

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 551[1,176 words]

Swoosh.

The Transcendent Realm masters couldn't hide their shock. What kind of fight demands that ten supersonic fighter jets scramble together?

One look at the formation told them enough—the jets weren't here to threaten. They were here to erase.

Their gazes shifted to the abandoned town below.

What could possibly be hiding there to draw this level of destruction?

Before anyone could find an answer, the supersonic fighter jets had already taken

their positions above the ruins. Panels under their wings opened, and they commenced their attack run, prepared to inundate the town with bombs indiscriminately.

Right then, a streak of brilliance tore out of the town.

It flickered into existence and vanished just as fast, like a phantom cut through space itself. The motion was so violent that even the watching Transcendent Realm masters couldn't follow it.

They caught only one thing—a slash of white.

Then it was already buried in the nose of the lead supersonic fighter jet.

"What was that?"

Inside the cockpit, a red alert suddenly screamed across the display. A hostile signal was closing in at over three times the speed of sound.

The pilot's breath caught.

Before he could shout a warning, the cabin shook.

Boom!

"What the hell?!"

The other pilots barely had time to register the blast when they saw it too—

The same pale streak ran directly through the cockpit of the most powerful supersonic fighter jet in the formation.

Boom!

The sky erupted.

A supersonic fighter jet vanished in a burst of fire, torn apart in midair as if an invisible blade had struck it.

"What... what just happened?"

In the command center, chairs scraped back as officers sprang to their feet. Everyone's eyes widened, and there was a brief moment of silence.

They couldn't make sense of what had just happened. One moment, a faint white arc sliced across the display, and then a frontline fighter had vanished from the sky. No one could identify that light or determine what kind of weapon could travel so fast and hit so hard that a warplane simply ceased to exist.

Even the Transcendent Realm masters observing from afar stiffened.

These were martial artists who stood at the summit of their era—some already bearing the aura of Infernal Crown Transcendents, untouchable beneath the King Phase. Yet none of them had ever dared imagine facing a modern air force directly. Against supersonic fighter jets, survival meant only one thing: evade and pray.

One missile was all it would take to end them.

And now...

A supersonic fighter jet that even they would fear—one that could force a King Phase master to retreat had just been erased before their eyes.

The impact of that sight crushed down on them.

For a long moment, no one could even breathe.

"What in the world was that?"

No one had time to finish the thought.

The sky answered instead.

Whoosh!

The pale streak flared once more, swiftly continuing without pause after slicing through the first jet. Driven by its own momentum, it plunged forward and struck another fighter before the formation had a chance to scatter.

Boom!

Another flame burst open in the air as a second aircraft came apart.

Now, real fear hit.

Across every cockpit, hands tightened on the controls. For the first time since they had taken to the skies, the pilots felt it was more than just danger.

It was something unfamiliar and incomprehensible—no textbook or simulator had ever prepared them for it.

"Break formation! Now!" a pilot roared over the comms.

The call prompted the squad to move out. Throttles were pushed forward quickly, and control sticks jerked as the fighters attempted to break apart.

Still, too late.

The white blur raced across the sky, silent and relentless, cutting through the formation like a scythe through wheat and leaving a trail of fire behind.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sky kept erupting—one blast after another—until eight thunderous detonations rolled across the clouds like the toll of a death knell.

From afar, over a dozen Transcendent Realm masters stood in shock, frozen in place with no one daring to move or breathe. A few of them noticed their hands trembling as the tremor persisted.

They were veterans of a time full of secrets, monsters, and forbidden legends. Unusual sights no longer astonished them.

Yet, this was beyond anything they had ever known.

Their mind raced. What is happening?

moved across the

A lone pale arom

sky, and in under thirty seconds, ten supersonic fighter jets disappeared each exploding into flames. They

only glimpsed a fall

crescent shape

in the air, unaware of the attack itself.

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Inside the command bunker, officers watched the screen with blank faces as ten

burning wrecks illuminated the display.

The room fell dead quiet.

At last, the commander spoke, his words dragging out as if they weighed a thousand pounds.

"Someone explain this to me."

His eyes remained glued to the

screen, his jaw clenched so tightly it hurt. A dull, heavy pain filled his chest as he watched all their
sent equipment disappear-ten

vene

supersonic fighter jets, not

twenty

Art Cobra attack helicopters armored columns, and countless heavy tanks.

That kind of hardware could have bought a kingdom-billions in steel and firepower.

And now?

All of it lay scattered across the battlefield as burning debris.

Yet the cost wasn't what gnawed at him.

