

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft)

Chapter 481

"Mr. Dunphy, don't you think you're out of line?" Liam's hands curled tight at his sides, and his fingers twitched with barely restrained anger.

Fire roared under his ribs, although he forced himself to stay composed. He couldn't afford to provoke the man confronting him.

Shirley watched with stiff shoulders and tense eyes. Disgust flashed across her face, although fear kept her quiet.

The Stanton Academy students clustered behind Linton and strutted around like they owned the place. Their looks toward Liam dripped with mockery. In their eyes, Liam wasn't a rival—he was background noise trying to stand center stage.

"You think I'm crossing a line?" Linton lifted a brow and released a low, dismissive laugh. His chin tilted up as if Liam wasn't worth a full glance.

Liam's voice caught in his throat, leaving him frozen.

Leander leaned back comfortably, one arm stretched over the couch. He looked ready to speak until something outside the window caught his attention.

"Huh?" His gaze sharpened on a narrow alley far down the street. A small grin tugged at his mouth.

Linton kept pressing his advantage. "Liam, I brought you into the Highcliffe scene because you were new and respectful. You spend a few months here and suddenly think you're somebody? Don't tell me you forgot how you begged to follow me around just to get your foot in the door."

A sting shot across Liam's face. Every word was a reminder of how powerless he felt. He couldn't even sit and share drinks with Leander without someone stepping on him.

He glanced toward Leander and noticed him still staring out the balcony window, completely unfazed. That silence hit harder than Linton's insults.

He thought back on everything since they reunited. Whenever chaos erupted, Leander handled it. Whenever Leander stayed seated, Liam discovered he was powerless.

More footsteps echoed from the stairs. A woman in a long velvet dress walked toward them, hips swaying in a practiced rhythm.

"Mr. Dunphy, everyone's on their feet. Doesn't that kill the party?"

Her voice melted into the room like warm caramel. Half the men within earshot leaned forward. Her smile alone felt dangerous.

She was the kind of beauty that derailed common sense.

"Rubyanne!" Linton's eyes lit with hunger before he forced the reaction down and flashed an easy grin.

Rubyanne approached with steps that looked choreographed. One look at the tension in the room told her everything she needed to know.

She smiled at Linton, warm enough to soften steel. "Mr. Dunphy, every guest here is welcome. This table belongs to Mr. Preston and his friends. Please take the second-floor lounge for me, alright? All drinks for your group are on the house tonight."

Her voice, posture, and curves worked together like a trained weapon. Several guys around the floor stared openly. Even Liam sneaked a quick look.

Linton's expression shifted.

"Since Rubyanne asked, fine. I'll give her that respect."

He shot Liam a cold glance.

"You got lucky. Don't forget who stands above you."

Then he wrapped an arm around Rubyanne's waist.

"Let's go, Rubyanne. You owe me a few rounds."

Rubyanne returned a polished smile, keeping her body just far enough from his to stay in control. As she moved toward the stairs with the group she glanced over her

shoulder. Her gaze ingere

Leander, who still hadn't shown a hint of interest.

Her beauty was lethal. She owned a stake in the bar and stood as its crown jewel. She turned her

appearance into a weapon,

effortlessly building connections and resources Even someone like

Linton, backed by real power, ended up wrapped around her finger.

Most men present were captivated by her. Nearly every gaze tracked her silhouette. Leander remained unaffected by her allure, the only man in the entire venue who did not react.

"Looks like he's the one worth catching tonight."

A spark lit up in her eyes as she ran her tongue over her lips before she drifted toward the stairs with Linton's group.

"Hoof!" Liam collapsed onto the couch the moment they disappeared.

Leander turned from the window and lifted his drink. "You're scared stiff of that guy, huh?"

Liam didn't deny it. "Leander, you run Jeff Enterprises. I'm nowhere near that. Highcliffe has its own rules, and I have to survive here."

He went on, "That guy's name is Linton Dunphy. His dad's loaded in Seagate and stays connected with the Morgan-Royce family. The Morgan-Royces operate alongside the Wave family in this city. Linton's tight with Rodrick Wave, the man in charge of the Wave Alliance."

"When I first came here, I wanted to connect with people so life wouldn't crush me and Shirley. Linton's the one who opened the door."

His voice cracked with exhaustion.

He knew exactly who Leander was and what he ran at Jeff Enterprises, although he couldn't go around flaunting that connection. Even if he held it up like a golden badge and told everyone, nobody would buy the story.

It felt like a freshman bragging about playing poker with billionaires. People would laugh in his face. So he built his own path, hoping it would make things easier for him in Highcliffe.

However, he never expected that once he stepped into that world, nearly everyone would see him as a joke. He lacked status, presence, and anything that would make others take him seriously.

"Got it." Leander drank without emotion.

