who ranked third, and Jeff, who ranked fifth, showed up, they could help us deal with these people, yet Galen hid in Mount Martial and refused to come out. Jeff moved around on his own and refused restrictions. It is a pity."

Hearing his bold master sigh like this, Labron felt a heavy weight settle in his chest.

Is the relic that appeared on Astrian land going to fall into the hands of Western

fighters again?

At that moment, a tall off-road truck rushed in from the northwest border.

A young man in white sat in the passenger seat with his feet propped up. His eyes

looked calm and deep. He was Leander, who had rushed over from the camp.

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Chapter 442

At the Knoxs' Ranch, Seth, Kenneth, and Keith sat around the fire. Their expression was tight with worry.

"This time, most of the top experts from International Combat Units are showing up. Just one Flame Goddess-Halia back in the day, she utterly crushed the three of us. How the hell are we supposed to stop them from running wild in Edgemontale?" Kenneth's voice was heavy, rough around the edges.

Even though they were all Transcendent Realm experts, the higher they went, the more painfully obvious the power gap became. With all their combined strength, they wouldn't even survive a single strike from the Flame Goddess. And that was before the people counted the others-warriors on par with them or even ranked among the top of the International Combat Units.

Seth paused, mulling it over, then finally said, "I'm going to call Director Gardner. Maybe he can reach Galen and Jeff and see if they can swing by to help."

Kenneth and Keith just shook their heads.

"Even if Galen and Jeff show up, with the lineup at the Knoxs' Ranch right now, once the artifact from Aorinth Peaks appears, there's no way we can stop them from taking it."

"So what's the point of calling them?"

Seth's hand froze in midair. He let out a long, heavy sigh.

Yeah, Galen and Jeff are strong, no doubt, but one's ranked third and the other fifth in the International Combat Units. There's just no way they can take control of the situation. Honestly, even if we call in the Shadow Division's director and deputy right now, we'd still be stretched way too thin.

Labron was sitting off to the side, watching the three Shadow Division heavyweights sigh and groan. He shook his head slightly, too.

This time, are we really going to repeat the tragedy from over ten years ago in Southern Astria, letting the Westeria expert retake the treasure?

A jeep tore through the side roads of Edgemontale, kicking up clouds of dust that trailed behind like smoke.

Leander leaned back in the passenger seat, eyes narrowing as the Aorinth Peaks drew closer.

Even though they were still a good dozen kilometers out, he could already make out the dazzling beams shooting up from the peaks. Every streak of light pulsed with raw

spiritual energy, a clear sign that a rare treasure was about to appear. This chapter is updated by

"Last time you came to Aorinth Peaks, did it look like this?" He tilted his head slightly toward the back seat, where a veiled woman sat.

It was Clara, founder of the Dual Meridian Sect. She stared at the radiant Aorinth Peaks, shaking her head in disbelief. "When I came here before, the peaks were no different from any other mountains in Edgemontale. I've never seen anything like this."

Clara had grown up along the border of Edgemontale and the outside lands, the Shimmering Isle Royal Line of the Shadowrealm. She'd spent years gazing at Aorinth Peaks, but this kind of spectacle was utterly new to her.

"Interesting..." Leander turned his gaze back to the mountains. His eyes were clear and sharp.

He wasn't particularly thrilled about whatever treasure was about to surface. At his level, divine weapons, precious materials, even ninety per cent of rare herbs and minerals could be ignored. Only magical beasts' ancestries or soul-enhancing herbs capable of boosting his cultivation would catch his attention.

The jeep sped relentlessly, finally reaching the outer edges of Aorinth Peaks. From hundreds of meters away, they could already see the barricades. Every fifty meters, a sentry stood watch, each post operated by over a dozen guards.

As the jeep drew near, a burly man stepped forward to block them.

His expression was stern. "Aorinth Peaks is sealed from this day forward. No one may enter without permission from the ranch master."

He swung his jacket aside, revealing a handgun tucked inside.

Leander didn't even glance at him. He tossed a stack of one hundred bills to the driver and stepped out alongside Clara.

The driver turned the jeep around and left, while Leander lifted his head to focus on the spiritual energy surging from Aorinth Peaks. His spiritual strength seeped out, probing deep into the mountains.

Moments later, his eyes snapped back. His spiritual strength retracted completely.

"Well, well, Aorinth Peaks. So it can block my senses." He grinned, waving at Clara. "Let's go in."

Clara nodded, following him. The burly guard saw them casually stride toward the entrance instead of leaving, and his anger flared. He reached for his gun.

Boom!

The instant he moved, a deafening roar tore through the air. Sentries within a kilometer all toppled, torn skyward by a violent wind like a passing hurricane.

Over a hundred people stood frozen, mouths agape. Only after what felt like an eternity did they snap out of it, but Leander and Clara had already vanished into the foot of the mountain.

Since the Qual Meridian Sect's

battle, Leander had wiped out every top-tier warrior of the Shadowreathm Sect, including their leader, Reid. The greatest threat to the Dual Meridian Sect was gone.

So when it ended, Clara had followed Leander northwest, guiding him.

She walked ahead, following both her memory and the faint glow emanating from the jade, as they threaded their way through the sprawling peaks of Aorinth.

After many twists and turns, they finally reached the core of Aorinth Peaks. This was the deepest, oldest, almost untouched part of the mountains.

Throughout their journey, Leander felt the surging spiritual energy everywhere. Even the occasional animals gave off warnings far stronger than any normal creatures elsewhere.

In the heart of the mountains, Clara stopped after ten steps.

Ahead was a dense, vibrant forest. Everything looked clear and calm, yet she sensed an invisible barrier cutting off the space in front of her.

"What the..." She reached out, her hand hitting something solid and smooth. To the naked eye, it was invisible.

Her eyes narrowed. Innate vitality surged through her palm as she struck. "Break!"

A thunderous explosion shook the ground beneath them. The surrounding earth trembled, trees swayed, and birds and beasts scattered in all directions.

She had poured eighty percent of her force into that strike, yet the invisible wall didn't budge.

"How is this possible?" She was shocked. Last time, this path had been clear. Now, there was an invisible barrier.

Even after unleashing several more blows, churning the ground for dozens of meters around, the barrier remained untouched.

"Sovereign Ashcroft!" She turned to Leander, exasperated.

Leander's expression stayed calm. He stepped forward and placed his hand on the barrier.

"This is a force shield. Whenever a rare treasure surfaces, it generates a protective magnetic field. Invisible to the eye but incredibly strong. break it by brute force requires unmatched destructive power. Otherwise, you wait for it to fade on its own."

He had read about such shields in ancient texts. Only treasures of immense power could trigger them.

Depending on the treasure's strength, the shield's intensity varied. This one could withstand a high grade supernatural's full-force strike without a scratch, meaning whatever lay beyond was no trivial treasure.

"Can you break it?" Clara asked.

"I can." Leander nodded decisively, then shook his head. "But it's not the best idea. The shield is self-generated by the treasure. Using brute force risks damaging it."

Clara frowned. "Then what do we do? Wait here?"

Leander chuckled lightly. "Just because others can't get in doesn't mean I can't."

As he spoke, a blue glow spread across his palm. Clara's eyes flickered. Where his hand touched, ripples of energy radiated outward like a drop hitting a still lake.

"Devourer's Ninefold Path. The Power of Dissolution!"

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Chapter 443

"Devourer's Ninefold Path, the Power of Dissolution!"

Leander pressed his palm downward, and ripples spread outward like waves on water. A sharp blue radiance flared across his hand, cutting into the space before him like a blade. The light then burst open, unfurling in all directions.

A soft hum vibrated through the air.

Clara felt the world tremble and distort. A moment later came the brittle crack of something breaking. She watched fragments of crystalline light drift downward like shattered glass before dissolving into nothing.