What he couldn't let go of was that white streak.

What is it?

What type of force can penetrate ten targets in one swift pass, moving so quickly

that the eye cannot follow, and punching through steel as if it's paper?

That's the real nightmare.

Nearby, several officers finally recovered from their shock. Their faces changed from surprise to fear as they looked at the man in front of them.

The commander looked hollow, like the fight had been drained out of him.

"Sir," one of them whispered, "we underestimated Jeff Ashcroft."

Another added, barely louder, "This loss... It's catastrophic for the nation."

The commander didn't reply.

He stood still for a moment, shoulders tense. Suddenly, it was as if the years overwhelmed him all at once. The fire in his eyes faded, replaced by exhaustion.

Gradually, he lowered himself into his chair.

A heavy sense of defeat weighed on him as he looked at the screen, where the final flames flickered silently.

High above, the pale light finally slowed and came to a halt.

Only then did the masters of the Transcendent Realm clearly recognize it a crescent-shaped air blade, glowing softly and shimmering. It was breathtaking. to see, yet everyone understood it was overwhelmingly terrifying_

"What... is that?" someone whispered.

The crescent air blade hovered in silence.

Then, a burst of blue light erupted from the depths of the crumbled town below and shot upward into the sky.

The crescent air blade appeared to be summoned, trembling as it changed direction, rushing back to the blue glow, sinking into it before disappearing completely.

When the figure wrapped in blue radiance appeared, every Transcendent Realm master watching froze.

At last, they understood.

That crescent air blade had not been a natural phenomenon.

It had been an attack launched by a man.

Among them, the Infernal Crown Transcendent felt his pupils shrink.

He once ranked nineteenth on the International Combat Units list. He was at Aorinth Peaks then, and that face framed by soaring blue light is forever etched in his memory.

He had never imagined that the godlike or perhaps demonic-presence burned into his memory would be the one who had just erased ten supersonic fighter jets in moments.

After a brief silence, he finally spoke, "At last, it's him."

His voice was low and heavy with fear.

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 552[1,192 words]

"At last, it's him," the Infernal Crown Transcendent master murmured the words, yet every Transcendent Realm master around him caught them clearly. Power

sharpened their hearing far beyond that of normal men.

Heads turned at once-respect mixed with disbelief.

"Mr. Shaffer, you recognize him?" one asked.

Odron Shaffer, nineteenth on the International Combat Units list and known as the Rage Lion, no longer exuded the menace of a predator. His throat felt constricted, and his breath was short, as though an unseen force was choking him. Remaining airborne became impossible. He fell directly to the ground.

The others followed without hesitation, all eyes on him as they awaited his response.

Odom took a deep breath, gazed at the distant sound enveloped in blue light, and finally forced the truth from his lips. "He's Jeff Ashcroft. Ranked number one on the International Combat Units list, the most powerful man ever to live-the Iron Sovereign."

A wave of sharp breaths cut through the crowd. Silence crashed down like a heavy curtain.

Odron stayed frozen, eyes fixed on the blue-lit silhouette. His mind was pulled back to a nightmare he would never forget the Aorinth Peaks.

Back then, almost all the names on the International Combat Units list had assembled. The only two missing were the King of Thunder, ranked fourteenth, and the Sword Master of Yamora, fifteenth. Khaedor, the God of Madness, had led the group with Halia, the Flame Goddess. They planned to assault the core area and await the awakening of an ancient relic.

One command from Leander had shut everything down.

At that time, Leander was ranked fifth. Odron did not fear him; instead, pride swelled within him.

Let him offend everyone, he had thought. With Khaedor and Halia around, what can he really do?

That smug fantasy had shattered in moments.

Halia had suffered several brutal blows before she fled in panic. Khaedor had lost even more. In front of all the masters present, Leander ripped the Blood Clan wings from his back with his bare hands. Nicholas, the leader of the Bloodthorn Mercenaries, also died alongside him.

Then, fifteen Chief Arbitrators from the Arbitration Office had descended together.

Leander had faced all of them alone.

Every single one had fallen.

That battle had crowned him number one on the list. No rival, no equal.

From that moment, Odron took a strict oath: never to cross Jeff Ashcroft, regardless of the reason.

Fear once dominated his heart, but now his feelings surpassed mere fear-what he felt was reverence.

His mind shouted.

A single slash extending almost a thousand feet. One strike instantly destroyed ten supersonic fighter jets. What kind of monster can do that? Who could face such madness? Even a King Phase master stepping into this chaos might not do any better.

