

# From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft)

## Chapter 541

"What is that?"

Everyone looked up. A streak of bright blue light shot across the sky, and their expressions changed at once. Shock and disbelief filled their faces.

The young man and woman were especially stunned, staring at the blue light without blinking. Within that glow, a faint human figure appeared, and their eyes widened in fear.

"Is that Superman?" The woman's beautiful eyes flickered as she whispered softly without thinking.

As for Torre and the others, after their brief shock, a memory suddenly surfaced in their minds.

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Back at the Stormcairn River, a figure wrapped in blue light had killed the arrogant elder of the Tarlyn Guild in one decisive strike. And now, the figure in the sky overlapped completely with that memory.

"It's the chief instructor. It's definitely him!"

The blue light came closer and closer. When it was only several feet away, they spotted Leander's face clearly.

Leander had rushed all the way from Dechor, flying at full speed. After an hour of pushing himself to the limit, he finally reached the border of Ivoria.

At a glance, he spotted Torre and the others hiding in the town below. His eyes narrowed slightly as he prepared to land and take them away from here.

But right at that moment, the sound of artillery suddenly exploded in the air.

Boom!

The rocket armored vehicle lifted its rear cannon slightly. Out of its twenty-four rockets, one fired straight into the sky. It was an anti-air missile, and its destructive power was terrifying.

The rocket tore through the air with a piercing scream and shot directly toward Leander's chest.

"What?"

Leander paused for a brief instant, then his body shifted. He moved sideways, pulling himself about a hundred feet away. The rocket narrowly brushed past his chest, and the shockwave made his clothes flutter wildly.

This scene made Leander's expression tighten slightly. At the same time, everyone hiding in the town also saw what happened.

"Did they just attack him?"

Torre's face went pale as a horrifying thought flashed across his mind.

"All this time while we were hiding here, they never made a move or attacked us at

all. But the moment the chief instructor arrived, they immediately used an armored rocket vehicle and anti-air missiles. Could it be..."

Before he finished, Skylar spoke in a deep voice. "Their real target is the chief instructor!"

"What?" Vane, Boomer, Brute, and the others all felt their hearts drop. Their expressions changed instantly.

"Did they use us as bait to lure the chief instructor here?"

Boomer looked at the others. Even though he wasn't the smartest one among them, he still understood what was happening now.

Vane, meticulous and calm, spoke up in a low voice, "These people are highly-trained elites. Their weapons and equipment are far above the average level of any country in the world. They've come prepared."

"But I don't understand," Torre said, his eyes murky and fists trembling. "How did they know the chief instructor would come if they used us as bait?"

"Someone must've hired them," Skyler replied, his voice grave. "And the person who hired them must know the chief instructor's movements like the back of their hand."

"Only a few major powers have the resources to do so," Torre responded.

Skyler's face paled, and he tilted his head. "Are you saying that a major nation is targeting the chief instructor?"

Torre didn't answer.

He simply stared at the blue light in the sky, his expression growing heavier.

Whoosh!

The rocket missiles narrowly skimmed past Leander's chest. As they passed, Leander's body recoiled, then he struck with a palm.

His Primordial Energy surged outward, forming a thin strand that collided with the tail of the rocket. The missile exploded midair in a shower of sparks.

His mind raced. In an instant, he realized what was happening. These armed forces had been waiting for him.

"A major nation of this era?" Leander clenched his fingers, a deadly gleam flashing across his eyes.

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Below, inside an armored vehicle, the leading middle-aged man waved his hand, issuing the attack command.

"Target acquired! Open fire and engage!"

At his order, the remaining twenty-two anti-air missiles were launched simultaneously.

Nearly three thousand armed personnel lifted their rifles, aiming at the sky and firing. Sixteen Gatling guns locked onto Leander, spinning their barrels into action.

In an instant, all three thousand soldiers focused on their target.

The young man and woman standing beside Torre froze in shock.

Leander had just flown in, a blue aura surrounding him like Superman.

Now, facing the combined firepower of three thousand armed soldiers, the scene was as thrilling as a modern weapons battle against a superhero.

A scenario that could only appear in a Hollywood blockbuster was unfolding right before their eyes.

"This is bad. We've put the chief instructor in danger!" Torre slammed his fist against the wall, his face full of guilt.

They knew Leander was strong, but even the strongest warrior could not possibly withstand a modern military force.

Here were armored vehicles and tanks, all kinds of modern weapons, and three thousand soldiers. How could Leander fight against such overwhelming firepower alone?

All of them looked grim, but at this moment, all they could do was watch helplessly as every weapon pointed toward Leander.

Inside an underground intelligence base in Novaterra, a large screen displayed a live feed of Leander facing the three thousand strong armed force. Nearly every camera angle focused squarely on him.

"I can't believe Jeff Ashcroft is here. This time, we must eliminate this huge threat completely!"

"Deploy the X10A squadron. Do everything you can to make sure he's neutralized in Ivoria."

Below, the personnel responded in unison and immediately began strategic deployment.

Whoosh!

From the sky, twenty-two rockets streaked toward Leander. His location had already been locked.

"Hmph!" Leander's eyes shifted slightly as his body surged backward, trying to create distance from the incoming missiles.

His speed had already surpassed the sound barrier, but the rockets traveled at twice the speed of sound, closing the gap in an instant.

Leander's eyes widened. Instantly, his Primordial Energy surged outward, forming a defensive barrier in front of him.

Boom! All twenty-four rockets detonated in front of him, the force striking directly against his protective Primordial Energy.

The explosions roared endlessly. The shockwaves spread outward in violent ripples,

and Leander let out a muffled grunt as he was blasted backward, tumbling through

the air.

His protective Primordial Energy could withstand direct rifle fire, but

the power of these rockets was devastating. In fact the explosion could destroy a single armored vehicle.