To him, Liam was family. Clearing problems for him took no effort, though growth came only from stumbling through the fire. Leander wouldn't take that from him.

"Linton Dunphy, huh?"

Leander never stepped in for small annoyances. That didn't mean he dismissed the name. Something far more dangerous waited tonight. The source of this content is

A thousand yards out, a man cloaked in black took position on a pavilion roof that overlooked the bar street. A Barrett rifle rested on a tripod in front of him.

He stretched his arms as if warming up. Murder gleamed in his eyes.

He lifted a custom-made round. The bullet was thicker than standard, coated with a faint green shimmer-poison.

"Jeff, you're the strongest Martial Practitioner walking this era. Tell me something. What do you know about killers?"

"This bullet was crafted for your chest. This rifle exists for this moment alone. Plus,

I'm 'Deadshot.' Missing isn't in my blood. One shot cuts through armor.

"Your martial barrier won't save you. This two billion is mine."

He locked the round into place. Through the scope, the crosshairs centered on Leander's chest.

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Chapter 482

On the second floor of the bar, Linton was surrounded by a cluster of people, boasting loudly about the future plans and operations of Stanton Academy's student council.

The others weren't buying it, but they all put on serious listening faces. Rubyanne sat beside him, tossing occasional compliments his way, making him feel even more inflated, almost drinking his glass dry in the process.

"Linton!" The aloof girl beside him suddenly spoke.

"Didn't you say Mr. Morgan-Royce would come tonight? It's past nine. Where is he?"

Hearing the name "Mr. Morgan-Royce", Linton immediately sobered up, straightening his posture. "Celia, don't worry. He just messaged me. He's on the way."

He said this while subtly admiring her graceful curves, inwardly sighing at his missed chance.

Her name was Celia Rhodes, the campus belle of Stanton Academy. To someone like Linton, who worshiped beauty, she had been a long-coveted prize, but he dared not make a move, because she was the woman Dylan Morgan-Royce cared about.

"Is that so?"

Celia crossed her arms, looking down on everyone.

Even Linton, who dominated the room, could not make her glance up.

At that moment, footsteps came up the second floor. Everyone turned to see a young man in a luxurious outfit standing at the stairhead.

With his handsome face and expensive attire, an overwhelming aura enveloped the room the moment he stood there, even overshadowing Linton.

Seeing him, Linton leapt to his feet. "Mr. Morgan-Royce! Finally! Please, please!" He gave up the main seat and gestured with exaggerated hospitality.

The young man's expression was cold. He waved his hand and sat directly beside Celia, pulling her into his arms.

Celia, known to be the cold and distant goddess of Stanton, did not resist. She leaned into him, soft and delicate like a small bird in his embrace.

"Everyone, let me introduce you." Linton gestured toward him respectfully. "This is the Mr. Morgan-Royce I mentioned-Dylan Morgan-Royce of the Morgan-Royce family from Seagate."

It is Dylan Morgan-Royce!

The crowd froze, then all rose to raise their glasses, calling out, "Mr. Morgan-Royce!" in unison.

Dylan remained seated, calm and unbothered, barely sipping the toasts offered. He clearly considered himself above them all.

Though his attitude was arrogant, no one dared to show defiance.

Everyone forced smiles.

The Morgan-Royce family of Seagate was akin to a boulder weighing on them. Facing Dylan was akin to standing before third-generation elites like Daphne Florian or Ethan Ashcroft. No one dared show disrespect.

"A Morgan-Royce!" Even Rubyanne, seasoned in high society, felt a jolt. Though she lived in Highcliffe, she'd heard the family name thunder across elite circles.

She stood and bowed slightly. "Hello, Mr. Morgan-Royce. I'm Rubyanne Monroe, one of the bar's shareholders. It's an honor to have you here. I'll drink first to show my respect."

Dylan's eyes flickered with amusement and desire at the sultry beauty. This time, he drained his glass with real intent.

Linton, having completed introductions, gave a flattering smile and asked cautiously, "Mr. Morgan-Royce, about Mr. Wave, I'm not sure if you..."

Dylan, still enjoying the warmth of Celia in his arms, interrupted coldly, "If I promise something, I never break it.

"I've already notified Rodrick. For the Stanton student council's event, the Wave Alliance will fully sponsor it, covering all expenses."

The crowd brightened immediately. The council's pitch competition required sponsors, and in Highcliffe, the Wave Alliance was unmatched. With their backing, the event's success and Linton's reputation would soar. Even the school administration would have to take notice.

"Thank you, Mr. Morgan-Royce! Bottoms up!" Linton drained his glass. Dylan only nodded casually.

The group resumed chatting until someone asked, "Mr. Dunphy, you once mentioned seeing immortals fighting at Celestial Pavilion. What happened?"