His eyes swept across the battlefield.

Outside the town, bodies lay stacked like broken dolls. Tank shells were torn into twisted scraps. Helicopter blades stuck out of the sand at uneven angles. The ground clearly showed signs of total destruction.

On the way here, Odron had believed two nations were clashing in the Sahar Wastes.

Now the truth was clear before him.

This was not war; it was Jeff Ashcroft.

That crescent air blade still burned in his mind. In a century of battles, Odron had never seen a weapon so terrifying. Even laser cannons looked like toys beside it.

In the past, a few King Phase masters had faced armies, but most of those battles involved no more than a few hundred infantry. That was nothing compared to what Leander confronted now-an entire special operations brigade built for modern combat. Only a handful had ever dared challenge the great powers of their age, and every one of them had been crushed by overwhelming firepower, erased from the field, and lost to history.

Leander had achieved the impossible. He had boldly entered modern warfare and emerged victorious.

Torre and the others watched from afar, their bodies locked stiff.

"That's our Southern Wyvern Blade chief instructor," Torre muttered, pride blazing across his face.

Skyler and his comrades snapped to attention. Their boots slammed together as sharp salutes flew through the air, all directed at the blue figure in the distance.

What Leander accomplished today defied simple description. One martial artist faced off directly against an entire army.

History would remember this moment.

Jeff Ashcroft, a mortal man, was standing alone at the summit.

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High above, Leander pulled the crescent air blade back into his spirit core. His complexion had turned pale, breath uneven.

That strike-Heavenrend Crescent-had been his ultimate move since cultivating his spiritual strength.

It was born from pieces of ancient texts after he broke into the Origin Realm, serving as a hidden trump card and his most ruthless creation. He intended to reserve it for the legendary King Phase masters who had vanished.

Using it here had never been part of the plan.

Supersonic fighter jets had forced his hand.

He had slipped into the town, dragging them into close-range bombing runs and breaking their locks. Only under those conditions could the Heavenrend Crescent unleash its true terror.

The attack moved at three to four times the speed of sound, yet its hunger for spiritual strength was monstrous. Barely thirty percent remained within him, even after pushing himself to the brink. The

overdraw had rattled his spirit core.

Without the Devourer Form and his Origin Realm foundation, that strike would have shattered his spirit core and scarred his soul forever.

Victory had come at a steep price.

Worth it, his heart insisted. Every d*mn bit of it.

A week would regain his spiritual strength. More significantly, the strain had hardened his spiritual strength, bringing him a firm step nearer to the next realm.

Blue radiance bathed his body, yet he remained coiled and alert. His senses pushed to their breaking point as his gaze swept the battlefield. Is this really over, or are more troops on the way?

The battlefield stayed deathly still as he counted the time in his head. After what felt like forever, he let the tension drain from his body, certainty taking hold at last. That's it. They have nothing left to throw at me.

The fight exhausted Leander completely, but no regret remained. Instead, his chest was filled with a fierce, electric excitement. This was precisely what he intended: to make everyone, especially the powerful rulers of this age, aware of the cost of crossing him.

The blue glow around him faded and disappeared. A sharp step broke the silence under his foot, causing him to lurch sideways as he soared over a thousand feet in a

flash.

Then a tiny dark speck floated close to his side, trying to slip away unseen. Leander darted forward and caught it midair.

A compact surveillance drone rested in his palm, its cold lens staring back at him.

He knew the minds behind this army were watching through that single eye.

So you're all hiding back there, he mused. Fine. Watch closely.

He aimed the camera at his face, raised a finger, and his tone was icy and firm. "Burn this into your memory. I, Jeff Ashcroft, will never forget. One day, I step onto your ground myself."

A smirk touched his lips as he added, "Every score gets settled."

His hand closed.

The drone crumpled and burst apart, fragments scattering into the air like ash.

On the 5th of October, Leander stood alone at the edge of the Sahara Wastes and defeated a thousand troops.

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 553[896 words]

Inside Astria's Mornwick Command, Darrow had been running on pure urgency.

Orders flew out one after another as he pushed covert teams toward Ivoria's border, right up against the Sahar Wastes.

Emergency channels remained open to four neighboring states, and their highest- ranking commanders were brought into the call.

One goal ruled the room: to get Leander back.

"What? An ambush in the Sahar Wastes? The target is General Ashcroft?"

The voices on the line grew tense. That name was familiar, and hearing it associated with a trap struck a deep chord.

"Who's bold enough to try this?"

"Qasara?"