"Let's move."

Leander pulled his hand back and strode ahead. The invisible barrier that had blocked their path had vanished completely.

"What kind of technique was that?"

Clara narrowed her eyes, stunned.

She had attacked with everything she had and hadn't made the slightest dent. Yet Leander had broken a shield spanning who-knew-how-wide in mere seconds. It felt downright otherworldly.

At Knoxs' Ranch, Seth, Keith, and Kenneth were discussing their deadlock when Labron's phone rang.

He answered. After only two lines, his expression shifted sharply.

"What? Someone's forcing their way into Aorinth Peaks?"

He sprang to his feet, eyes flashing.

Just yesterday he had mobilized everyone at Knoxs' Ranch to seal off the Peaks. The Shadow Division had also pushed through official channels, so the local authorities had locked the area down completely. Under those circumstances, only true martial powerhouses could break in by force.

He hung up. Seth glanced over, composed as ever. "Someone breached Aorinth Peaks?"

Labron nodded. "Yeah. Surveillance shows a young man and a middle-aged woman."

Seth only lifted his eyes and then looked away, utterly unimpressed.

"Ignore those small-time opportunists. With an anomaly appearing at Aorinth Peaks, we're far from the only ones interested.

"Plenty of nobodies below the Transcendent Realm want a share. If they're bold enough to sneak in, let them. They'll only end up injured for nothing."

Keith laughed and agreed. "Exactly. The heart of the hills is wrapped by the relic's own protective field. No one's getting through until it fades naturally.

"I hit it with my full strength and didn't even scratch it. Those weaklings? They'll just humiliate themselves."

Hearing this, Labron finally understood.

Despite Seth's group-and the International Combat Units-being full of top-tier Transcendents, none of them had rushed the hills. They had simply set up camp at the ranch. That had confused him before.

Now it made sense. They were waiting for the relic's shield to disappear on its own. Only then would the real struggle begin.

But just as Seth and the other two finished speaking, all three stiffened, their expressions shifting drastically.

In the same instant, they bolted out of the tent. Startled, Labron hurried after them.

Outside, he realized it wasn't only them. In front of the largest tent, the International Combat Units elites had already gathered-Khaedor and Halia, the top two ranked fighters, were there as well. [Read full story at](#)

Every eye was fixed on Aorinth Peaks.

Labron followed their gaze. The sight was completely different from half an hour earlier.

Before, the Peaks had shimmered like a distant mirage. Now, vibrant swirls of multicolored energy twisted above the mountains, like a brilliant painting unfurling across the sky.

"The relic's shield disappeared? That's impossible."

Seth muttered in disbelief. Keith and Kenneth looked equally stunned.

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They had examined the inner hills and studied the shield themselves. By their estimates, it should have taken at least another week for the fluctuating spiritual energy to wear it down. Yet after only half a day, it had vanished entirely. None of it made sense.

A roar split the air.

A jet of fire shot upward, tearing through the sky with a shrill sonic boom. Chasing close behind, a streak of black shadow swept forward like a trailing blade. Two figures streaked toward Aorinth Peaks.

"Khaedor and Halia?"

Seth and the others reacted instantly. They stomped down, surged upward, and shot after them.

"The relic has opened move!"

The rest reacted immediately.

Beams of light shot into the sky, and

figures streaked, forward, charging

toward the bills like the Eight

Immortals crossing the sea-each displaying their own signature technique.

Labron, a Martial Sovereign listed on the Astria Power Index, watched a flood of

living legends surge past him. He drew in a sharp breath despite himself.

He understood that Edgemontale was about to be turned upside down.

The battle for the relic had begun.

On a high ridge south of the Aorinth Peaks, three figures stood with their hands clasped behind their backs. They watched streaks of light race toward the mountains, yet they remained unmoved-calm as

monks, perfectly composed.

To the left stood a middle-aged man in a maroon robe. He was tall and striking but carried an unhealthy pallor.

To the right stood a languid, alluring woman in an ice-blue dress, her mature beauty layered with frost. Cold air spread from her feet, coating the ground in ice.

Between them stood a man with both hands hidden in his sleeves. His robe was marked with thunder sigils, and arcs of lightning flickered in his eyes. His hair bristled upward like that of a lightning god.

The three stood at the summit, and the air above their heads split under the pressure, carving a visible rift through the clouds.

"Reefus, what do you think?"

The man in the red robe turned toward the figure in the center.

Lightning danced in the central man's gaze as he smirked, pure contempt in his expression.

"What do I think? They're nothing but a pack of crazed, brainless dogs.

"That International Combat Units list? A grand title with no real weight. Aside from Halia and Khaedor-who barely deserve a second glance the rest are just a circus troupe.

"Let them fight to the death. When they're dead or half-dead, we'll sweep in.

"Relics of heaven and earth belong to the strong, not for narrow-minded fools who can't see beyond their own well."

His voice remained cool, and his arrogance cracked through the air like thunder.

Every name on the International Combat Units list was considered a giant among men—individuals powerful enough to make entire nations uneasy. Yet in his eyes, they were not even worth insulting.

Even Khaedor and Halia, ranked first and second, earned only a reluctant acknowledgement. That alone revealed how high his standards were.

The two beside him chuckled, clearly in agreement.

"Give it 15 minutes," he said. "Then we move."

A flash of killing intent flickered in his eyes.

"Once we secure the relic, we return and hunt down Jeff. We'll enforce the Writ of Judgment.

"He killed the Son of Judgment from the Arbitration Office. This time, he won't be allowed to walk away alive."

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Chapter 444

Deep in the heart of the Aorinth Peaks, in an ancient and hidden forest, Leander walked beside Clara as they made their way toward the center.

He could already sense countless powerful auras rushing in from every direction around the mountain range, but he paid them no mind and continued forward without hesitation.

Clara's cultivation was far weaker than his, so she had no idea that many of the world's strongest figures were gathering here. She only focused on guiding him, the jade piece in her hand glowing brighter as they moved, signaling that they were nearing their destination.

After several minutes of winding paths, they finally arrived at a cave entrance.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, this is the opening I discovered before. Once we pass through, it leads directly to the Dragon Gate," Clara whispered.

"Okay," Leander responded with a nod, narrowing his eyes as he looked ahead.

A roaring surge of spiritual energy poured out from the cave, and he immediately felt its intensity.

"What an incredible Hidden Haven," he murmured.

He had traveled across countless famous mountains and ancient lands, visiting many extraordinary sanctuaries, yet none held energy as rich as this place.

"It seems Aorinth Peaks truly hides something remarkable." With that thought, he stepped into the cave first.

Clara hesitated for a moment before following closely behind.

The cave was completely dark, but their night vision made it easy to navigate. Guided by the jade's pull, they eventually reached a glowing exit.

The moment they stepped out, the scenery expanded dramatically. Though the cave had barely allowed two people to walk side by side, it opened into a vast space filled with jade-green grass. At the center lay a deep spring, hundreds of square meters wide, silent and shadowed.

The scene looked unreal, as though they had walked into a world from an old tale.

Leander's gaze fixed on the spring at once.

The water glowed a deep green, its bottom invisible, as if it had no end. Warm mist drifted from its surface, giving it the appearance of a sacred pool hidden from the world.

"You met that so-called black dragon here?" he asked Clara.

"Yes. This is the Dragon Gate," she answered quickly. She had followed the jade shard to this place, where a black dragon had helped her establish the Dual Meridian Sect—giving rise to the legend of a dragon appearing in Whitville.

"Sovereign Ashcroft," she asked suddenly, "why are you looking for the Dragon Gate? The black dragon from back then is long gone. Are you after what it left behind?"