With twenty-two rockets striking simultaneously, the impact was twenty-two times greater. Even with his immense cultivation, Leander could not block the full force.

His protective Primordial Energy shattered from the frontal impact.

His clothes were burned and torn by

the explosions, leaving a charred patch across his chest. The force sent him flying backward dozens of feet.

"Ah, the power of modern weaponry!"

Leander's expression shifted. At that moment, he finally understood why the kings who once ruled the world had relied on hidden defenses.

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Leander's chest was charred black, and a section of his clothes had been burned

away. He patted his chest, wiping off the sticky black residue to reveal flawless, pale skin that concealed immense strength.

The twenty-two rockets had shattered his protective Primordial Energy, but they hadn't truly harmed him.

His Devourer Form was now complete. Even with just his physical body, he could withstand the frontal impact of a hand grenade. The rockets' blast had been seventy percent absorbed by his Primordial Energy. The remaining thirty percent only burned his clothes, leaving him unscathed.

Still, the attack was enough to make him fully aware of the destructive power of modern weaponry.

"No wonder the kings who once ruled the world could only hide in the end," he muttered, his expression unusually grave.

Leaving aside world-ending weapons like nuclear arms, even just this salvo of rockets could instantly kill an ordinary King Phase cultivator.

No matter how powerful a King Phase was, how could they stand against a modern army? Not to mention aircraft carriers, laser weapons, miniature nuclear devices, and all the other high-tech arms of the present day.

In this era, if a King Phase cultivator revealed themselves, even briefly, the major powers would likely launch real military strikes against them.

Leander had long anticipated that one day he might face modern military forces, but he hadn't expected it to happen so soon.

While he was contemplating this, another rocket armored vehicle rolled forward, lifting its twenty-four rockets into position, ready to fire.

Whoosh!

At that moment, Leander finally moved. Having felt the full power of the first attack, he coiled his body and darted straight downward.

"Fire!" From below, a commander shouted, and all twenty-four rockets were launched.

Whoosh!

The sound of rushing air tore through the sky, and twenty-four rockets surged straight at him.

Leander hovered in midair, blue light flashing in his eyes. He slammed his foot down into the void.

The air below caved in instantly, forming a massive footprint thirty feet wide.

It was as if an ancient giant had stamped down, directly intercepting the path of all twenty-four rockets.

Boom! Boom!

The rockets exploded in midair, several dozen feet from Leander, sending only a faint ripple of shockwave brushing against his chest.

"What?" The armed personnel below were clearly startled. Leander, however, did not falter. He clenched his hands, and a long spear of flame materialized in his grip.

Without hesitation, he hurled it straight at the rocket armored vehicle below. Whoosh!

A streak of fire shot through the air, and the flaming spear struck the armored vehicle dead center.

The vehicle's exterior was made of high-strength alloy, designed to withstand extreme attacks. Even a hundred rifles firing continuously day and night might not penetrate it.

Yet, Leander's spear struck as if a steel blade had pierced soft tofu, driving straight into the cockpit. An explosion erupted, shaking the surroundings.

In an instant, a rocket armored vehicle-worth millions of dollars-was destroyed in front of over three thousand soldiers.

"What in the world?" The commander of the armed forces froze, his expression twisting in shock and disbelief.

"Was that a flaming spear?"

He could hardly believe his eyes. With a single strike, Leander had destroyed a multi-million-dollar armored vehicle. What sort of ability was that?

Torre and the others were equally stunned, their pupils widening in disbelief.

"Is the chief instructor going to take on the entire army by himself?"

The young man and woman beside them were speechless, especially Gisela, who stared at Leander without blinking.

She had often wondered if beings like Superman or Iron Man—the superheroes from movies could exist in reality. And now, her imagination seemed to be coming to life before her eyes.

A figure bathed in blue light hovered above the ground, crushing an armored vehicle beneath him. If this wasn't a superhero, then what was?

"Open fire! Don't let him form that flaming spear again!"

The armed commander barely kept his composure. He had received some information about Leander when taking the mission and knew he was the strongest warrior of the era.

He understood the immense power of the flaming spear and immediately ordered his troops to suppress Leander with all available firepower.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Instantly, every rifle and machine gun opened fire. Countless bullets tore through the air toward Leander.

But Leander was ready. Twisting and spinning in midair, a long blue trail followed him as he sprinted forward, creating distance and staying beyond the effective range of the guns.

The soldiers saw him retreating and hesitated, lowering their fire. But in the next instant, the blue light suddenly reversed like a returning meteor, and a powerful gust of wind surged toward them.

"Fire!" shouted the commander.

The troops reacted, pulling their triggers, but the blue light moved far too fast. It plunged straight into the ranks of over three thousand soldiers.

Boom!

A tank was suddenly lifted into the air. Leander's hand gripped the tank's turret,

spinning it like a giant top before hurling it violently away.

He flung the

forty-ton steel tank like

a discus. Wherever it landed, it

crushed soldiers into mangled pieces. Three more tanks slammed into each other, tilting and colliding, throwing the entire formation into chaos.

Leander followed with a palm strike toward the crowd. A massive Primordial Energy palm, more than thirty feet wide, descended from above, crushing over fifty soldiers into debris.

The remaining tanks quickly turned their turrets toward Leander, ready to fire. However he reacted first. Like a phantom, Leander weaved along an S-shaped path, dodging two shells. Then, he closed in on the side of a tank.

His long, pale fingers stretched out. Flames erupted from his hands, slicing through

the air like molten blades. They tore into the steel tracks of the tank, and with a powerful pull...

Crack!

The steel tracks bent and snapped

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under Leander's grip, and the tank immediately lost all mobility. Another palm strike followed. Flames surged explosively, detonating inside the tank as if a high-explosive shell had gone off. The heavy tank was blown apart into two segments.

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The surrounding armed soldiers were stunned. From the town, Torre and the others

watched with their mouths agape, finding it absurd.