"Angleland or Etrax making a move?"

"Agylae testing the waters?"

Questions collided, heavy and tense.

These men commanded great powers. They understood exactly what those nations could unleash when they chose to erase someone. Even Angleland and Etrax had long perfected methods meant to deal with peak martial artists.

Old rumors still lingered. Years ago, Etrax and Angleland had worked together to hunt down five King Phase masters and more than ten Transcendent Realm masters. No nation lacked tools designed to kill martial artists.

This time, Leander had walked straight into the Sahar Wastes.

Nothing about this felt random. Darrow could tell the Sahar Wastes had been turned into a cage, built in advance for the moment Leander stepped inside.

Leander was Astria's steadfast supporter, a recipient of the Guardian Medal, and the chairman of Jeff Enterprises. He embodied the nation's strength, and losing him would create an irreplaceable wound that Astria might never recover from.

Every commander on the call expressed the same idea: protect him at all costs, but avoid altering the political landscape of the Sahar Wastes.

Beep, beep.

A sharp alert cut through the room.

Darrow took the call at once. The report poured in.

His breath hitched.

"3,000 special forces? Twenty-four armored vehicles? Five rocket armored vehicles, fifteen heavy tanks, twenty-one AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters... and ten supersonic fighter jets?"

He did not bother lowering his voice. Every word of the call was heard.

The room went cold.

A dedicated special operations unit of this size alone could wear down a Martial Sovereign. With armor and rockets added, even a top Transcendent Realm master would find it difficult to survive. AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters could control entire regions, and supersonic fighter jets would finalize the advantage.

This isn't a hunt; this is extermination, more than one general realized. Against firepower like that, even the King Phase masters of a century past would fall.

Darrow's hand shook around the phone. As commander of Mornwick, he forced himself steady.

"General Ashcroft, what's his status? Have you located him?"

Darrow knew what "located" could imply. It might mean nothing more than a corpse on the sand. Even so, he held on to a single hope—that they would find Leander still breathing, broken perhaps, yet alive long enough to be pulled back from the edge. The report continued.

Faces on the screens changed from grim to stunned, with eyes widening. A few men leaned back as their strength seemed to drain away.

"What did you just report?" Darrow snapped. "Repeat it. Start from the beginning." He listened again, forcing every detail out.

Silence followed.

Then a laugh tore from his chest before he could stop it.

"Commander Leon, what is it?" someone pressed. "Is he down? Or do we still have hope?"

Darrow exhaled slowly, rubbing his brow.

"Confirmed from the front. General Ashcroft fought alone. The 3,000 special forces were wiped out. Every armored unit was destroyed. No survivors.

"All twenty-one AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters were taken down, and the ten supersonic fighter jets never made it back.

"Torre and the others have already boarded the evac chopper and left the Sahar Wastes. General Ashcroft has crossed Ivoria's line. He's safe."

Darrow recited the report from start to finish, leaving nothing out.

On the screens before him, the commanders initially showed minimal reaction, with only brief flickers passing across their faces.

By the time he reached the end, these same men—each governing a large part of Mornwick—appeared even more shaken than Darrow was just moments earlier.

What in the world are we even hearing?

More than a thousand soldiers... not driven back, not scattered, but wiped out completely. A modern formation loaded with heavy weapons, torn apart like paper. Then even the air force AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, supersonic fighter jets— every last one gone.

General Ashcroft is no longer just a martial artist; he has become a monster.

For a long stretch, the room stayed

dead silent as the generals stared at

their screens. Then, almost together,

they broke out in stunned protest "This is getting ridiculous!"

A faint grin lifted Darrow's lips.

"The emergency is over. This call ends here."

He closed the terminal, pride surging through his chest.

"Leander... how many times are you going to shake this world?"

The image of Leander standing alone against twenty-one AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters and ten supersonic fighter jets filled him with savage joy.

He thought, Now those so-called giants won't sleep tonight.

...

The clash in the Sahar Wastes spread like wildfire.

not

For the first time, a martial artist had smashed head-on into a modern army. Those Transcendent Realm master's who witnessed it could fo stay silent. News flooded into the International Martial Network rippling across every dark corner of the underground.

Forums exploded as headlines rocketed to the top.

'No. 1 Sovereign Crushes an Army.'

'Jeff Ashcroft Drags Fighters from the Sky.'

'A Great Power's Trap Shattered.'

Thread after thread climbed to the top.

The International Martial Network boiled.

The Global Assassin Network erupted.