Leander gave her a faint smile but did not answer. His eyes burned with excitement.

From the spring, he already sensed a powerful presence—one strong enough to stir a faint warning even within him. Whatever hid beneath the water was terrifying. "Step back a hundred feet," he commanded.

He did not look at her. He simply waved a hand. Although confused, Clara obeyed and retreated to the cliff wall.

She stared, unsure of his intentions, until Leander suddenly extended his hand.

With a slight curl of his fingers, a massive palm of deep blue energy appeared in midair. At its center, a black hole opened, pulling fiercely at everything around it. The once-calm spring churned under the pressure.

The water began to bubble violently, and the surface exploded into chaotic waves.

"Still refusing to come out?" Leander muttered.

The pull from his hand intensified. Several tons of water rose into the air, lifted a dozen feet high as if gravity no longer applied.

Bang!

A sharp explosion burst from the spring.

A massive black form shot upward, sending water scattering in every direction.

Splash!

A long shadow streaked across the air. Its body twisted like a dragon or a giant serpent, and its presence cast the entire space into darkness.

Clara's eyes widened as the towering silhouette came into view. The sight was almost unbelievable.

It was the same black dragon she had seen before.

Except now it was twice as large—stretching at least two hundred feet from snout to tail. Its body was as thick as reinforced steel columns, layered in black scales that gleamed with a deadly, icy shine. Four taloned limbs, armored in overlapping plates, radiated a crushing, violent power as the creature vaulted into the sky.

"Who dares interrupt my cultivation?"

The dragon circled overhead, and with every snort, its voice rumbled like rolling thunder, shaking the earth below. Flowers and grass snapped under the pressure.

The black dragon was speaking in human language.

Its gaze dropped to Clara, locking onto the jade in her hand. Fury burned in its eyes, each one as large as a bronze bell.

"It's you. I remember you. You're a descendant of the Shimmering Isle royal family."

Its voice grew colder, edged with rising anger.

"Decades ago, your family came here. Your father once helped the Deepcoil Dragons- he sheltered my younger son. So when you discovered this place my son left our spiritual vein willingly and went

to the Central State of Astro

assist you. He gave his life for it.

"Our debt to the Shimmering Isle royal family has been paid in full. And now you intrude and disturb my cultivation. Do you take the Deepcoil Dragons for something you can push around?

"Return my son to me!"

Its roar thundered through the air. Every breath sent a violent surge of raw vitality flooding the spring. Clara froze as fear crashed over her- the same terror she had felt the first time she encountered this black dragon.

She finally understood: the dragon who had helped her establish the Dual Meridian Sect had been this creature's offspring.

"You're mistaken. She didn't come for you- I did."

Leander stepped forward and placed himself between Clara and the dragon.

Only then did the dragon truly look at him.

The Deepcoil Dragon possessed ancient draconic blood. Even standing near it made breathing difficult.

Its power alone could crush the courage of most cultivators. Even Clara, who had reached the Blaze Transcendent stage, felt her heart tremble. But the young man before the dragon remained steady. The creature couldn't help but raise its opinion of him.

"Who are you? And why have you come?"

Its tone was low, still dripping with disdain.

"Who I am doesn't matter. What matters is that I'm here to make a trade."

Leander's gaze sharpened, and a strange light flickered in his eyes. He reached into his coat and produced a pill. A strong, fragrant aroma swept across the clearing.

"This is..."

The dragon's eyes narrowed at once, fixed on the pill. Its tongue curled despite itself, droplets of saliva misting the air.

"You already know what it is. A Formshift Pill."

Leander smiled. "Over the past eight years, I've traveled through ruins and ancient sanctuaries. By sheer luck, I found a Formshift Herb—extremely rare—and combined it with sixty-four other medicinal herbs to forge this pill.

"I can guarantee that only a handful of Formshift Pills exist in the world right now."

"You know exactly what it does. And you need it more than anything."

The dragon's massive body shuddered. Even after nearly a century of refining his cultivation, he still couldn't suppress the tremor.

He carried ancient draconic blood, but he was not a true dragon-only a hybrid. He lacked the innate gift to assume human form.

No matter how far his cultivation rose, he remained a beast. Without human form, he could not absorb

the world's spirit

like

human spirit, could not break through the Transcendent barrier, and could not step into the next realm.

His cultivation had already surpassed Transcendent, nearing the legendary level above it. But his physical form lagged behind; he needed a Formshift Pill to advance.

He had lived for more than a century. He understood his own history. A Formshift Pill was almost mythically rare—something one encountered only by fate. And now one Formshift Pill was right before him.

He forced down the tremor in his chest and fixed his eyes on Leander.

"What do you want?"

Leander's smile didn't fade. He held up one finger.

"Simple.

"I want your Dragon Core."

The moment he spoke, the dragon's eyes blazed. A furious roar tore through the sky.

"You wretched human! What did you just say?"

Roar!

The shockwave split the clouds apart. Countless experts rushing toward the area turned pale.

Many halted and stared toward the distant Aorinth Peaks, faces tight with fear.

They could feel it now a terrifying power had been unleashed deep within the Aorinth Peaks.

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Chapter 445

"How dare you, you wretched human!" the black dragon bellowed, his sheer volume and rage causing the clouds to dissipate.

His reptilian gaze locked onto Leander, glaring at him furiously.

"How dare you covet my Dragon Core! Do you have a death wish?"

Honestly, it was expected of the dragon to get this angry. The Dragon Core was the source of his power. He had spent more than a century slowly refining it.

After all, he'd gone from a worm of a serpent to a massive Deepcoil Dragon that could split heaven and earth by refining that very core.

Any beast with dragon blood running in their veins was born with a Dragon Core. That same core was what fueled their strength. It was essentially their core. Still, it was important as it was also something that determined their place in the hierarchy. To all beasts, their cores were akin to their lives. One might as well wait for death to claim them if they ever lost it.

Therefore, the fact that Leander was coveting his core was enough to trigger him. Clara, who was standing behind Leander, looked lost and terrified.

She was fortunate to gain a black dragon's help once. However, all it took was for him to puff at her, and she was gone. This dragon was his sire! That meant that his cultivation was immense and far beyond her understanding.

She had no idea how strong this dragon was, but she knew that Leander might as well be spelling his doom by angering him.

Leander might have ended the Shadowrealm Sect and eliminated several Arbitration Office's Infernal Crown Transcendents, but this black dragon was a magical beast. That meant that Leander was sorely outmatched and outgunned when it came to physique and raw power.

After all, Leander was still human. His chances of winning against a beast like that were slim to none. The source of this content is

"Calm down," Leander said with a wave of his hand. He wasn't the least bit scared despite having the full force of the dragon's anger on him.

"I'm not saying that I want your Dragon Core. I just want something in it, specifically your Primordium."

"My Primordium?!" the black dragon snarled, his fury skyrocketing to greater heights.

"How's that any different from taking my Dragon Core?" he hissed.

Primordium was the one thing inside the Dragon Core that no beast would ever part with. If his Dragon Core was the battery, then Primordium was the energy fueling it. He needed Primordium to use his might. If he lost it, he would be losing his cultivation. He'd be back to square one.

"Of course, there's a difference!" Leander exclaimed.

Then, he enunciated each word carefully as he continued, "I just need to take 30 percent of your Primordium in order to forge my soul. Sure, you might not be as strong as you once were after losing a third of your Primordium, but you only need two decades to cultivate all of it back."

"Meanwhile, you'd also be gaining a Formshift Pill. You could transform into a human, leaving your beast form behind. Judging by your physique as a magical beast, you could easily achieve a cultivation beyond that of the Transcendent Realm."

"I'm sure you know what choice to make."

The black dragon fell silent upon hearing his proposal.