What happened today was too shocking for their minds to fully grasp.

Torre's jaw dropped as he struggled to speak.

"Taking down a tank barehanded?"

If they weren't acquainted with the man in front of them, they would have thought

they had stepped into a sci-fi blockbuster.

A martial artist's strength was formidable, but how could anyone dismantle tanks with their bare hands, or stand against a modern military force head-on?

Clang!

A heavy tank was cleaved in half by Leander's Dragonfire. He grabbed the two massive steel remnants with one hand and tossed them into the surrounding soldiers, sending them sprawling. Blood and flesh flew in every direction.

With this single strike, nearly a hundred lives were lost instantly.

"Since you made me your target and lured me here, I don't mind playing along!"

Leander's eyes were cold and sharp. Tilting his head slightly, he leaped straight into the crowd. With a single wave of his hand, nearly a hundred men were swept away as if hit by a hurricane.

Blood splattered all over, their life forces flickering out before anyone could react.

These Sahar Wastes, normally fierce and battle-hardened, recoiled as if they had seen a ghost. None dared approach him. Yet, the more they retreated, the closer Leander seemed to follow, moving through the main formation. Every strike of his palm reduced dozens of men to nothing but shredded bodies.

"B\*stard! Attack now!"

The commander, stationed inside a tank, watched Leander harvest lives like a Grim Reaper. His heart clenched in terror.

These were elite mercenaries he had painstakingly gathered. With a massive backer providing endless modern weaponry, he had built this armed force, and even among the Sahar Wastes, they wielded considerable influence.

Their numbers had grown to nearly three thousand. Yet in just ten minutes, Leander, with mere gestures and strikes, had killed hundreds.

Not only that, but the tanks and rocket armored vehicles-expensive weapons purchased at high cost-were being torn apart before his eyes. One flaming spear alone had obliterated a rocket armored vehicle. Such losses were beyond what he had ever imagined.

"Attack! All of you, attack!"

His frantic voice echoed over the comms. Though he had Leander's information and understood the power of modern warriors to some extent, he never expected human combat ability to reach such a level.

Destroying tanks with bare hands was unthinkable.

But he had no time to dwell on that. From the moment he accepted this mission, he had been committed. Now he could only order a full-scale attack, hoping to eliminate Leander.

All tanks pivoted their turrets toward him.

Boom!

The three lead tanks opened fire, their railguns aimed directly at Leander.

Whoosh!

Leander moved first. His foot swept across the ground, kicking up sand and debris into a swirling mini-tornado. Wind and dust spiraled high, forming a protective barrier around him.

The three incoming railgun shots slammed into the outer wall of the sand tornado. Bang! Bang! Bang!

The simultaneous explosions reverberated, deafening everyone nearby. The tornado held for a moment but was shredded by the immense force, scattering sand in every direction.

Amid the flying debris, Leander's figure vanished. The remaining tanks could not lock onto him.

Seizing the moment before anyone could react, a figure shot forward like a spear, emerging from the whirlwind of sand.

Whoosh!

A sharp rush of air tore across the sky as Leander shot straight toward a tank. His long, pale hands clenched into fists and struck the side of the vehicle.

Boom!

The sound of metal crashing against metal rang out, and the tank's armored exterior caved inward from the sheer force of his punch. Impactore through the steel, striking inside the cabin. Both drivers immediately bled from all orifices, their life forces extinguished on the spot.

The other tank crews reacted instantly, and more than a dozen tanks opened fire simultaneously in Leander's direction. He slammed his foot down, leaving a massive footprint, and leaped into the air. His form became a streak of blue light, dodging every incoming shell with incredible precision.

Leander pulled his hands back, summoning two blazing whips of fire, and swept them downward across the battlefield.

The fiery whips tore through the air like raging serpents. Wherever they struck, the armed soldiers didn't even have time to scream before being incinerated and vaporized, leaving not a trace of bones behind.

In an instant, hundreds of men were turned to ash, and three tanks were severed in half under the furious sweep of the flaming whips.

"What terrifying power!"

Torre and the others watched Leander single-handedly take on three thousand armed soldiers, their expressions shifting constantly between shock and disbelief.

Leander's feat at the Stormcairn River where he killed Mason left them impressed, but this performance left them utterly stunned. One man, facing an armed army and holding his own, completely shattered all their expectations.

For members of the Southern Wyvern Blade, whom many had military backgrounds, respect for martial artists was always tempered by the belief that armies and modern weaponry were supreme.

Yet here, Leander was proving, with his own body, what it meant to withstand an army with nothing but a mortal form.

Gisela and the young man beside her stared in awe, as if witnessing a living legend.

No matter how Torre and the others

had described Leander's strength, it

had always seemed abstract. But now, seeing him single-handedly face three thousand armed soldiers, dismantle tanks with his bare hands, destroy armored vehicles, and kill effortlessly, left no room for doubt.

"This is our Chief Instructor, the strongest in the history of the Southern Wyvern Blade. A Chief Instructor to be revered for life!"

Skyler paused, speaking in three parallel phrases, each word heavy with respect and awe.

Earlier, he had regarded Leander as a rival in Ravenridge. But now, any lingering thoughts vanished.

To him, Leander was no longer a competitor—he was a figure worthy of admiration and reverence, the ultimate Chief Instructor.

The other Southern Wyvern Blade members looked at Leander as well, their gazes unwavering.

They all knew one thing with certainty—this battle would mark the beginning of a new era, a historic chapter in their history.

Leander moved like a phantom, and wherever his Dragonfire passed, it swept everything aside. The three-thousand-strong formation before him was almost completely annihilated.

Heavy tanks and armored vehicles were ripped apart by his bare hands or sliced through by the Dragonfire, reduced to nothing but scrap metal.

At the border of Ivoria, dust and smoke filled the air. Leander, clad in tattered white robes, lifted a middle-aged man in his hand and slowly emerged from the swirling sand.