Old monsters reemerged. Legendary stories, unheard for decades, came alive again. New names surfaced suddenly.

In a single night, the underworld shook to its core.

**From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding
Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 554[
1,138 words]**

Chaos ruled the International Martial Network.

'That's complete nonsense. Jeff Ashcroft taking down ten supersonic fighter jets alone? Who's buying that garbage?'

A Transcendent Realm master fired off the post, disbelief thick in every line.

A fresh Transcendent Realm cultivator followed right behind, openly questioning the story with clear skepticism.

'Dream on. Does anyone here know what modern armies can do? Even the King Phase monsters from a hundred years ago got forced underground. The Arbitration Office and the Church never dared clash with today's advanced weapons. One man beating cutting-edge war machines? That's fantasy.

'Jeff's powerful, no argument. He erased half the Chief Arbitrators back then. I respect that. Still, blind worship? Count me out.'

Soon, a Martial Sovereign added his take, 'Hah. People just stirring the pot. Breaking through 3,000 soldiers alone might be possible. Shooting down supersonic fighter jets? That crosses the line into fairy tales.'

The flood of replies kept rising. Nearly every post cast doubt on the claim that Leander had ripped supersonic fighter jets from the sky. Skepticism drowned the forums, with over ninety-five percent of members openly expressing doubt and disbelief about the story.

Then one account stood out.

It belonged to a Transcendent Realm master who had witnessed the battle in the Sahar Wastes.

'It's true. I was there. I saw it happen. Odron Shaffer, once ranked nineteenth on the International Combat Units list, saw it too!'

His reply hit like a bomb, drawing a flood of comments as everyone swarmed the thread.

'So you say you saw it, and that's proof?'

'Who's Odron Shaffer? If he's really there, why isn't he talking?'

'No evidence, no credibility. Stop wasting space.'

The thread turned on him in an instant. Comment after comment slammed down, stripping his words apart, with barely a single voice willing to agree.

Rage simmered within him, yet he could only stay silent behind the screen. No matter how tightly he clenched his fists, it was useless in this moment. All he could do was suppress it and endure the feeling of helplessness.

Right then, the International Martial Network's top banner flared to life.

'Footage Released: Jeff Ashcroft, No. 1 in History Brings Down Supersonic Fighter Jets!'

The headline blazed across every page.

Without a second thought, users clicked.

The instant the link was opened, the page refreshed, and an HD video took over every screen.

Ten supersonic fighter jets were already racing across the sky, closing in on a ghost town. Not even ten seconds passed before a pale streak erupted from the ruins below, tearing upward at a speed that rivaled their own. It punched straight through the formation.

The sky detonated.

Ten blazing fireballs burst apart one after another, scattering across the clouds as the wreckage fell.

Moments later, a column of blue light surged from the town and shot into the heavens. The camera sat far back, yet the image was sharp enough to make out a lone figure standing within that glow. The faint outline of a young face could still be seen.

He hovered in open air.

The white streak curved back, vanishing above his head.

The footage stopped without warning.

The clip was brief, yet its impact was crushing.

All the jeers and doubt vanished on the spot. Both the International Martial Network and the Global Assassin Network fell into stunned silence for several heartbeats.

Then the uproar exploded.

Cries of shock and awe flooded the forums, racing across every thread like wildfire. 'No way... that was real? Someone really take down the supersonic fighter jet?' 'D*mn! That blue glow has to be Jeff!'

'Right! Someone described his energy barrier as always blue!'

'This is insane. Even King Phase monsters can't do that. What is he now?'

'I take it back. The Iron Sovereign is beyond comparison!'

Threads ignited across every board. Doubt collapsed under undeniable proof.

Martial circles went into a frenzy, and assassin circles erupted with chaos. Leander's name quickly dominated every front page. View counts skyrocketed into the million's within minutes. Nearly every martial artist saw it-regardless of skill level, anyone with access piled into the clip.

At the Shadow Division Base in Highcliffe, a woman in a training suit moved through the Eternal Flow Art. Each motion flowed like silk, spiritual strength rolling from her palms in steady waves. Her cultivation

matched the very best of Astria's

younger generation, standing

alongside names like Daphne and

Ethan.

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A little girl rushed in, hugging a laptop. "Anastasia, look! Something huge just broke online!"

The woman was Anastasia of the Shadow Division, someone who had once crossed paths with Leander. Her form never slowed, and not a trace of emotion showed on her face as she continued to move.

"What now? More noise about Jeff and supersonic fighter jets?" Her voice carried cool dismissal. "That kind of rumor isn't worth attention."