He couldn't deny that Leander's bargain was a good one.

Leander was right in saying that his cultivation might take a dip after losing a third of his Primordium, but that he'd be able to return to his prime after 20 years.

Deepcoil Dragons could live for more than two centuries. He was only in his first century, and in human terms, he was about middle-aged. To him, 20 years was but a blip.

Plus, he would be getting himself a Formshift Pill if he agreed to aid Leander. Once he had it, he'd be able to break through the Transcendent Realm. When he did, his lifespan would lengthen to more than just two centuries.

The condition Leander was offering was definitely tempting!

"Human, you do have a good point."

Leander raised his gaze to look at the dragon and said calmly, "So, do we have a deal?"

The black dragon went airborne as a flicker of cunning appeared in his eyes.

"Human, you were right on many accounts, and your deal sounds very tempting. However, you made a mistake."

"Is that so?" Leander asked, looking at the black dragon with one of his hands in his pocket.

The black dragon's eyes took on a murderous glint as his bloodlust encompassed the entire cave.

"I have another option aside from agreeing to your deal. I could kill you and take that Formshift Pill for myself!" he declared.

He'd already thought this through. Not only would he avoid losing his Primordium, but he'd also be gaining a Formshift Pill after killing Leander.

He was a beast, and he cared not for honor. All he knew was he wanted something, and he was going to get it. In their world, power meant everything. As the saying goes, "The strong eat, the weak are meat." The powerless were destined to be crushed.

Besides, those who had treasure would always have a target painted on their backs. Leander had a Formshift Pill, so that was enough for him to kill the human.

"Of course, you could also leave the Formshift Pill here. Who knows? I could be merciful enough to let you leave with your life."

However, his malicious eyes told a different story. He was already looking at Leander as though he were trapped prey.

Clara could only stare at the black dragon in utter disbelief. She never expected the dragon to be so shameless! She couldn't help but look at Leander in worry as she waited for him to make his move.

To her surprise, Leander chuckled despite facing the dragon's wrath head-on.

Then, he remarked wryly, "I should have known. Dragons really are the epitome of shamelessness."

"You know, I didn't want to do this the hard way. That's why I brought the Formshift Pill to barter with you. It's just a shame that you just had to make the most foolish decision in your life, he said as he kept the Formshift Pill back into his pocket.

Wind began to streak around his feet, swirling around him. Soon, his eyes burned a menacing blue as his black hair whipped wildly.

"Since you prefer taking things by force, I see no reason to waste my time convincing you otherwise. So, your Dragon Core? It's mine now. I'm taking it, and I won't be settling for just 30 percent. No, I want it all."

Leander shot forward the second those words fell from his lips, tearing through the air and heading straight for the black dragon.

"You foolish human, you're asking for it!"

The black dragon roared in rage when he saw that Leander was charging instead of retreating like he should.

He flicked his tail, making it slice through the air before crashing it down at Leander.

Boom!

It struck Leander squarely. However, he didn't dodge. Instead, he took the blow without even flinching.

Their attacks collided, creating shockwaves and tremors. Their fight caused half a mountain to turn into chunks of earth, causing the waters to roil violently as the winds howled in fury.

Leander didn't falter despite meeting the black dragon with his mortal body. Instead, the black dragon was thrown off his trajectory.

"How could this be?"

The black dragon was alarmed. After all, he was a magical beast, and magical beasts were renowned for their tough constitution. Even human cultivators who had been bitterly training their bodies for decades could never dream of beating him in a physical fight.

The weak-looking Leander with his pale skin and slender figure looked nothing like those humans. So, how could someone like him win against a magical beast?

Leander remained as dispassionate

as ever throughout the brief

exchange of blows. Then, he stomped his foot, energy bursting beneath his feet before turning into a streak of blue. This time he was aiming for the black dragon's head.

Content

"Dragon Breath!" The dragon bellowed through narrowed eyes as he unleashed a torrent of flames.

"That's all you got?"

Ashcroft's eyes darkened. Then, he struck.

Trinity Strike Technique, Act Three-Earthshaker!

Boom!

The dragon fire split apart under Leander's technique before slamming back to the dragon. Clang!

A metallic crash echoed in the air, followed by a dragon's tortured cries. Sure enough, the dragon had been launched into the mountain, causing the very earth to tremble.

The entire Aorinth Peaks' mountain range trembled under the black dragon's weight.

Two figures in black and red hovered in the air nearby. Those individuals were none other than Halia the Flame Goddess and Khaedor the God of Madness.

They were the fastest. Thus, they were also the first to arrive at the mountain range. Nevertheless, they had felt the presence of two terrifying forces clashing long before they got there.

Halia narrowed her eyes as she raised a hand and fired a beam into the stone wall, melting a huge tunnel straight into the heart of the mountain.

"Let's go!"

The two swiftly shot through. Soon, they arrived on the other side of the tunnel.

Yet, what greeted them made them freeze in their tracks.

A colossal black dragon was half-embedded in the mountain. There was a fist-shaped crater marking its flank.

"Is that... a Deepcoil Dragon?"

They were at a complete loss. That was because they were one of the cream of the crop in this world. Hence, they naturally knew what a Deepcoil Dragon was.

That was a magical beast that was capable of crushing an Infernal Crown Transcendent like a gnat. Yet, a beast like that had been smashed into the mountain

with just a fist?

Their instincts screamed at them. They quickly snapped their heads upward, staring at the figure in astonishment.

They saw a white-clad young man with his black hair flowing freely in mid-air, his clothes fluttering.

Just then, he tilted his head and looked down right at them.

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Chapter 446

Leander hovered mid-air as his calm gaze locked onto the two interlopers. His eyes betrayed nothing, seemingly fathomless.

Halia and Khaedor's eyes flickered. While they were shocked, they also had enough of their wits to speculate about Leander's identity.

The Deepcoil Dragon he'd fought was the size of a small villa. Although it'd been smashed into the mountainside, it was definitely alive... and very, very angry. His aura was so oppressive that even they had to be careful when dealing with magical beasts of his caliber.

Yet, this young man had managed to send a Deepcoil Dragon flying with just one punch. He'd even managed to leave a dent in the dragon's scales. This alone proved that he was a monster of his own right.

A fighter of his caliber could easily leave a mark on the International Combat Units list. However, they'd seen anyone worth seeing and had never seen him before.

Suddenly, a name popped up in their minds.

Among the top 20 ranked worldwide, the only one they hadn't encountered was the Astrian genius—Jeff Ashcroft.

"Jeff Ashcroft?"

Halia licked her lips in interest, her gaze a mix of curiosity and seduction.

However, one should never judge a book by its cover. Although she boasted unblemished skin and youthful looks, she was already 60 when she first made the list. Now, she was approaching 80.

Back then, she'd been known as the youngest top ranker worldwide.

Now, it seemed that this young fellow was about to take that title from her.

Nonetheless, she was intrigued by this mysterious figure. He was now ranked fifth despite not even being in his 20s.

Khaedor's aura flickered in black pulses, his aura betraying his disbelief as he gaped at Leander.

He and Halia ranked first and second on the International Combat Units list. Even they wouldn't dare to provoke a Deepcoil Dragon unless they really had to. Yet, Leander, who came in fifth, had subdued the Deepcoil Dragon effortlessly.

That could only mean one thing his true power was way above his ranking.

Leander shot them a glance, but wasn't surprised by their appearance. After all, the appearance of an unknown relic would always attract several powerhouses.

Suddenly, they heard a thunderous roar that sent the remaining half of the cliff into chunks.

Sure enough, chunks of earth fell to the ground in deafening thumps. The black dragon had gotten himself free from the mountainside, and he had soared into the sky once more.