"After that, you never brought it up again. Now that we've finally got everyone together, why don't you tell us the whole story? Follow current novels on

Linton's expression grew serious.

"I'm not joking. I had some drinks and passed the Celestial Pavilion that night. I swear I saw two figures fighting in the sky.

"The scene was wilder than any martial arts drama. The pavilion shook. Their bulletproof glass shattered everywhere.

"I couldn't see their faces—only two streaks, one green, one white, darting across the sky..."

A little drunk, Linton told the story with exaggerated excitement. What he described was the battle a month ago between Leander Ashcroft and Galen Pierce.

The crowd listened, entertained.

Rubyanne and Celia kept straight faces, silently sneering.

In the modern world, superheroes did not exist.

Only Dylan sipped hard, his eyes darkening.

Rubyanne stayed for ten more minutes, then excused herself. She mixed a special cocktail at the bar and went upstairs.

"Mr. Preston, my apologies." She

smiled sweetly and bowed slightly to

Leander and his friends. "You had some friction with Mr. Dunphy, earlier but bats are for relaxation. hope you won't take it to heart. This is my special Herbal Romance, it's on the house. Enjoy your night."

She placed the drink on the table with a graceful smile. Liam was flattered beyond words.

"Rubyanne, you're too kind."

Her long hair fell over her shoulders as she offered a shy, gentle smile. Her gaze flicked to Leander, who remained unmoved like a stone statue.

A sly glint appeared in her eyes. She feigned a stumble, falling toward him.

Leander raised his hand and caught her at the waist. Her eyes shimmered helplessly, looping her arms around his neck.

The intimate pose was observed by a Stanton student heading to the restroom. He hurried downstairs to whisper to Linton, whose temper flared. He shot up. "You're saying Liam's friend is holding Rubyanne?"

His voice dropped low, fury barely restrained, drawing attention to him. The crowd smelled drama.

They often hung out with Linton and knew he had feelings for Rubyanne, but he'd never been able to make a move. And now, some outsider's friend had beaten him

to it.

How can Linton possibly stomach that?

"Mr. Morgan-Royce, please stay seated. I have to handle something upstairs quickly. I'll be back soon!"

He apologized to Dylan and stepped away.

Dylan, already a bit buzzed, wanted to show off in front of Celia. He stood as well. "If something's going on, let's go see."

Linton beamed. The others followed, eager for a spectacle.

Upstairs, Linton saw Rubyanne rise from Leander's arms and sit close to him like she was his girlfriend.

Rage surged within him. Even he'd never received such treatment from her. He stepped forward, but a hand shot out, gripping him tight.

"Mr. Morgan-Royce?" Confused, he looked at Dylan, wondering why he was stopped.

"If you don't want to die, don't go there."

Dylan's face was grim, teeth clenched as he hissed the warning.

Linton was baffled, having no idea what Dylan was really aiming at.

He was about to press for an answer when Rubyanne leaned in to whisper to Leander, but he pushed her away.

She suddenly leaned in, her lips drawing close to his ear-only for him to push her away in one swift motion.

"I'm not interested. Don't waste my time."

Before her last word landed, a sharp whistle cut through the air, followed by the sound of glass shattering.

Clang!

A shockwave burst through the window.

Of everyone present, only Leander saw it clearly. A sniper round wrapped in a fierce spiraling gale was riding a roaring vertex of wing blasting straight for his left eye as if slicing through paper.

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Chapter 483

A kilometer away, atop a towering skyscraper, a man in a trench coat stood, his eyes shadowed and sharp, a cold, cruel smile flickering across his lips.

His name was Barrett, just like the heavily modified sniper rifle cradled in his hands. Within the infamous network known as Netherweb, he also carried a name that struck fear into all who heard it. He was known as Deadshot.

He was born to kill. Over the past twenty years, he had clawed his way from a nobody to dominate the international assassin rankings, soaring ever higher with unstoppable momentum.

His targets were always of utmost importance. They were either top officials of great powers, mercenary commanders, or heads of terrorist factions.

Among the bounties he accepted, there was never a mere nobody. Twenty years ago, his heavy sniper rifle fired its final shot, his signature toxin-laced armor-piercing round obliterating the head of a Infernal Crown Transcendent with a single strike.

From that moment, his reputation in the assassin world was sealed. He ranked fourth on the killer list, earned the title "Deadshot", and was recruited by the Netherweb. The mere mention of his name sent chills through the world.

That very morning, he had just received a bounty order from the Netherweb. He immediately rushed to the capital, all for one purpose, which is to assassinate Leander.

For him, the more dangerous and challenging the target, the more it stoked the violent ferocity within him.

He gripped his sniper rifle, and in the scope, Leander's head filled the crosshairs.

"Jeff Ashcroft...number one in the International Combat Units, greatest of all time. Today, your legend ends.