She shot the girl a stern look.

"Look at you. So much talent, and you still won't train seriously. The Shadow

Division chose you to become a pillar, not a rumor addict."

She still recalled that visit with

Nixon, another member of the Shadow Division. They had gone to confront Leander, believing the could control him! However they were harshly rejected. It was the first

major hit to her pride, and since then, just hearing his name would dampen her spirits.

The girl stuck out her chin, irritation written all over her face. She tipped her head up, eyes blazing with stubborn pride. "Fake news? It's all over the net now! There's actual video proof. Jeff really wiped out ten supersonic fighter jets in a single strike!" "Video?" Anastasia's calm finally cracked. Her eyes moved to the screen as the girl clicked the link. The footage played, and once it finished, Anastasia stayed frozen in place.

She had met Leander before. Despite the faint blue glow and his half-visible face, she recognized his features instantly.

It was him.

"This clip... It doesn't seem like a digital forgery, does it?" Anastasia asked, her voice tinged with disbelief.

Shaking her head, the girl quickly responded, "I was curious too when I first saw it. I had experts inspect it, and there's no CGI or compositing involved. It's genuine raw footage taken with high-end micro lenses."

Anastasia went still.

Her mind reeled. That troublesome man... Is he really this terrifying now?

She had never imagined he could rise to a level where even supersonic fighter jets meant nothing to him.

Yet, her shock was only the beginning.

By the afternoon of 7th October, the story had broken out of the martial world and into the wider internet. Across forums and major platforms, a single headline shot to the top of every trending list: 'Superhuman Brings Down Supersonic Fighter Jets!'

Every link led to the same clip the complete recording of Leander annihilating ten supersonic fighter jets in one strike. Office workers, college students, and even kids scrolling for fun all stumbled onto it.

Shares surged, causing traffic to exceed peak limits. As a result, multiple major sites were overwhelmed and buckled under the sudden surge.

Within hours, the video had become a nationwide phenomenon.

Jeff Ashcroft's name spread to every corner of the web.

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 555[961 words]

"Holy hell... What am I looking at? Is that Superman?"

Inside the internet cafe, a blue-haired teenager froze in front of his monitor, shock clear on his face. His reaction drew a few friends away from their games, and they gathered around to see what had caught his eye.

They were browsing Twitter when a single clip skyrocketed to the top of the trending list, claiming the number-one spot. The caption boldly declared, 'Superman vs. Supersonic Fighter Jet.'

The video was played below. A figure lit up in blue light sped across the screen, and as the scene unfolded, the group appeared increasingly surprised. None of them could quite accept what they were watching.

"No way that's real. Nobody moves like that. He just smacked a jet out of the sky, didn't he?"

More voices rose from around the gaming cafe. Almost everyone had already seen the clip that had just been pinned to the top of the trending board.

"Come on, this has to be some blockbuster trick. There's no way it's real. It's a bad joke," someone snorted.

"Exactly. Trash like this still hits number one, with people sharing it nonstop. That's what's truly ridiculous," another voice shot back.

Mockery echoed through the gaming cafe, yet a few people fell silent. Those involved with cameras or editing footage moved nearer to their screens, their eyes filled with astonishment.

They knew the truth: no digital magic could produce something this realistic. The clarity was too perfect, and the movement felt too genuine.

The blast was shredding a supersonic fighter jet, with a blue streak moving faster than the eye can follow.

Everything in the clip appeared genuine, untouched, and unaltered.

This indicated that what we saw was real: a blue-lit figure had forcibly dragged ten supersonic fighter jets from the sky in a single sweeping motion, gliding effortlessly through the air.

A single thought gnawed at everyone watching.

Is this... actually Superman?

At Goldenridge Arts Academy, soft afternoon light streamed through the window of a girls' dorm. A young woman sat on the sill with a book resting on her knees. Birds fluttered past the glass, yet her gaze never wavered from the cover: "The Craft of the Stage."

She was Madeline.

Since joining Glorious Entertainment's star-making machine, her ascent had been rapid and direct. Only the global diva Maeve surpassed her among Astria's singers and movie stars. With ten albums and ninety-six songs, she was at the peak of fame.

The company had pushed for a nationwide tour. She had refused.

Her voice alone was not enough. A true concert required greater elements-mastery of stage timing, the endurance of martial arts, and a commanding presence capable of captivating an audience immediately.

After consulting her team, she decided to seek their support. She enrolled at Goldenridge Arts Academy for six months of intensive training to refine every aspect of her performance.