His nostrils flared as he glared at Leander murderously. There was no mistaking his look for anything else but the intent to kill.

"You insolent human, how dare you strike me!"

Wrath burned in his eyes, his scales bristling as an ominous energy rippled outward. Soon, cracks appeared in the space beneath its claws.

"I'm not done. You're dead once I'm done with you," Leander replied calmly as he raised his hand, blue energy swirling in his palm.

"You? Kill me? Hah!"

The black dragon didn't even spare Halia and Khaedor a glance. To him, Leander was his true enemy.

"The Dragon Core is the culmination of my cultivation! Yet, you want it for yourself! You only have yourself to blame for dying. I will use the Deepcoil Dragons' legacy to end your life. Neither you nor that Formshift Pill you have will ever leave this valley alive."

The dragon then slammed his claws against the ground, sending dirt and debris everywhere.

Just then, a strange black energy surged into the ground, resonating with the springs and causing the waters to roil in protest.

The spring bubbled and frothed. Leander narrowed his eyes slightly in surprise.

The black energy shot countless threads from the springs, covering hundreds of feet

of the ground. Shortly after, a black, ominous light surged to life.

Leander never left his spot despite being the center of it all. Soon, stones erupted from the springs, more specifically, 12 bronze dragon statues.

These 12 statues rose into the air, forming a perfect circle around him. Each statue flashed as threads,

glowing a faint black, connected net

them together Thread upon thread intersected with each other, creating a sealed net that trapped Leander.

"An array?"

A flicker of surprise appeared in his eyes, but that was it.

He finally understood just what the dangerous aura he'd been feeling in the springs was. It turned out that it wasn't the black dragon. Instead, the statues were the culprit.

Although they'd been submerged underwater, these statues showed no signs of rusting. They looked to be in mint condition. Thus, they were definitely made from special materials.

Even if he hadn't known whether they had been forged with special materials, the fact that they were floating midair was enough to make them fantastical.

The black dragon let out a chortle.

"You fool! I had to admit that I am no match for you when it comes to raw strength. Still, I bet you didn't see this coming! The very ground you're standing on is the Deepcoil Dragons' ancestral land!

"Our bloodline might not be numerous, but every single powerhouse who was on the brink of death would forge their flesh and blood into statues to anchor this array and guard our sacred home!"

"You are now facing the strongest

array created by my ancestors

themselves: Behold, the

ver

Dragonbound Array! This array could slay those stronger than the

Transcendent Realm. Although it now only has 80 percent of its power, it's still more than enough to kill you!"

His laughter thundered above them all. "Cherish your last moments while you still can, foolish human!"

This was his ace in the hole.

Although he wasn't able to manifest

the array's full power due to his

cultivation, he felt confident with his chances. After all, they were on his turf and playing by his rules.

Even 10 Infernal Crown Transcendents could only watch helplessly as they died to this array.

"Sovereign Ashcroft!" Carla screamed.

Halia and Khaedor tensed upon hearing the dragon's explanation, their eyes falling on the 12 bronze statues. Although they were the best of the best, the destructive power radiating from it screamed danger. IF YOU WANT TO READ MORE CHAPTERS, PLEASE VISIT [find~novel~net](#)

Still, they felt a guilty sort of relief when Leander was the one trapped in the array.

Judging by the black dragon's words, the Deepcoil Dragons had been living here for a long, long time. This was their territory.

So, it was highly likely that the unknown relic was tied to them. It was possible that the black dragon was its guardian.

Thus, they would be the ones facing the array and its disastrous power if Leander hadn't gotten here first.

"Dragonbound Array, huh?"

Leander's eyes glinted dangerously as a disdainful smirk played on his lips.

"Do you really think an array like that is enough to stop me? Watch. I'll shatter it right before your eyes, reptile."

Then, he balled his hands into fists as blue energy shot out from above his head, splitting into 12 beams before striking each bronze statue one after another.

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- Chapter 447

Chapter 447

Boom! The source of this content is

Streaks of blue struck every single bronze statue. Leander's Nirvana Energy was brutal and powerful enough to warp or even snap a divine weapon in one strike. These bronze statues had nothing against those weapons.

Suddenly, he heard a loud hum as black light surged inside the confined space around Leander before the beams of blue could land on the statues. It quickly condensed into a sticky, pitch black shield in order to block Leander's attack.

The blue energy sliced through the viscous substance like butter. Yet, whatever the light was supposed to be was odd as the beams were stopped after barrelling against it for several yards.

"Human, your arrogance knows no bounds. My ancestors used this very array to kill 10 individuals stronger than those of the Transcendent Realm. Yet, you think you can break free from this? Hah! Pitiful!" the black dragon's voice rumbled overhead. Those ancient freaks of nature didn't dare test his patience ever since he'd gained control of this array. Thus, he was very certain that things would go his way.

"I'll give you one final chance. Give me the Formshift Pill now, and I might just let you go. Otherwise, you will die in the Dragonbound Array."

Although Leander had failed in his first attempt to ruin the array, he wasn't at all panicked. His aura only exuded utter calm and confidence as a blue glow enveloped him.

"You're a talker. Still, I'm breaking this array and taking your Dragon Core."

Then, he threw a punch at one of the statues.

The black dragon felt his patience snap. He gave in to his murderous intent, causing crimson to bloom in his eyes.

"Rise!" he growled.

Black light erupted throughout the valley in an instant. The 12 bronze statues moved, their eyes snapping open as they released thick waves of black. Soon, an ancient yet oppressive pressure fell upon them.

Leander's eyes sharpened dangerously. Each of the 12 statues contained immense power, and the black dragon's dark light was the key that activated them. So, it didn't take long for all 12 statues to fully awaken.

As the crushing weight continued to increase, he felt as if he wasn't just facing one Deepcoil Dragon and his bronze statues. No, now he was facing 12 Deepcoil Dragons.

He could feel all 12 auras lock onto him as he stood in the middle of the array, each one as powerful as a Son of Judgement.

He twisted midair and shot toward the closest statue, blue light gathering around his fist. He wanted to obliterate it with one strike.

"Trinity Strike Technique, Act One-Soulbreaker!"

Crash!

A massive fist tore through the black liquid and smashed straight into the bronze dragon's head.

That same punch had blown the Peterson family's patriarch's head clean off back when Leander was still a Martial Sovereign.

With his current cultivation, he could easily make a fist through the mountaintop with it. Yet, the statue didn't even budge when he hit it. It was utterly unharmed.

"Hm?"

A flash of shock appeared in his eyes. That was because he'd felt his power getting dispersed and transformed into 12 different forces.

Boom!

A deafening explosion echoed behind him as the mountainside beyond the statue shattered and collapsed. His raw strength had been redirected and changed into something else.

"This array can redirect the attacker's power? It took Jeff's strike and sent it to the mountain!"

Khaedor and Halia couldn't help but look at each other in fear.

After all, it meant that the statues would remain completely intact no matter how hard Leander went at it. Instead, his power could even be redirected their way!.

"How ingenious."

Gadreau let out a soft exhale. He wouldn't be able to do anything even if he didn't use his bloodline sorcery and went all out on one single statue. The array would tire him out until he died of exhaustion.

"Its gimmick is to redirect power, huh?"

Leander paused mid-movement, considering his options.

Suddenly, an ink-black blade shot toward him from the side, aiming for his left ribs.

He snorted and dodged it effortlessly. He might be trapped in the array, but his movements were far from restrained. The viscous black liquid couldn't even hope to do anything to him.

Still, he wasn't about to waste his stamina. So, all he did was tilt to the side, allowing the blade to skim past his chest.

At that moment, the statue he'd struck earlier suddenly moved. A dragon claw as strong as steel lashed out with incredible speed, aiming for his abdomen.