"Who sent you here to wait for me and attack me?" he asked, his voice cold as he tilted his head toward the man.

The middle-aged man was the commander of this armed force. His face, a typical Middle Eastern complexion, was pale with terror.

"You're a demon..." he stammered, his voice trembling.

In just half an hour, a three-thousand-strong armed unit had been completely wiped

out by Leander—one man, alone, leaving nothing standing in his wake.

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The commander's face was deathly pale. Little did he imagine he'd witness something so shockingly beyond comprehension.

He even began to wonder if he had somehow stepped into another world, into a strange realm entirely unfamiliar to him.

A three-thousand-man armed force, equipped with heavy tanks, rocket-mounted armored vehicles, shoulder-launched rockets, precision rifles, and fifty Gatling guns —yet all they managed to do was shred Leander's clothing, before being completely annihilated by him alone.

From beginning to end, he hadn't even seen a single trace of blood on Leander's body.

It was practically a one-sided massacre.

Leander had wiped them all out without getting a scratch.

At that moment, the commander began to doubt why his powerful backer had ever instructed him to provoke such an indescribably terrifying being.

If even tanks and armored vehicles were helpless against Leander, then how was one supposed to deal with him? Should they have deployed fighter jets or bombers?

In his eyes now, Leander was no different from the Grim Reaper himself.

Leander's gaze was icy cold as he lifted the commander into the air, speaking succinctly. "Who hired you?"

The commander was terrified. He felt a chilling cold engulf his entire body, almost afraid to even meet Leander's eyes. The aura of death wrapped around him completely. "If I tell you, will you spare my life?" he replied shakily, his pupils trembling.

"If you tell me, I'll let you die peacefully." Leander's expression remained indifferent as he answered calmly.

"If you don't promise to spare me, I won't talk!"

The commander kept his mouth shut. He thought he had seized a lifeline, but in the next moment, Leander narrowed his eyes.

At once, he was suddenly flung high into the air.

"Since you won't talk, I'll just kill you."

Without even lifting his head, Leander simply clenched his hand. A terrifying, invisible force centered on the commander suddenly tightened, constricting him slowly.

Within that crushing pressure, the commander felt every bone in his body grinding and shattering bit by bit.

He could even hear the sound of his own bones cracking and his blood vessels bursting.

He died a slow and agonizing death. Every nerve in the commander's body seemed amplified, pain piercing through him at every point.

Every scream of agony traveled from his limbs to his brain, giving him a horrifying taste of what true hell on earth felt like.

Finally, a cloud of blood erupted into the air. The three-thousand-man armed force had been completely annihilated.

Leander killed the commander with a cold, indifferent expression. He walked out from the ruins of steel and debris, then stepped forward, transforming into a streak of light that shot into the town.

Torre and the others stared blankly at Leander's approaching figure, unable to utter a single word. Gisela and the young man beside her were equally stunned, frozen by what they had just witnessed, their eyes fixed on him.

Leander wore a tattered white T-shirt with a large rip across his chest. Yet, no one dared to show the slightest disrespect, and all eyes followed him with a mix of awe and reverence.

Several yards away, Torre, Brute, Boomer, and the others instinctively raised their hands in salute, as if by silent agreement.

"Chief Instructor!" they called out.

A faint smile appeared on Leander's face as he finally came to a stop in front of them. "All good?" he asked, scanning the group.

Everyone nodded, voices strong and clear.

"That's good. The armed forces have been completely taken care of. Let's get back to Astria and finish the tasks we need to complete," Leander said, stretching casually.

Despite the fierce battle he had just endured, there was no trace of fatigue on his face.

Gisela watched him with curiosity and admiration, but Leander didn't glance at her once. The young man who had doubted Leander's strength before now remained silent, completely humbled.

Leander's performance was nothing short of superhuman. Witnessing such power, one could not imagine how much strength that was.

As team captain, Torre bowed

deeply. "Chief Instructor, you came

all this way to save us, yet we have failed you! Those people weren't just bait. In

targeting us. We were ju

truth, they wanted to lure you here and take you down! We nearly became weapons used against you. We're truly sorry!"

Boomer lowered his head, full of shame and defeat. "Chief Instructor, you taught us the Devourer's Flowe We've practiced day and night,

thinking we'd gotten strongerine

compared to you, we are, stilb nothing more than ants only causing you trouble!"

Skyler and the others stayed silent, heads bowed in shame, their guilt for causing Leander trouble evident.

Seeing their remorse, Leander chuckled lightly and waved his hand. "The Devourer's Flow is meant to help you discover your potential, to master stronger power more quickly. Given your current level, you've already exceeded my expectations!

"Since you call me Chief Instructor, it's my duty to save my team! Don't feel guilty about it. These people were targeting me. Even without you as bait, they would have done everything to lure me here eventually. It was only a matter of time."

Hearing this, Torre and the others lifted their heads, their admiration for Leander deepening.

True heroes require three things—strength, responsibility, and character. Leander embodied all three.

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Torre collected his thoughts and said to Skyler and the others, "Since he's here we need to pack up immediately. Get Professor Rainer onto your back, and we'll leave this place at once! Even though the armed forces have been

completely wiped out by the Chief Instructor it's too chaotic here. There could still reinforcements. Leaving quickly is the safest choice!"

Just as Skyler and the others were about to respond, Leander, standing at the side, suddenly paused. His gaze sharpened, and his voice turned icy. "You all should leave immediately. The farther from here, the better. Move!"

Everyone turned in shock.

His expression was grave, as if he had just detected a threat unlike anything he had ever faced before.

Torre and the others felt their hearts seize. This was the first time they had ever heard Leander speak with such urgent insistence.

Before they could ask what was happening, a deafening whirring sound of rotor blades echoed through the air.

On the distant horizon, six massive choppers appeared, rotors spinning rapidly, approaching at incredible speed.