"If I take you down, I can surpass the Ripper in third place, the Blood Fiend in second, and even challenge the Hermit at the top!"

The thought of claiming the top spot after killing him made his blood boil. His eyes gleamed with fevered ambition.

"Goodbye, Jeff. Your legend ends here," he whispered. In his scope, he saw a stunning woman collapse into Leander's arms-but he shoved her aside.

Seizing the instant, Barrett squeezed the trigger.

Tzing!

The green-glowing armor-piercing round tore from the barrel like a furious dragon. Beyond the rifle's built-in power, Barrett had infused it with his own innate vitality, sending the projectile screaming.

A single sniper round tore through the night like a tornado, slicing past power lines and cables, and pierced the bulletproof glass beside Leander.

The bulletproof glass, meant to stop rounds, crumbled like paper.

In Leander's sight, a green-glowing sniper round hurtled toward his left eye.

Barrett's face brimmed with confidence. He could already envision Leander's skull exploding into fragments. But the next moment, his expression froze, a scene etched forever in his memory.

Inside the bar, the sudden explosion startled everyone. Linton and the others, who were ready to confront Leander, froze in place.

At the moment the bullet was about to hit Leander's eye, his hand lifted. It seemed slow, almost lazy, but before a bullet traveling over a thousand kilometers per second could strike, his two fingers pinched it.

"What?" Through the scope, Barrett's face drained of color.

His sniper rifle, custom-modified, could outshoot the Agylae's most powerful sniper rifles and propel bullets faster than normal. Even an Infernal Crown Transcendent's body could be pierced with ease.

He had tested it before. One shot, combined with his innate vitality, could pierce three armored vehicles in a line. Its destructive power was unmatched.

Since rising in the assassin rankings, he had never failed. Every target fell to a single shot.

Yet Jeff had caught my hidden kill shot?

It was a fact that Leander was supreme. He was number one on the International Combat Units after all, evading a shot was believable. But catching a bullet moving

ove

thousands of kilometers per second with just two fingers, that was

impossible to fathom.

In his mind, even the once-dominant King Phase who ruled the world might not

possess such terrifying skill.

"D*mn. Is he even human?"

The moment Leander caught the bullet, Barrett's heart plummeted. He yanked back his rifle and prepared to retreat. A true assassin always learns to escape before killing. Only those who survive after the kill are genuine professionals.

And Barrett was the best of the best. If one strike failed, he would never linger.

"Hmph." Within Barrett's field of view, Leander's lips curved into a mocking smile.

A heartbeat later, Leander flicked his fingers. The toxin-laced round reversed course, tracing the same trajectory at twice its prior speed.

Less than a breath later, green light blazed across the night. Barrett barely twisted his shoulder in time.

Bang!

The armor-piercing round slammed into Barrett's shoulder, shattering one arm. Pain ripped through him, but he had no time to dwell. Stomping hard, he vaulted upward, smashing the rooftop beneath him.

All he wanted was distance, anywhere far and fast. Finally, he understood that he wasn't facing a man. He was facing a demon.

"Running?"

Leander remained seated. Around him, Liam and the others gawked, but he ignored them. He crushed a beer bottle in one hand, the golden liquid swirling into the shape of a dragon before shooting into the distance.

It's a soulchaser! Follow current novels on

It was not a Dragonfire-forged arrow, hence, its power is reduced. But Leander's cultivation and spiritual strength made escape impossible, even an Infernal Crown Transcendent has no chance of escaping.

Once the arrow flew, Leander didn't even glance back. Barrett's fate was sealed.

Silence enveloped the bar. No one had an idea what had just happened,

but seeing Leander manipulate water into a dragon stunned them into disbelief. Even Liam, who was familiar with Leander, stared as if meeting him for the first time.

"Liam, that's enough for tonight. Take a seat. I have matters to attend to." Leander smiled gently.

Confused, Liam guided Shirley to a booth, staring blankly at Leander.

Linton and the others froze. Leander had become the epicenter of attention.

With a subtle gesture, a bottle of Louis XIII floated across ten meters, landing at Leander's table. No hands were required, the liquor poured itself into the glass. The scene left everyone awestruck, as if they were witnessing a deity.

Linton trembled, abandoning any thought of confrontation. Leander finally turned his gaze.

Dylan and Linton both stiffened, hearts dropping into icy dread. But Leander's eyes bypassed them, landing on the woman in Dylan's arms, Celia.

"Miss, allow me to buy you a drink.

"Or... should I call you the Ripper?"

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Chapter 484

Leander's voice was gentle, almost amused, as if he were speaking to an old friend he hadn't met in years.

The moment his words landed, everyone who knew Celia Rhodes turned their heads in shock, completely unable to understand.