He swiftly twisted, blocking and countering the attacks. His arm had collided with that claw more than a dozen times in a split second.

Boom!

Countless blasts shot out from behind the statue, causing spiderweb-like cracks across the valley. Leander's power had all been displaced elsewhere while the statues remained utterly unharmed.

His eyes narrowed. Sure enough, the remaining statues began to move. Now, 12 statues were moving in unison as they released blades of black that could slice through space. itself. Even worse, they were all aimed at his vital spots.

Good riddance.

He scoffed as his body weathered the storm and weaved between the blades. He countered all their attacks with perfect precision, striking the dragon statues and causing each clash to send shockwaves everywhere.

Boom!

The ground, cliffs, and even the springs all exploded and churned violently. The entire valley was turning into a wasteland because of his power yet, the 12 dragon statues did not even have a single scratch on them as they targeted him relentlessly.

His power was absorbed and redirected elsewhere whenever he hit any of them. Whatever material that was holding the statues together seemed unbreakable while nature was weeping.

Leander's eyes turned dark with thought. The statues aren't really that strong. In terms of cultivation, they're only on par with a Son of Judgement. I can easily kill individuals of that caliber.

However, his problem now was that these statues were supported by some mysterious force. His main issue was how the 12 statues kept dispersing his strikes and converting them into fuel to keep them in perfect condition.

It was as if he were fighting a swarm or a horde of the undead. They were weak and useless, but their numbers were overwhelming. Coupled with their "immortality," he had a problem in his hands.

Those powerhouses that the black dragon kept deriding over and over again had likely died due to exhaustion.

Several International Combat Units' top listers appeared one after another while Leander was fighting inside the array. They gathered behind Halia and Khaedor.

Seth and the Baker brothers were caught off guard when they saw what was happening. However, the expressions on their faces changed very quickly when they saw who was fighting.

"Is that... Jeff?"

They were from the Shadow Division. So, they'd seen his picture in the Shadow Division's database. Therefore, they only needed one look to have him pegged.

"Didn't Jeff decline to help? Why is he here?"

The three exchanged glances, utterly dumbfounded.

Meanwhile, the other ranked fighters had already guessed Leander's identity. Their

lips pulled into smirks as they were eager to watch this rising star die because of the array he's stuck in.

The black dragon's fury rose. He had been monitoring the gathering crowd. Although his main target was Leander, he was prepared to wipe them all out once Leander was dead.

Honestly, Leander no longer mattered now. None who had gotten caught in the Dragonbound Array ever lived to tell the tale.

Just then, a ripple tore through the pitch-black space.

"The Dragonbound Array is indeed powerful. It can convert and redirect my power to nature. However,

theres one thing it

cant neutralize. No matter how strong an array is... can it withstand fire?" Leander asked, his voice calm and confident.

As his words fell, a giant hand made of fire seemingly tore apart the darkness.

I'm going to scorch this d*mn place to the ground with just one move!

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Chapter 448

A hand formed entirely of condensed flames tore through the heavens like a fire giant reaching to rip and burn the viscous black light into nothingness.

Then, the flames swept outward, following the trails of black mist and igniting the thick, tar-like liquid. Soon, the blaze roared into an unstoppable and ferocious force.

"What?"

The black dragon had been plotting to wipe out all the remaining human cultivators after finishing Leander off. Yet, Leander's fiery strike had jerked him out of his murderous fantasies.

"How is this possible?" he breathed, utterly shaken.

Anyone trapped within the Dragonbound Array had only one fate—death. It didn't discriminate on how powerful that person could be, as even the Transcendent Realm had died to it.

Sure, there were exceptions, but those were either individuals with rare bloodlines or certain species that specialized in quick getaways. Those with secret techniques or divine power were not part of that exception.

Yet, that giant hand of fire had simply torn the special space formed by the Dragonbound Array apart and incinerated it into nothing. Suffice it to say, he did not see this coming.

A deafening crash soon followed.

The sky became an inferno, a sea of flames layered upon itself as it churned like a tidal wave spreading through the air.

Many Transcendent Realm experts turned their heads sharply, their expressions shifting. All they could see was a brilliant and blazing red.

They could hear a dragon roaring in pain and fury within the sea of fire. It sounded as if several dragons were suffering grievous wounds.

"No... My ancestors!"

The black dragon's face twisted in panic. He stomped the ground with his claw and prepared to fly upward into the flames when a thunderous explosion shook the sky.

Boom!

The sea of fire erupted, scattering into countless blazing fragments. Then, they split into two rows, carving a passageway through the sky.

A figure stepped out from within with his black hair flowing against the sea of red. His calm eyes were unfazed by the chaos he had unleashed. It was none other than Leander.

His fingers curled slightly before tightening with finality.

The entire sea of fire vanished with a hiss, returning the sky to its usual blue shade. The 12 bronze statues were still suspended mid-air. However, the pitch-black gleam in their eyes had completely faded.

Crack.

Each statue split began to crack across their heads. The fissure continued down, down, and down until they finally fell apart into nothing. Rubble and debris rained down upon the shocked crowd.

"How... How is this possible?"

The black dragon was in a state of petrified disbelief.

Each of those 12 bronze statues had once been the strongest of his species in their time. Their cultivation and strength far surpassed his. Their bodies remained even as they passed to the afterlife.

They'd even volunteered to become these statues to form the Dragonbound Array. They had chosen to remain here in death to guard their ancestral land.

In theory, these statues should be invincible to even the elements of nature. Yet, Leander had given the black dragon a harsh wakeup call by showing him that it wasn't as impervious to everything as he thought.

"What terrifying flames."

Halia, the Flame Goddess, narrowed her eyes at Leander. She was a master when it came to fire. Her cultivation had everything to do with flames, so she could confidently say that none knew fire better than she did.

She had seen plenty of rare and odd fires in this world. Yet, none of them could prepare her for the flames Leander had just unleashed. This text is hosted at

Even she had to admit that she likely couldn't have broken out of the Dragonbound Array if she'd been caught by it. Her flames wouldn't have made a difference.

"What a terrifying man this Ashcroft fellow is!"

Khaedor's eyes glinted with excitement, his blood heating at the prospect of a good fight as he eyed Leander as though he'd discovered a better and sturdier sparring partner.

Halia shot him a look. She knew right then that her long-time rival was thirsting for battle now. Leander's powerful display had fully awakened his thirst for combat.

Aside from these two top-tier beings, the remaining International Combat Units experts exchanged heavy looks.

Leander was mainly famous in Astria, so these elites had only bothered paying attention to him after he'd made it to the list. Few had ever interacted with him personally.

After his display of strength, they had no choice but to acknowledge that he truly possessed the strength of one of the best fighters in the world.

Seth and the Baker brothers regarded Leander with awe and a tinge of relief. Based on what they'd seen it was possible that Shadow Division's chief and deputy might not hold a candle to him.

The thought put a grin on their faces. With Leander here, they now had a powerhouse to keep these Westerners in check.

"I've destroyed that array of yours. Now... It's your turn."

Leander's calm eyes fell upon the black dragon.

The black dragon felt his blood freeze despite being a magical beast of flame and fury. His scales stood on end as cold terror flooded him. He had the blood of the dragon so He had never been on the receiving end of such primal fear.

A sharp sound sliced through the air.

A streak of blue shot down from above at supersonic speed and pierced straight through his skull before he could even react.

His head, which had a skull harder than steel and was able to withstand even heavy fire, was instantly blown into chunks.

When the stunned observers came back to themselves, they saw Leander standing atop the dragon's corpse with a shimmering crystal in his hand.

An extraordinarily powerful yet strange energy pulsed within the crystal. Several of the elites wet their lips at the sight, their desire for power flaring to life.