It had already been two weeks since she arrived.

"Madeline! You have to see this!"

She had been engrossed in her book when a roommate bounced off her bunk and rushed over barefoot, thrusting a tablet forward.

"Look! Superman!"

Madeline offered a small, helpless smile and lowered her gaze. In the next heartbeat, her pupils snapped wide, shock flaring through her eyes as her breath caught. "This..."

On the screen, a blue beam of light soared into the sky. A solitary figure hovered between the ground and clouds. Only a side profile was visible, but the recognition was immediate.

"Leander?"

Her fingers tightened around the tablet as she stared, unable to blink.

At Highcliffe University, Yvette walked along a garden path in a flowing boho dress with a friend when gentle guitar strings floated across the lawn. A young man stepped forward, singing "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. Students soon gathered, clapping along. The scene looked rehearsed to perfection.

He moved straight to Yvette, dropped to one knee, and accepted a bouquet passed in from behind.

"Yvette, give me a chance, yeah?"

Cheers rose as several girls watched with starry eyes. The singer, a campus heartthrob, was admired for his good looks, singing talent, height, and charm, making him the dream guy to most of the girls.

Yvette paused, then offered a calm smile. "Sorry. I already like someone."

The air cracked.

The bouquet froze halfway.

Yvette and her friend walked past without slowing.

Her friend sighed, then her phone buzzed. One glance at the group chat made her gasp. "Yvette, look at this! Is this real? Superman?"

Yvette leaned in. The moment the blue figure shot upward, her pupils shrank. "That's Lean. What's happening out there?"

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Within half a day, the clip of Leander destroying ten fighters over the Sahar Wastes went viral. It dominated trending charts, broke click records, and continued to rise.

Names caught fire across the net-Blue Phantom, Superman, the Undying.

The footage ripped through WhatsApp chats, Telegram groups, feeds, and forums— the net split in two. One side swore it was real, while the other screamed fake. Arguments raged without pause.

One truth could no longer be denied. Leander bringing down a supersonic fighter jet had already become common knowledge across the web.

In Astria, Darrow and several

top-ranking generals rushed into an emergency video briefing. After a brief but heated exchange, they reached the same conclusion. This storm had to be cut off at the source.

Orders went out at once.

Their influence was thrown at major search portals. Direct lines opened to WhatsApp and other leading platforms. Every side was pressed for one goal-to erase the footage, block its spread, and smother the sing attention before it burned any hotter.

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No one there underestimated the danger. Once the public truly witnessed such power, the hidden world of martial artists would no longer stay secret.

If that door opened, the age ahead would be far more unruly and divided.

Darrow shut his terminal and relaxed into his rosewood chair, with his brow furrowed. A murmur escaped his lips.

"Leander, you need to come home now."

His gaze hardened.

"This era is about to lose control because of you."

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 556[1,065 words]

Deep in Yelem, the sacred city of Dechor, hidden within the Sahar Wastes, Leander rested in the open courtyard pool of the Yelem Hotel. Cool water cradled his body while faint ripples shimmered under the desert sun.

The hotel was busy with nobles, magnates, and elites, but no one dared approach. About 300 feet away, men in black suits stood silently in a line. Every 30 feet, a guard blocked the way. Several newly grown clans of Yelem had organized this, turning the courtyard into a private sanctuary for Leander.

After Leander had crushed the Hermit and wiped out the armed forces along the border, those families treated him like a divine.

Whatever he asked for, no one refused.

Once broke through Ivoria's border defenses and demolished their air support, Leander quickly turned toward Yelem. The intense confrontation had drained him, and he sought a place of complete silence. Among the vast lands of the Sahar Wastes, only Yelem offered that kind of sanctuary—a place where outsiders wouldn't dare enter, allowing him to recover quietly.

Thin white marks traced his skin, shallow cuts left by metal beads packed inside rocket shells.

Those pellets had struck harder than rifle rounds.

They had failed to pierce his Devourer Form, yet they still carved faint marks across his flesh. Beneath the clear pool water, the pale scars were already fading, healing at a pace the eye could follow as his skin slowly returned to its natural tone.

Leander floated on his back, arms relaxed and breaths steady. To the naked eye, a gentle glow could be seen enveloping his entire body. It flowed along his skin in steady loops, as though quietly siphoning spiritual strength from the pool.

Eyes closed, thoughts vacant. He remained in that state for a full day and night. Just then, footsteps broke the stillness.

A round-bellied local Yelem man in a tailored suit hurried in, waved through by the guards. He stopped at the pool's edge and bowed deeply. "Mr. Ashcroft."