Celia was the campus belle of Stanton Academy, she was famous throughout Highcliffe's university circles. Plenty of people knew her, but no one had ever heard she had another identity, The Ripper.

Dylan stared at her with deep confusion, instinctively releasing his hold and stepping slightly away.

As a descendant of the Morgan-Royce family in Seagate, even without martial talent, he still understood the assassin world thanks to Maximilian Morgan-Royce.

And he knew very clearly that The Ripper was one of the golden aces among the top-ranked killers in the world.

For Leander to call Celia "The Ripper" rattled him to the core.

Celia's expression was soft as autumn water, her beauty fragile and helpless on the surface, a little lost, yet Leander's gaze never shifted. Under that unwavering stare, she finally smiled. And the smile was as breathtaking as a blooming flower.

"The undefeated Iron Sovereign truly lives up to his name. Even though I hid so deeply, I still couldn't fool you."

She no longer concealed herself. Her brows softened into a bright smile as she gracefully walked to Leander's side and sat down, downing her drink in a single breath.

Leander raised his cup and drank with her. She set her glass down, her eyes lingering on his peerlessly handsome face.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, since childhood I trained under the previous King of Assassins, Jason Delon. I learned every killing technique he knew, and mastered the art of concealing my presence. I always believed no one could ever see through my true identity.

"I truly want to know-how did you recognize me?"

She tilted her face into her palm, like a curious young girl. No matter how experienced or senior someone was, they would find it impossible to connect the woman before them with the notorious Ripper who terrorized the assassin world.

Leander smiled lightly. "A person's core energy is always unique. Every individual's core energy differs from everyone else's. All the more so for a Martial Practitioner who has reached the level of an Infernal Crown Transcendent.

"You may have perfected the art of concealment to nearly flawless levels. Even a King Phase master might fail to sense you. But unfortunately for you, your opponent is me.

"Under my divine sense, no matter what demon or monster you may be, you cannot hide."

"Divine sense?" Celia's face changed. "You're actually a spiritual grandmaster?"

In the West, a spiritual grandmaster was the universal title for someone whose spiritual strength had reached the Origin Realm.

She had never expected that besides being a peerless Martial Practitioner, Leander was also a spiritual grandmaster.

In the martial world, cultivation began easy and became more difficult. But cultivating spiritual strength was the opposite, extremely hard at the start, and only easier much later.

To elevate both paths simultaneously required unparalleled will and a talent unseen throughout history.

Leander stood at a height she could not even touch.

This thought brought a bitter smile to her lips.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, I originally came tonight to assassinate you. But after watching you casually neutralize Barrett's killing strike, I already knew there was no possibility of killing you.

"This may sound shameless, but I still wish to say it. I no longer wish to be your enemy. I only hope you can let me live."

She had clearly seen Leander catch Barrett's bullet with two fingers, and rebound it along the exact same trajectory. From that moment, she knew that she could never harm him, let alone kill him.

And when Leander called out her identity by name, her last trace of intention vanished.

Now she only wished to survive.

Assassins were not suicide soldiers. Even a top-ranked killer, when faced with certain death, simply wanted to live.

"Let you leave? Do you think that's possible?" Leander poured himself another glass, smiling calmly.

"The Arbitration Office issued a bounty. The one who chose to come after my life was you. I didn't force you.

"And now that you know you cannot win, you ask me to spare your life? Doesn't that sound laughable?" He drained the cup. His eyes turned cold.

"Since you came tonight, you must be prepared to pay the price. Being an assassin comes with risk.

"I, Jeff Ashcroft, have walked the world unchallenged. To anyone who tries to kill me I have never shown mercy. If you want to live, you'll have to rely on yourself."

A bitter smile twisted Celia's lips. For a moment, she didn't know how to respond.

Facing Leander was like a lone leaf-boat facing a raging ocean. She didn't even possess the courage to raise her hand.

Off to the side, Linton and the others trembled violently. "Jeff Ashcroft?"

Linton was especially taken aback. He knew the capital's elite circles better than the others. And in the past month, the name spreading most wildly across those circles was none other than Jeff Ashcroft.

A student with some family background beside him gasped. "Jeff Ashcroft? He's the one who crushed the entire Riverstone Family of the western region? The one who made seven generals bow their heads? The one who got three provincial governors dismissed and investigated?"

Word of the incident at Celestial Pavilion had been suppressed, but rumors always leak.

And despite differing versions, one point remained constant. For the sake of dealing with one young man, the Riverstone family mobilized seven generals and three provincial governors.

Yet in the end, that lone young man crushed the Riverstone family and exiled them to Highcliffe for ten years. This young man was none other than Jeff Ashcroft.

Remembering Leander's

overwhelming presence tonight,
summoning a dragon, drawing beer
through the air, none of them
doubted anymore.