They were six heavily armed helicopters, their massive bodies almost covering half the sky. Flying in a tight formation, the six helicopters were now close enough that the pilots' faces in the cockpits were visible.

"Are those Cobra attack helicopters?"

Torre and the others, all well-versed in military knowledge and familiar with some of

the world's most famous high-end combat vehicles and aircraft, immediately recognized them.

These were the very attack helicopters developed by Agylae back in the 1960s, now rapidly approaching from the sky.

Rotor blades had hammered the sky as six gunships tore through the clouds, dropping low with murderous intent. Dust had whipped into spirals along the streets. Torre's squad had frozen, faces pale, throats tight, every nerve screaming danger.

AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters were built by Agylae in the '60s to rain hell from the sky, and decades later, they were still packing the same brutal punch.

Each one had looked like a weapon given wings.

A crewman operated an enhanced Gatling gun at the nose, sweeping across a fierce one-hundred-fifty-degree arc. At the same time, a heavy cannon was mounted below a weapon that once commanded worldwide attention.

These guns were designed not for easy targets but to demolish heavily armored vehicles. They could pierce almost twenty inches of steel with each shot. A single precise hit could destroy a tank, leaving it riddled with holes as if devoured from within. The power of one shell far surpasses that of a Barrett rifle, making it seem trivial.

Deadlier still, missile pods were mounted under the frame, each warhead strong enough to drop a skyscraper. Once loose, they could latch onto targets at close range and hunt them down, turning the battlefield into a killing ground.

With weapons like that, one AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter was enough to wipe out a force of 3,000 soldiers, including armor and vehicles.

Six flying side by side meant the sky itself had become a full strike brigade.

No one could fathom what kind of disaster would call for that kind of response.

Stunned silence swept through the group. Every head slowly turned.

All eyes landed on Leander.

No explanation was needed.

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He was the one who had torn through 3,000 troops by himself.

The enemy had failed to break him.

Now they were changing the rules.

"Get moving. Don't look back."

Leander had raised his arm.

A surge of unseen power had exploded outward, scooping Torre's team off their feet and hurling them down the road. Boots had scraped across dirt as they were forced away, bodies fighting a current they could not stop.

"Chief!" Their voices had cracked, carried away by wind and fear.

Leander had chosen to stand alone.

Better one man take the storm than let everyone be buried under it.

Their hearts wanted to go back, but their minds understood the danger. A single shot from those guns would eliminate them before they could reach him.

Once they were beyond the last buildings, Gisela grabbed Torre's sleeve, her eyes trembling. "He's really staying behind to fight all six of the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters?"

Vane brought her fist down into her palm, breath sharp. "Captain, he's carrying this because of us. Walking away feels wrong. We can't leave Chief to fight that alone."

Boomer had stepped forward, teeth clenched. "If he's going down, I'm right there with him."

That idea persisted with nearly all of them.

Leander had defeated a force of 3,000 men alone, but that strength still seemed insignificant compared to an AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter in the sky.

One gunship throwing death from a distance was already too much to handle. Six flying together felt like a death sentence.

What they wanted was to stay, fight at his side, move forward, and fall back

together. If the mission died, they would die with it.

None of them wanted to live as the ones who ran.

Then, another blast thundered through the streets.

Boomer's muscles tensed. He broke into a charge, ready to storm back into town

and stand with Leander no matter what waited there.

A grip like iron closed around his shoulder and yanked him off balance.

He twisted back, breath sharp. "Captain?"

Boomer locked eyes with Torre. The look on his face left no room for debate.

"Fall in now," Torre commanded sharply. "Stay away from the Chief. This is not a request."

"But..." Shock had flashed across their faces.

"He ordered a retreat. That means

we leave." Torre's stare had cut through them. "Staying only makes us anchors around his neck. With his strength, he can still break free if i turns ugly That only works if we aren't in his way."

Silence had swallowed the group as understanding followed.

They had turned, guiding Jonathan and his family deeper into the open desert, every step heavier than the last.

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From the last line of buildings, Leander tipped his head back. The sky had filled with six AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, racing in like predators on the hunt.

They did not hesitate to close the gap. From a great distance beyond the battlefield, the formation quickly mobilized, firing their guns in unison.

Cannons mounted beneath their frames roared to life. The air split apart as each helicopter released twin streams, twelve torrents of fire rushing downward in a powerful, unified wave.

Clang, clang, clang.

Shells had slammed into the streets around him. Sand, stone, and broken walls had blasted skyward. Entire buildings had collapsed under the storm of fire. The town had been ripped apart like cardboard in a shredder.

The burning lines in the sky shifted as if they had a mind of their own, inching forward as the gunners

targeted them. Twelve beams of

molten light cut through the ground. ahead of Leander, destroying everything in their path. The pace of destruction quickened with each heartbeat.

His eyes drew into slits. So this is what the new age looks like.

He had previously flipped through magazines with pictures of the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter, considering them as distant curiosities. Now, seeing them alive and roaring was like peering into the mouth of a beast.

Missiles and rockets were bad enough, but the true terror was the anti-armor cannon mounted beneath the frame. This gun alone had the power to crush an Infernal Crown Transcendent as if they were made of chalk.

Khaedor, the God of Madness and a famed body-forger, could not survive a direct hit. Likewise, Nicholas, the leader of the Bloodthorn Mercenaries, would meet the same end. A single shell could tear either of them in two.

Even the Blood Demon's domain couldn't withstand such an assault; one mighty blast would demolish that crimson realm and grind his true form to dust.

A cold truth settled in Leander's chest.

No way I tank that head-on with just Primordial Energy and my own body.

So, this is what modern weapons look like... power that blows straight past the King phase.

Twelve rivers of flame steadily

narrowed the gap, striking toward Leander as gunners directed their fire. Far from the chaos of battle, beneath layers of concrete and steel an underground command center was illuminated with screens. Several uniformed officers stood silently, their eyes fixed on the live feed.