Even Khaedor and Halia couldn't help but regard the crystal greedily. They knew what it was—the Dragon Core. The very same core that was the source of the Deepcoil Dragon's power.

Once they refined it, it would push their cultivation to an entirely new level. It was priceless.

Leander wasn't bothered by the tense atmosphere around him. He simply raised his hand toward the crowd.

"This is my trophy. If you want it... Well, feel free to try. Who wants to go first?"

The entire area fell deathly silent as soon as he said those words. The Transcendent Realm experts who had been eyeing the crystal hungrily immediately sobered.

No way were they going to try anything.

Not only were they ranked lower

than Leander on the list, but they had also just witnessed him use the Dragonfire to crush the

Dragonbound Array and kill Deepcoil dragon whose strength rivaled that of an Infernal Crown Transcendent Realm with a single supersonic strike.

Who would dare challenge him after that display?

Even Halia and Khaedor fell silent for a few seconds, tamping their desire for power down and away.

The Dragon Core was tempting, but not enough to make them fight someone as dangerous as Leander.

They had come for the unknown relic. The Dragon Core was nothing compared to that.

Halia gave him a seductive smile and waved lightly.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, you're such a joker. It's your trophy. We wouldn't dream of touching it."

Leander didn't even bother sparing her a glance. Instead, his lips curved into a cold, disdainful smirk.

"Wouldn't dream of it, you say? Or should I say, wouldn't dare?"

His mocking tone made both Khaedor and Halia stiffen with displeasure, their annoyance surging at this disrespect.

Still, they held their tempers for the sake of the relic. They weren't about to pick a

fight with Leander with something as important as the relic on the line.

Leander then kept the Dragon Core away and beckoned to Clara, ready to leave the valley.

Just then, a figure blocked his path. That person was none other than Seth.

Then, he bowed respectfully.

"I'm Seth from the Shadow Division. Greetings, Sovereign Ashcroft." Finally, he met Leander's eyes and said earnestly, "We are here under Director Gardner's orders to prevent the relic from falling into foreign hands."

"There are too many Western experts present. The three of us are not enough to achieve our objective. Since you're here, we want to ask for your help to eliminate these foreigners!"

As soon as his words fell, more than 20 Transcendent Realm experts turned pale.

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Chapter 449

The moment Seth finished speaking, the expressions of the experts shifted. All eyes turned to Leander. Even Halia and Khaedor exchanged cautious looks.

Until now, none of them had taken Seth and the Baker brothers seriously. With their strength, they barely qualified for the International Combat Units list, and only at the lower-middle tiers.

Even if the three joined forces, their strength was nothing in a situation filled with so many powerful figures.

However, that would change if Leander sided with them.

Everyone had witnessed Leander's display earlier. He'd turned the sky into a sea of flames, breaking the Dragonbound Array, and killing the black dragon with a single strike.

If Leander stood with Seth's group, he would become a massive threat to everyone here.

Aside from Khaedor and Halia, who had aces up their sleeves, none of the Transcendent Realm powerhouses could confidently claim they could defeat Leander.

Leander paused and tilted his head slightly at Seth.

Since he was from Astria, everyone assumed he would agree. To their surprise, Leander shook his head.

"I won't help you."

His tone was calm. "Relics belong to those capable and powerful enough to keep them. It doesn't matter what country or land they appear in; only the strong have the right to claim them."

"If the Shadow Division truly wanted to secure this relic, you shouldn't have sent three mediocre high-grade Transcendents. You should've sent real powerhouses." "The situation you're in is strictly a Shadow Division problem. I'm not a member of the Shadow Division, and I'm not interested in this relic. Whoever gets their hands on it has nothing to do with me."

After he said his piece, he walked past the three without sparing them a backward glance.

Seth and the Baker brothers were stunned as they never expected Leander to give them such a response. Meanwhile, the other experts all let out quiet sighs of relief.

As Leander walked away with Clara, Keith suddenly yelled at him angrily, "Jeff, you're an Astrian! What about your country? Don't you care about defending your country?"

Leander didn't stop.

"Defending my country? Of course, I will. I would fight to the death if my country's at stake. But what does seizing a relic have to do with defending Astria?"

"Also, patriotism isn't something you shout about. It's something you prove with action."

Keith's words instantly died in his throat.

"Hmph." Khaedor's tone was mocking as he sneered. "Seth, someone at Jeff's level has no reason to listen to shrimps like you."

"It's funny how you think he'd fight on for the Shadow Division of yours. Your naivety is truly embarrassing to witness."

Seth and the Baker brothers turned pale, their hearts sinking.

The relic was about to appear soon. Yet, they were still at a disadvantage. It didn't help that there wouldn't be any reinforcements coming. When the fighting began, they would be crushed without mercy.

After Leander and Clara left, silence fell over the valley. The Transcendent Realm experts stood motionless, waiting for the relic to appear.

The stillness felt eerie after the charged conversation earlier.

Still, Seth and the Baker brothers exchanged glances, quietly gathering their innate vitality to its limit. They were prepared to fight for the relic the moment it surfaced—even if it cost their lives.

This was their duty as one of Astria's Shadow Division.

Clara followed Leander as they left Aorinth Peaks, not daring to make a peep. Although Leander wasn't even in his 20s, he carried himself as if he were far older than that.

His thoughts seemed unfathomable even to her, and she had been alive for nearly a century. Yet, she still couldn't get a good read on him, or any read on him, really.

As they continued their journey, she finally mustered her courage and spoke up. "Sovereign Ashcroft, there's something I believe would interest you."

Leander continued strolling leisurely as he shot her a look.

Clara hesitated before continuing, "You took the Dragon Core... if I'm not mistaken, you want it for your cultivation, don't you?"

Leander didn't answer; he simply nodded. Get full chapters from

"In that case, I think you shouldn't overlook one more thing hidden in that valley."

"Oh?" Leander stopped walking, interest flickering in his eyes.

Clara recalled the scene from her last visit to the Aorinth Peaks. "When I came here years ago, I encountered the black dragon as well.

"Back then, the springs were crystal clear, and I could see the black dragon resting at the bottom... as if guarding something."

"I couldn't really tell what it was, but it seemed to be a herb shaped like a dragon— or perhaps a serpent."

"The black dragon who helped me that year seemed extremely protective of that herb. I still don't know what it is, but I thought the information might be useful to

you."

She said it out of gratitude-Leander had saved the Dual Meridian Sect and wiped out the Shadowrealm Sect that had been plaguing them.

"A herb that grows underwater... with the outline of a dragon?"

Leander repeated slowly as his tone became one of excitement toward the end.

"Why didn't you tell me this earlier?"

Clara looked apologetic as she answered, "I only just remembered."

She hadn't even finished speaking before a blast of wind shot past her. A streak of blue light surged back to Aorinth Peaks.

She was still blinking dumbly at the empty air when she heard Leander's voice echo from afar, saying, "You've led me to the Dragon Gate. The deal between me and the Dual Meridian Sect ends here."

"Leave Aorinth Peaks immediately. Do not linger."

The blue light flashed once as it vanished deep into the hills before she could even understand what was going on.

Inside the valley, a sudden rumble erupted from the spring after 10 minutes of dead silence.

The once-calm surface started bubbling furiously as though someone had decided to toss in a strip of magnesium in it.

Steam began to fill the valley, hot air billowing against everyone's faces. Yet, none of the Transcendent Realm experts moved a muscle as they continued staring at the spring hungrily.

They could feel the relic before it appeared. It possessed an indescribably powerful spiritual energy that seemed seconds away from bursting through the surface.

Sure enough, a massive column of water dozens of meters tall shot into the sky with a thunderous roar.