The unassuming
young man on the balcony couch
was the legendary figure who shook
Highcliffe.

Linton's legs gave out and he collapsed to the floor, sweat pouring like rain.

He had actually tried to provoke such a titan. He had even thought of demanding him to switch seats with Liam.

If Leander had taken offense, a single sentence from him would have left Linton with no grave to bury.

Dylan's eyes were full of jealousy and fear, shrinking into a corner, silent. Everything he prided himself on—his family name, his status—looked like paper in front of Leander.

Celia heard the killing intent hidden in Leander's tone. She let out a sorrowful laugh and opened her arms.

"I've already made my stance clear. I don't wish to fight you, Sovereign Ashcroft.
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no match for you.

"I have no intention of resisting. If you wish to kill someone who isn't even fighting back, then kill me."

She offered no defense, completely exposing her life to him.

"You think this kind of provocation works on me?" Leander sneered, eyes still icily calm.

He raised two fingers. Premordial Energy flowed to his fingertips, forming a sword intent.

He thrust forward.

Tzing!

A streak of blue light flashed across the third-floor bar. It was so fast no one saw it clearly.

A moment later, the light faded, only then did everyone snap back to their senses. They saw that Leander's finger hovered half an inch before Celia's forehead. She had kept her eyes closed the whole time, unmoving.

When the force dissipated, she finally opened her eyes and smiled. She knew she had gambled correctly.

"The Iron Sovereign stands above all. You are a hero unmatched. Naturally, you wouldn't kill a woman without the will to resist.

"Thank you, Sovereign, for sparing my life."

Leander slowly retracted his hand. "I can spare you, but you must give me a compelling reason. Or... offer something valuable enough to buy your life."

Celia relaxed slightly and smiled lazily. "Sovereign Ashcroft, I wonder if you've ever heard of 'Heaven-Slayer, Earth-Breaker, Ghost and Ghouls'?"

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Chapter 485

"Heaven-Slayer, Earth-Breaker, Ghost and Ghouls?" Leander balanced the cup between his fingers, voice mild. "You're talking about the Netherweb?"

He wasn't unfamiliar with the name. Now that he stood on the world stage, and Jeff Enterprises had become the strongest conglomerate on Earth, the information funnelling to him had multiplied. Very little escaped his awareness anymore.

Through Frankie Wainwright's channels, he already knew the Arbitration Office had issued a two-billion-dollar bounty for his head. And the Netherweb was the assassin guild that had taken the contract.

Among the fragments he'd gathered, Leander understood this much: the Netherweb counted within its ranks the top four assassins in the world. It was an ancient, enigmatic syndicate, reigning over the underworld for more than a century. It managed to stay unshaken, unsurpassed.

Even the Arbitration Office handled them with caution. Whenever the Office needed something done without leaving fingerprints, it would post the bounty on the underground boards and let the Netherweb do the dirty work.

Celia, arrestingly beautiful, spoke softly, "Those words do point to the Netherweb. But ninety-nine percent of the world has no idea what they really mean.

"They represent the Netherweb's internal ranks. Heaven is the pinnacle. Ghoul is the lowest."

Leander's gaze stilled for a moment as the picture clicked together, just like the Umbral Court in Ravenridge he had crushed single-handedly.

The Umbral Court, hidden in Astria, used their own strict hierarchy: the Twelve Talons, the Six Wraiths.

But the Netherweb was stronger by orders of magnitude. Eight tiers, each more ruthless than the last.

Celia continued, "The four ranks symbolised by 'Ghost and Ghouls' are merely the outer circle."

"From the rank of Breaker and upward, that's where the true inner elites begin."

Leander sipped again, expression unchanged. "That information alone won't buy your life."

Netherweb ranks were of little interest to him.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, don't rush. I'm not finished." She let a quiet, enigmatic smile form. "Tell me, what level do you think I hold on the global Assassin Leaderboard?" Leander's eyes narrowed.

To him, Celia, also known internationally as The Ripper, ranked third on that mysterious list. In any reasonable measure, she should stand at the very top, Heaven-tier, at least.

But the way she spoke made it clear that the truth was far more severe. "You've guessed it," she said softly. "Inside the Netherweb, I am only Slayer-tier. "The one who just tried to snipe you, 'Deadshot' Barrett, he's Slayer -tier as well." For the first time, Leander's expression shifted.

She pressed on, voice low, eyes darkening with a fear that seemed deeply carved into her. "In the Netherweb, only two people have ever reached Heaven-tier."

Leander spoke before she could continue. "The Blood Demon and the Hermit, right?"

There was no real need to speculate. Only the top two on the global assassin list could stand above the third-ranked Ripper and qualify as Heaven-tier.