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They were waiting.

They wanted to watch this martial prodigy get shredded under the star's overwhelming barrage.

On the display, Leander finally made his move.

Crack!

He tore his arm free from his torn clothing, pulling away the tattered fabric. The pieces dropped to the ground, exposing dense, well-defined muscles and a frame that seemed forged from steel.

Leander tipped his head back toward the screaming sky, eyes blazing with hunger for battle.

"Today, I test these war machines with nothing but a mortal body," he thundered. "Come on. Let the steel show me what it's got."

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Boom! The world exploded around him.

Leander ripped what remained of his shirt apart as twelve blazing torrents tore through the air, rushing straight for his chest.

He drove his foot into the ground.

The desert split open beneath him, sending sand and stone erupting in a violent burst as he was propelled upward. A blue streak cut through the firestorm before the flames could reach him.

The shockwave boomed as he smashed past the sound barrier and ripped into the clouds.

No Primordial Energy carried him this time.

This was pure Devourer Form surged. His legs detonated with raw power, hurling

him higher in a single bound. Hundreds of feet vanished beneath him in an instant.

The streams of fire clawed upward, far too slow to catch him.

Inside the six AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, alarms shrieked.

Pilots stared in disbelief as a human figure rocketed up toward their altitude.

Fear flooded the cockpits.

Comms erupted.

"Gain height! Now! Don't let him reach us!"

Voices overlapped, sharp with panic.

This time, their goal was simple-to pin Leander down with overwhelming firepower and destroy him. That was why they had gathered extensive intelligence on martial artists.

They already had solid data on the Transcendent Realm and even on King Phase masters. Both could ride the wind and stand in midair, yet that ability came with a strict limit.

Martial artists achieved this by using the innate vitality or Primordial Energy within their bodies to bend gravity around them. It looked like defying nature,

but nature always pushed back. Even the strongest Transcendent, even the King Phase legend from a hundred years ago, could only rise to about five hundred feet. Within that space, they could move freely. Beyond it, climbing higher was impossible.

Combat machines like the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter did not share that restriction.

Those gunships could reach nearly 3,000 feet. As long as they kept their distance, Leander would never be able to touch them. From there, every weapon on board became a killing tool, ready to rain death down from the sky.

Thup-thup-thup!

Rotors screamed as every pilot pulled hard, forcing their gunships upward. Yet, Leander moved first.

Mist curled around his hand as he reached forward. Heat sparked. Fire stitched itself together, forming a blazing spear that roared in his grip like a living beast.

The nearest pilot glimpsed Leander's crooked grin through the glass. Dread hit him like a punch.

Leander twisted his body backward, hips snapping into position, with every joint aligned and power held tightly.

"Haah!"

The beastlike roar tore from his chest as the coiled tension in his body was released. He then hurled the flaming spear, which screamed through the air toward the nearest AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter.

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Sizzle...

A lance of fire tore across the sky at more than twice the speed of sound. The pilot glimpsed a flare of flame-then it was already on him.

Thunk!

The fire spear punched through the cockpit.

Though the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter's aluminum alloy armor was not as thick as tank or rocket-vehicle plating, it was durable enough to withstand sniper fire and typical rifle fire. Its front barrier was built with multiple layers of tempered glass and reinforced, bulletproof materials.

Leander's fiery spear did not even slow.

It shattered the cockpit windshield, pierced the pilot's chest, and continued forward, bursting out the rear and creating a direct path from nose to tail through the aircraft.

Kra-boom!

The sky cracked open with a violent roar as the once-feared war machine from the '60s burst apart, torn to pieces by Leander's blow.

Fire and wreckage spiraled away, leaving the remaining five pilots frozen in disbelief. Their minds went blank. A man just did that?

Leander never even looked their way.

His body blurred forward, closing the distance in a breath. Flames surged again, forging another inferno spear in his palm.

"Keep climbing! Push higher!"

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Panicked voices flooded the comms as the pilots wrenched back on their sticks, fighting to drag their gunships higher and farther from Leander.

"Hmph." A chill smile crept across Leander's lips. His gaze snapped to the next target, and another spear of fire ripped free from his hand.

Fizz-Crack!

Fire blossomed in the sky.

A second AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter vanished.

Deep underground, a group of officers in military uniforms gathered before the large screen, their eyes wide with disbelief and bodies tense.

"What the hell is that flaming spear in Jeff's hand?" one blurted. "How can it hit like that?"

"I believed he wiped out three thousand troops," another muttered. "This makes no sense. An AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter can't even slow him down?"

One man sprang to his feet, face pale. "Our combat estimate is wrong. Completely wrong. Jeff Leander is far beyond projection. We misread him from the start."

Off to the side, one man's gaze turned cold as he released a helpless sigh.

On the screen, Leander appeared as a deity of destruction. His blazing spear soared and plunged, each throw piercing a gunship, with every impact erupting in a violent explosion of fire.

The AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters

never reached the height where their standoff firepower mattered. They never even brought that advantage into play. Before they could climb to safety Leander had already torn them apart in the sky skewering each one from front to back.

"Is he even human?" someone whispered. "Not even the King Phase master from a hundred years ago fought like this."

"That fiery spear hits ten times harder than armor-piercing rounds. Plus, the blast rivals an anti-air missile. That's not a man. That's a myth," a young officer burst out, fear shining in his eyes.

For the first time, he understood what a martial artist truly meant.

His mind raced back a hundred years, to the age when a King Phase master carved

up the land and ruled the world. How horrifying must that era have been? Did modern weapons really drive beings like this into hiding?

Were those King Phase masters truly forced into hiding for a century, kept in the shadows by the military deterrence of the world's great powers?