Then, that was when they saw it-a dazzling golden light piercing through the mist as it nestled within the water pillar. They could see the

Xague outline of a dragon ora serpent through the liquid

The International Combat Units rankers immediately sprang into action.

"The relic has appeared! Move!"

These usually elusive powerhouses surged forward like a tidal wave, racing to seize the prize.

Seth and the Baker brothers stomped the ground and launched themselves forward as well.

Only Halia and Khaedor remained calm. With their power, they were absolutely confident they could kill whoever seized the treasure and take it for themselves.

The robbing and the deaths were just another day for them. It didn't matter how the others struggled because in the end, they were all prey.

A streak of blue pierced through the air just as the Transcendent Realm experts neared the water column and were about to dive in.

A massive azure hand descended from the sky, smashing the towering water column back into the spring.

Gasps of astonishment and frustration exploded across the valley.

Just then, a cold, emotionless voice sounded behind them, saying, "I'm not singling anyone out. So, listen carefully The relic in that spring belongs to me. If anyone steps even one foot closer... You die."

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Chapter 450

A massive palm descended from the sky, forcing the water column and the relic in it back down into the spring. Everyone's faces drained of color as their expressions twisted in shock.

They swiftly turned around to search for the culprit, and there stood the white-clad Leander, hovering mid-air as he looked down on them with cold, indifferent eyes.

"Jeff? Why has he returned? Didn't he refuse to help us?"

Kenneth stared at Leander in disbelief. Leander had bluntly refused to take action earlier. Yet, here he was now. None of them could understand why this was happening or what was going on in Leander's brain.

The others wore complicated expressions as they exchanged looks. Yet, his threat rang loud and clear as none dared take another step forward.

Halia and Khaedor, who had been dominating the scene with an overwhelming aura, finally shifted their attention to Leander.

The usually silent Khaedor lifted his gaze slightly and said coldly, "Jeff, you're a top-tier powerhouse on the International Combat Units.

However, you've already made it clear that you wouldn't interfere. So, why are you here now? Are you breaking your own word?"

Leander didn't even flinch at the accusation, his face cold.

"I did say I wouldn't help the Shadow Division. That part hasn't changed, but I didn't return to help them-I'm here for myself. Everything here belongs to me. Anyone who dares to take what's mine... Dies."

His voice was sharp and absolute. Everyone could clearly sense the pure, icy killing intent in his words. Their expressions shifted dramatically.

The reason Leander had returned was entirely because of what Clara had revealed earlier.

She had described an underwater herb that was shaped like a dragon-serpent. He'd also noticed the golden gleam earlier. All of this matched the description of the legendary and nearly extinct Bloodjadea!

This herb was a once-in-a-century elixir. Anyone who obtained it could skyrocket in strength. Its spiritual energy was so immense that it could instantly elevate an ordinary person to a Transcendent Realm cultivator.

If handled properly, its energy was powerful enough to create an entire army of Transcendent-Level cultivators.

Meanwhile, if an Infernal Crown Transcendent got their hands on it, their cultivation would soar in leaps and bounds. They'd ascend to a level that existed only in myths.

Nevertheless, the Bloodjadea had an even greater significance to Leander. It was one only he knew, which was the forging and tempering of the soul.

He'd be able to obtain spiritual strength on par with that of a Spirit Convergence after refining the Dragon Core. Once he stepped into that realm, his spirit would grow several times stronger, allowing him to break past his limits.

However, that wasn't enough. With a spiritual strength like that, he needed something to temper it. He didn't just want power for the sake of power. All of that fluff and nonsense wasn't what he wanted.

No, he wanted quality. He wanted a spiritual strength that came with the ability to wield it like a weapon.

If he didn't have that, his spiritual power was essentially useless regardless of how much he had. Instead, it would become a weakness enemies could exploit.

That was why he had to obtain the Bloodjadea.

Due to its unique environment and conditions for growth, the herb had appeared only a handful of times in recorded history. Heck, only once or twice in ancient Astrian myths, and a few times in Western divine legends.

Leander had searched high and low for it. Alas, he'd never seen even a blade of leaf or a broken root of it.

He never expected it to appear here, in the ancestral ground of the Deepcoil Dragons, right in the heart of the Aorinth Peaks. Updates are released by find-novel-net

Judging by the blinding phenomenon earlier with its bursting to the brim spiritual energy, he was confident that the relic that everyone had been eyeing was none other than the Bloodjadea.

Only such a treasure could trigger such a massive celestial anomaly and draw so many experts here.

Halia and Khaedor's expressions darkened.

They hadn't provoked Leander earlier because they didn't want any unnecessary conflict. However, Leander's declaration that everything in this valley belonged to him changed things.

He had just ripped their chances of getting the relic right before their eyes.

Thus, Leander was now their mortal enemy.

"Jeff, who do you think you are?"

The other experts on the International Combat Units list finally exploded.

"Do you think a lone man like yourself is enough to stop all of us from making a grab for that relic? Do you really expect us to step aside just because you said so, and let you walk off with everything?"

The person who'd broken the tense silence was over two meters tall. He essentially looked like a towering mass of pure muscle.

He even had the voice to match his size as the ground shook slightly as he bellowed.

"I'm Torrez the Raging Bull, ranked 11 on the list!"

Seth's jaw tightened when that name dropped.

Although Torrez wasn't in the top 10, he had trained his body since childhood. His physical strength was so terrifying that he could withstand a tank without taking any damage.

Years ago he had wreaked havoc in

a small Western nation, destroying over a dozen tanks with his bare hands. He was infamously known as the Immortal Berserker after that incident.

He was ranked 11th only because he had been on international wanted lists for years and had to keep a low profile. Otherwise, he could've easily entered the top 10-perhaps even the top five.

"You have a problem with me?" Leander glanced at him calmly.

"Of course, I do!" Torrez roared, causing his clothes to burst into shreds.

His body swelled rapidly, transforming into a giant over four meters tall with bones and muscles like steel. Soon, inky armor grew around him.

"If you insist on barring my way to claiming that relic, I'll show you the true power of a world-class fighter!"

His aura surged into unimaginable heights. Yes, Leander had surprised him earlier by breaking the array.

However, Torrez was confident with his chances. That was because he figured he would have been able to brute force his way out of that weird array if he'd fallen victim to it.

Torrez shot forward like a launched missile with a stomp of his foot, moving at nearly sonic speed.

Everyone else could only watch as a mountain of a man hurled himself right at Leander.

"What terrifying physical strength!"

Seth's heart clenched at the sight. He now understood how Torrez was capable of destroying tanks barehanded.

With a body like that, he'd probably even walk off a collision with a train. Meanwhile, the train would never see the light of day again.

Wind howled as Torrez lunged for him. Oddly enough, Leander didn't move a single step. Instead, he simply lifted his hand and lightly pressed his palm forward.

Clang!

They heard a metallic crash instead of the sound of flesh hitting flesh.

Then, they watched as Torrez was forced to a stop and how a delicate-looking hand lightly tapped against his chest.

"Ah!" Torrez, who was ranked 11 on the list, spat out a mouthful of blood as his eyes turned dull.

His giant form shrank back to his human form as he fell from the sky. He was already dead before he hit the ground.

A renowned powerhouse of the International Combat Units had been killed just like that.

Everyone stared, wholly dumbstruck. Even Khaedor and Halia, the strongest ones among them, narrowed their eyes at the sight.

Leander retracted his hand calmly.

"Those with any objections may step forward."

Silence fell over the valley.

Torrez, with all his monstrous might, had died from just a single palm strike. Who would dare challenge Leander now?

Those famous experts froze where they stood. All seemed lost when they simultaneously turned their eyes toward Halia and Khaedor.

Winds howled around the two as their auras surged, distorting the space around them.

The top two on the International Combat Units list... were finally about to make their move.

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