Still, the revelation shocked him. The difference between third and second shouldn't have been a chasm. Yet, if Celia was an entire rank beneath them, the gulf was monstrous.

Even while suppressing her presence, Leander could feel her cultivation, she was a peak Infernal Crown Transcendent, strong enough to rival Maddox, once first on the International Combat Units chart, and not inferior to the Chief Arbitrators of the Office.

If the Blood Demon and the Hermit surpassed her, then what realm had they stepped into?

Could they have already reached the King Phase?

Celia nodded, solemn. "The Netherweb is now effectively led by the Blood Demon. He is their living sigil."

"As for the Hermit, he hasn't appeared in decades. I don't know if he still walks this world. As for the Blood Demon, I've encountered him once. And I promise you that he alone is enough to make even you take caution.

"Fifty years ago, the Blood Demon hunted and killed a true King Phase expert."

Leander finally reacted, brows lifting. "Oh? He killed a King Phase?"

He had never seen a King Phase before. He didn't know how overwhelming such a being truly was. But if the Blood Demon could kill one then he was at the very least close to that level, perhaps already standing among them.

Celia lifted her slender hand and poured another glass. "I believe that should be enough to buy my life.

"The Blood Demon..... there are no words that do his terror justice. Killing is not his job, it's his nature, something woven into his bones.

"And he never kills nobodies. His prey is always the strongest of the strong."

Her voice chilled, eyes sinking into a deep, distant fear.

"Sovereign Ashcroft, you are Astria's strongest. The all-time number one in the International Combat Units ranking. All nations watch you.

"The Arbitration Office issued this bounty openly. Given the Blood Demon's instincts, he will never pass on such a chance.

"He is likely already on his way to Astria."

Even mentioning him made her tremble. For someone at her level, someone who stood at the peak of Infernal Crown Transcendent, to feel fear for the Blood Demon said everything. He truly was the most bloodthirsty man she'd ever met.

"He's already here."

She had just risen to leave when Leander spoke, arresting her mid-motion.

"What? Here?" IF YOU WANT TO READ MORE CHAPTERS, PLEASE VISIT

She went pale, senses flaring out in all directions, but she detected nothing.

Boom!

A violent blast ripped across the side of the building. A colossal palmprint of condensed innate vitality tore through a billboard, pulverising it in midair, and descended toward the balcony of the bar like a falling sky.

The air in the bar was strangled. Beside Leander, Rubyanne's face twisted in terror, a scream ripping out of her throat.

Leander's lips curved coldly. "Hmph." He raised one finger, light as a whisper, and flicked.

A razor-thin stream of force shot

out, striking the descending palmprint dead centre. The massive imprint, dozens of feet wide,

froze

cracked, then shattered into

scattering motes of light. A tempest roared through the street, sending pedestrians stumbling in chaos.

Wind howled through the bar. People shielded their eyes, staring upward. A man in a blood-colored robe hovered in the night sky, hands clasped behind his back, arrogance etched into every line of his face.

"The Blood Demon? Is that really him?"

Celia saw him, and her pupils constricted violently.

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Chapter 486

The man in his blood-red robe stood upon the air itself, each step suspended over the void. The robe drifted around him like a living stream of crimson, coiling and rippling as though it breathed.

Linton and the others were struck dumb. Especially those who had scoffed earlier when he spoke of "gods" crossing blows. Their worldview shattered on the spot.

In a world that worships science and logic above all, who could imagine someone standing in the sky and walking through clouds?

Yet here it was, undeniable and unfolding before their eyes.

The newcomer was none other than the second-ranked assassin in the world, the Blood Demon. His gaze swept down first, landing on Celia.

"Ripper," he drawled, "looks like you failed miserably."

Celia lowered her head, saying nothing. That alone was a signal of her silent admission.

In the assassin world, failure and being caught by your target meant inevitable death.

A streak of scarlet flashed across the Blood Demon's eyes. His voice turned cold enough to freeze bone.

"The day you entered the Netherweb, you should have understood that your life ceased to be your own.

"In the Netherweb, failure is forbidden. Once I finish this bounty, I'll deal with you myself."

His tone was calm, yet it carried the weight of a death sentence. Celia's blood chilled instantly, terror spilling across her features.

Then the Blood Demon turned to Leander. His gaze sharpened like drawn blades, and a ripple of invisible force plunged downward.

Leander lifted his eyes. Where their gazes collided, sparks seemed to crackle in the air.

"Jeff Ashcroft," the Blood Demon said in a quiet, even tone, "I've come to kill you." He said it the way someone might announce a casual visit, using a calm voice, but in his case, with murderous intention.

"Oh? Is that so?" Leander smiled faintly.

"You're an assassin. Assassins hide in the shadows. That's how you get a one-strike kill on me.