No one had time to draw another breath before the screen erupted again. A final flash of fire swallowed the last AH-1 Cobra attack

helicopter, and the wreck plume). ne

toward the ground in a burning spiral.

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From the first strike to the last, Leander never gave those gunships room to breathe. He pressed the attack without hesitation, cutting them down before they could ever bring their strengths to bear.

When the smoke cleared, only Leander hung in the open sky. Six AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters were gone. His posture stayed steady, his face unreadable, yet a harder edge had settled into his eyes.

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Then new shapes rushed in from the distance.

Fifteen armed helicopters soared through the clouds at their maximum altitude, well beyond his reach.

The clash was not finished.

The hunt for Leander had only just crossed into its fiercest stage.

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Thup-thup-thup!

Fifteen AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters tore across the sky, contrails slicing long scars through the clouds as they rushed in from all sides.

The order had just dropped.

Every pilot had watched the footage of six gunships getting skewered by that burning spear. No one planned to repeat their mistake. Sticks were pulled

back hard as the formation climbed, pushing close to 3,000 feet, keeping Leander at arm's length. "Hmph."

In the underground command room, a row of officers stared at the feed. One of them let out a short, cold laugh.

"That flame spear of Jeff's looks terrifying, but it can't be limitless. The farther it flies, the slower it gets. Inside about 3,000 feet, these AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters are fast enough to dodge anything he throws.

"They've got missiles and heavy anti-tank cannons. Long-range suppression will pin him down. Fifteen birds firing together can blanket nearly 3,000 feet. No matter how fast he is, there's no hole to slip through."

Several men straightened, confidence returning.

"Modern firepower still rules this world. A martial artist might be fierce, but steel always wins."

"Jeff's run ends here. The Sahar Wastes will bury him."

Their eyes stayed glued to the screen, already envisioning Leander being shredded by the AH-1 Cobra helicopters' barrage.

Whoosh!

High above, fifteen Cobra gunships opened fire simultaneously from over half a mile away.

Everyone had watched the live feed of Leander skewering six helicopters with that flaming spear. They knew exactly how unnatural and terrifying his combat power

was.

None of the pilots dared to fly closer. Instead, they kept their distance and subjected him to heavy fire from afar, aiming to trap and eliminate him without getting close.

Boom! Boom, boom, boom!

This was a sky-wide seal.

They were not trying to tag Leander himself. The goal was to drown the air around him, to turn an entire stretch of space into a locked cage that shut every path forward and every line of retreat.

It was the blunt hammer of modern warfare-a saturation strike.

The exact play professional forces used when facing King Phase and Transcendent Realm masters.

Against someone who could blur through space like Leander, chasing a direct hit was pointless. So, they erased the space he stood in. No matter how he darted or twisted, he would still be trapped inside the storm.

Within a net that thick, one armor-piercing round would be enough to cleave him in two.

Those rounds were more dangerous than they seemed, each packed with hidden steel shot. When detonated, the explosion hurled these pellets at incredible velocities, turning the air into a whirlwind of metal. Every shard struck with the force of a heavy sniper bullet.

Not dozens.

Hundreds.

Thousands.

Much like a fragmentation grenade, the real killer was the shrapnel, not the explosion itself. Those fragments punched through flesh and ripped muscle apart. Even a body-forging master would find it almost impossible to live through a storm like that.

Fire swallowed the heavens.

Smoke and dust surged outward in rolling waves, sealing the sky in chaos. Leander's silhouette vanished inside the maelstrom, erased from sight as the barrage closed in.

Far away, Torre and the others stood frozen. Their faces pale as they watched in shock and shared the same thought: With the air seals off, even Chief might be ground to dust.

"Yes!"

In the bunker, officers surged to their feet, eyes blazing. Watching him vanish under the barrage, they barely needed confirmation.

The AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter might not be the latest model, but it was more than sufficient against a single martial artist.

"See! I've said it already—keep Jeff at range and don't give him room to throw that weird flaming spear. Do that, and he can't hold a candle to modern weapons!"

Shrrk! A sudden blue flash ripped across the display.

Whoosh! The blue flash burst straight out of the smoke, punching upward into the clear sky.

Every voice in the room died.

Leander burst free from the barrage, enveloped in a flowing blue light, and shot upward through the clouds.

The veil of blue vapor coiled around his body, drifting like liquid light and pulsing with an uncanny glow. Steel pellets and shards poured into it, yet every impact rang as if against iron plating. Each piece rebounded harmlessly, unable to touch his body at all.

"He's still alive?!"

Inside the cockpits, faces turned ghostly white. A fleeting moment of hope quickly turned into stark panic. Amidst that wreckage-under a hail of shells-they couldn't understand how Leander remained standing.

Leander hovered about 300 feet above the ground when the blue glow around him flared. He drove his foot into empty air.

The sky buckled.

A massive footprint pressed into the void, as if an unseen layer had collapsed, and his body shot upward.

600 feet.

900 feet.

1,200 feet.

Each brutal stomp crushed the air and hurled him higher. After five such strides through the sky, Leander stood nearly 1,600 feet above the ground, alone in the open heavens.

"This... He..."

The officers stood motionless in front of the screen, their faces pale and eyes filled with disbelief.

The man in charge moved closer, his voice piercing the silence as if he were shouting directly at the image.

"How is this happening? Our intelligence can't be wrong. Even the King Phase master from a century ago could only step through a few hundred feet of an How is he up there?!"

No one answered.

They did not need to.

The impossible was unfolding right before them.

By then, the fifteen AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters scattered in every direction, rotors screaming as pilots tried to flee.

Still, too late.

Leander lifted his arm, and flames erupted, swirling around it to form a fiery longbow. The flames solidified into a glowing, burning arc. His fingers then found the string.

"Dragonfire! Windchaser Arrows!"

Leander breathed out softly and drew the bowstring to its limit. In a blink, fifteen firelit arrows formed along the string, with sparks dancing across their feathers.

He released.

The string recoiled, sending fifteen streaks of flame into the sky, diverging rapidly beyond recognition.

Each one hunted a target every last AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter in the sky.

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Whoosh!

Leander's eyes hardened as fifteen flaming arrows shot through the air, screaming and disappearing into the clouds at many times the speed of sound.

Screech!

Inside the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, alarms wailed. Pilots scattered in panic, breaking formation and yanking their gunships into wild evasive arcs.

It changed nothing.

The firelit arrows clung to them like living trackers, closing in no matter how hard they twisted or dove.

Boom!

A flash split the sky.

Then another.

Then another.

In moments, fifteen columns of fire tore open the heavens.

Burning wreckage rained down in spirals.

Leander plummeted from nearly 1,600 feet, then stabilized around 300 feet and hovered in the open sky, with blue light swirling around him like a living cloak. He appeared as a god of war forged from light.

"Hmph." A cold, slender smile flickered on his lips as the flames diminished. His eyes remained devoid of warmth.

His killing intent burned more fiercely than ever before. He had never wiped out so many in a single confrontation. Today, he was completely without restraint.

He was well aware that the force used against him was not from a simple rogue group but from a state-sponsored entity, backed and financed by a superpower.

A nation that could field AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters like this?

Only one answer fit—the Agylae.

The dominant power of the age was a nation that bent others with sheer military weight.

The thought brought no fear.

If they thought crushing him would serve as a warning to those King Phase masters from a century ago, then so be it.

He would carve the price of challenging Jeff Ashcroft into their memory.

Today, he activated Devourer Form, charged at rockets directly, tagged fifteen targets with spiritual strength, and eliminated them using Windchaser Arrows.

This was his reply.

Not even a powerhouse like Agylae could make him bow. He would carve the message into the world with his own strength: to every nation plotting his death, to anyone who wanted Jeff Ashcroft gone—killing him would never be that easy.

"Oh my God..."

From a distance, Torre and the rest stood frozen. Gisela's face drained of color, her lips parting into a silent circle as she stared.

Once, she had thought Leander was merely beyond human.

Now that idea felt foolish.

He had already torn through 3,000 soldiers alone, leaving nothing but wreckage behind. Tanks and armored vehicles had fallen like toys before him.

Then six AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters had been ripped from the sky, pierced through by flaming spears.

After that, fifteen more had tried to bury him in fire. Rockets and storms of steel had hammered down, yet he had walked away untouched. In return, he had loosed fifteen arrows, turning every helicopter into a falling star.

Gisela swallowed.

For her, this was no longer just a fight. It was a legend being etched into the clouds -something meant for gods, not mere humans.

"Chief... what are you?" someone whispered.

The Southern Wyvern Blade members exchanged looks, awe, and dread mirrored on every face.

They had known he was monstrous when Mason fell at Stormcairn River. They had sworn to chase his shadow forever. Yet, this was beyond chasing.

As they watched him cut through armies, overpower the era's most advanced weapons, and face rockets with only flesh and blood, they felt a legend forming in their hearts.

You could challenge a rival.

You could hunt a goal.

A legend? You could only look up.

Skyler's fist clenched before gradually relaxing. A helpless smile appeared on his lips.

He had first crossed paths with Leander in Ravenridge. Back then, he had dismissed him as just another washed-out kid, maybe even a hängeron for Frankie Leander showed some skill, sure, but to a Southern Wyvern Blade reserve like him, it hadn't seemed worth noticing.

He never treated Leander as a serious rival—only a small hurdle, a love competitor he thought he could easily dismiss.

Later, during a gathering of Ravenridge's elite, he learned Leander's true identity—Mornwick's Legend and the chairman of Jeff Enterprises.

Those two titles hit him like a crushing weight, wiping away his earlier contempt and everything he thought he understood.

That night, he knew he had lost. Still, it did not feel beyond saving. Though he left the banquet in disgrace, he clung to one belief with enough effort in the Southern Wyvern Blade, elight one day rise to Leander's he level.

Then Leander appeared at the Southern Wyvern Blade training base, quickly becoming their chief instructor and revealing himself as the top ranked martial artist on the Astria Power Index. The gap could no longer be ignored. When Douglas fell at Stormcairn River, the last trace of hope was shattered.

Even so, Skyler clung stubbornly to a faint hope that one day he might catch up,

share in that glory, and stand under the same sky.

Today destroyed it.

Only now did he realize that the dream had always been an illusion.

Leander had broken his view of the world and rewritten his understanding of power.

At last, Skyler accepted the truth: true strength could rise high enough to stand against even Earth's most advanced weapons.

The young man next to Gisela couldn't tear his gaze away from the blue-glowing figure overhead. His face had gone rigid with disbelief, and for several heartbeats, he couldn't even move.

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"How can someone like that exist in this world?" he whispered. "Is this really the world I live in? How many things are there that science just can't explain?"

His voice faded away. All his doubts about Leander, now sour in his chest, remained bottled up in silence.

High above, Leander hovered in silence. Blue light flickered around him, yet his Primordial Energy pulsed unevenly, clearly draining.

Moments earlier, he activated Windchaser Arrows, targeting the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters as they flew by, shooting them down one after another.

This incredibly drained him, using up both his Primordial Energy and spiritual strength.

With his current spiritual strength, he knew he could only perform that level of tracking art at most twice.

"Three days to recover... minimum."

The hollow ache in his spirit core elicited a faint smile as he shook his head, with a

hint of weary acceptance in his eyes.

If it hadn't been necessary to end the fight swiftly and eliminate all threats, he would

never have resorted to such a dangerous killing move.

He turned, ready to leave.

Then danger screamed through his senses.

His body snapped 100 feet sideways in an instant.

Swoosh!

A black streak shot past, leaving a trail of smoke that was too quick to see.

Leander's pupils tightened. "That's... a homing missile?"