"You're here, appearing out in the open, attacking me face-to-face. You've already broken the cardinal rule. Now I'm truly curious, how did you kill a King Phase back then?"

"Haha!" The Blood Demon laughed madly, chin lifted, wild pride pouring out of him. "That King Phase? I killed him with stealth, in addition to my secret technique. I struck the instant his mind slipped.

"But with you? I don't need the trouble."

Scarlet light erupted in his eyes. A suffocating wave of pressure exploded outward.

"You're strong, yes. You killed Gadru, the former champion of the International Combat Units. You destroyed fifteen High Arbitrators alone. But you are still not a King Phase.

"And as long as you're not a King Phase, I have absolute confidence, one hundred percent, that I can crush you with overwhelming force.

"Below the King Phase, I am invincible."

He said a mere few simple sentences, yet his pride brimmed to the point of arrogance.

"Invincible below King Phase?" Leander murmured, lips curling into a dangerous smile. "You truly believe that?"

The Blood Demon didn't respond. Hands clasped behind his back, he lifted one arm and pointed north of Highcliffe.

"Come, Jeff. Let me see whether the one hailed as the strongest in all of the International Combat Units' history truly deserves the title.

"I'll be waiting for you on Swallow Hill."

The moment the final syllable fell, wind erupted beneath his feet. His figure burst into a blazing streak of bloodlight and surged toward Swallow Hill.

Leander drained the last of his drink, then approached Liam and Shirley.

Liam stared at Leander's approach, throat locked, mind frozen.

When he'd learned Leander was the chairman of Jeff Enterprises, he had been shaken, confused, and skeptical, but he could still process it.

But tonight shattered every framework he had ever believed in. He was no longer certain the world he'd lived in was even real.

Leander reached him, placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Liam, there's far too much in this world you haven't seen. And too much I've yet to tell you.

"I have business tonight. I'll go ahead. After this, we'll drink and I'll tell you everything."

With that, his figure blurred—almost ghostlike—and shot upward from the balcony as a streak of blue light.

Liam and Shirley remained stunned into statues. Behind them, Linton collapsed onto the ground, legs giving way, a dark stain spreading across his trousers.

The moment Leander erupted into blue light, Linton finally recognized the silhouette. It overlapped perfectly with one of the two "gods" he'd seen that night at the Celestial Pavilion.

Only now did he grasp it. The one fighting in the heavens that night had been Leander Ashcroft.

Boom!

At 11:30 p.m., Swallow Hill stood empty, desolate. Then a streak of bloodlight shredded the clouds and speared the summit.

A heartbeat later, a tail of blue light followed, like a meteor ripping through the night.

The lights dissipated. Only the two silhouettes remained, facing each other. Leander and the Blood Demon hovered at the cloudline, facing one another. An unseen collision of force between them churned the clouds into rolling waves.

"Jeff Ashcroft," the Blood Demon said with a bloodthirsty smile, "Swallow Hill's night scenery is worthy of your title as the mightiest alive pick fine spot here for your grave."

Power surged beneath his robe. Crimson radiance unfurled like a sea.

"Many have said that to me," Leander replied calmly. "All of them died. You won't be an exception." His voice dropped—and without a breath of hesitation, he thrust out a fist.

The strike tore through the cloud sea, opening a tunnel of spiraling mist several stories wide. The Blood Demon's pupils narrowed instantly.

But he didn't dodge. He raised his fist, bloodlight surging around his knuckles, and struck head-on.

Boom! Find the newest release on

The collision ripped a storm across the mountain, vaporizing the summit of Swallow Hill section by section.

Neither budged. Their first exchange was perfectly even.

"Oh?" Leander's brows lifted slightly.

He hadn't used full strength, but ever since achieving Spirit Convergence,

the Nirvana Energy in him had

transformed. It was now dense potent, and multiplied severalfold. A

strike like that could have obliterated any Chief Arbitrator.

But the Blood Demon met it directly. He was the first man he had ever seen who

could.

Leander studied him closely. The crimson glow around the Blood Demon had thickened into near liquid currents, rising and falling like viscous blood. His aura flickered unpredictably, vast, grand, transcending the mortal world.

At that moment, Leander understood that the Blood Demon's realm was far above Infernal Crown Transcendent. He had stepped into an entirely different tier. To someone at his level, even Infernal Crown Transcendents would be mere insects.

"King Phase?" Leander whispered.

The Blood Demon tilted his head back. Blood-essence roared around him, dyeing Swallow Hill peak a ghostly scarlet.

"You look surprised, Jeff."

A twisted grin curved his lips. "You said it yourself. Below the King Phase, I have no rivals.

"That is because I am now a Half-King."

At that instant, he flexed his fingers. The world began to warp. A radius of a hundred feet collapsed into a dome of bloodlight, forming a realm of its own. And Leander was sealed inside.

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