Leander kept his eyes shut. His lips barely moved as his voice drifted out, calm and low. "Give me the latest. What's changed?"

The man was the chairman of the Yelem Hotel. The great families had ordered him to monitor the International Martial Network and the Global Assassin Network.

"Nothing unusual in Yelem. No strange movement across the Sahar Wastes either. One matter did come up..."

"Go on," Leander demanded.

The chairman placed a laptop beside the pool. "A video of you went online. It spread everywhere. The whole world is watching."

Leander paused, then his eyes flew open. "It reached the public? Show me."

Without a hand gesture, the laptop lifted from the tiles and hovered before him. Once he saw the clip flooding every corner of the web, realization struck. "Agylae... you play a crafty hand."

Leander did not doubt the source.

That angle could only come from the pinhole lens on the drone he had smashed to pieces.

What he never expected was this. They had thrown the footage straight into the open.

His face was blurred, and the image seemed distant. Nevertheless, it felt as if he had been thrust onto a world stage, vulnerable to countless eyes and at the heart of a global storm. That intention puzzled him more than anything.

What game are you trying to run, Agylae?

Leander visited several Dechor websites and kept seeing the same thing. Every homepage featured the clip prominently locked at the top. The situation struck him as so absurd that he couldn't tell whether to laugh or sigh.

What caught his eye most were the silly nicknames in the comments-names unrelated to him but spreading quickly.

He let the laptop drift back down and closed his eyes again before saying, "Prepare a full set of medicinal herbs. Rare stock only. The older, the better."

The chairman stiffened. This was Yelem, not Astria. They didn't deal in medicinal herbs, but he knew those major families kept hidden private reserves. He nodded promptly and went to fulfill the order. Before long, the poolside returned to silence.

Leander's spiritual strength kept gathering, drop by drop.

...

On the International Martial Network, the clip lit another fire.

Old veterans emerged from years of silence.

'If he can tear down supersonic fighter jets, his strength already surpasses the King Phase masters from a century ago.'

'History just shifted. A single man crushed an army and walked away. That deserves to be written in blood.'

'Hah. I said it a month ago-Jeff

ita

already hit King Phase. People

laughed at me back then. So what now? Tanks, jets, the whole army.

still Couch him. To everyone who argued with..

me before, say

Say it

loud-is Jeff a King Phase master or not?'

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Threads exploded. Replies stacked faster than screens could refresh.

Back at the Ashcroft home in

Highcliffe, Ethan sat beside Reginald

in front of a growing screen. "Grandpa, Leander was filmed this time, and the clip is everywhere. Trouble is coming, right?"

The worry in Ethan's voice was justified.

Martial artists existed, yet most ordinary people had never truly seen that world. This clip dragged it straight into daylight.

Reginald pushed himself up with his cane, offering no reply. He had barely taken a step when a rough coughing sound suddenly blared from the speakers.

Both turned back, eyes narrowing in surprise.

A massive banner stretched across the top of the International Martial Network.

"The King?" Ethan repeated the two words, confusion plain on his face. Reginald froze for a heartbeat, then burst out in sudden disbelief. "The King? King Phase?" Shock rippled through his eyes. "Could this be... the old King Phase Rankings?"

The shock did not stop with the Ashcrofts.

Around the world, every leading martial artist who saw that banner stiffened. The ancient figures who remembered deeper history drew cold breaths, eyes locked on those words.

...

Deep beneath Europa, a figure pushed open the heavy doors of a hidden palace and stepped inside to face the 16 Supreme Arbiters.

"Your Highnesses, urgent news."

The middle-aged man in a white shirt moved forward, his tone level and unhurried.

"The King Phase Rankings have surfaced."

The hall appeared to freeze the

In

moment he spoke. The air grew ice-cold, and sixteen piercing gazes like sharp blades fixed on him. Despite being in his King Phase cultivation he experienced a tight chest and had temporary difficulty breathing.

From the central throne, a voice rolled out. "Vanfleet. Is this confirmed?"

The middle-aged man in the white robe gave a heavy nod, his expression grave.

Silence stretched.

Then the central voice thundered once more. "Deliver my order. East and West alike, let all hear it. From this moment on, the King Phase Accord stands broken."

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 557[1,434 words]

There was a sprawling bamboo forest by the Eastern Sea's shore. The green stalks seemed to loom over every living being as they tried their best to pierce the sky.

One could find large bamboo leaves flitting down to the ground as the bamboo stood in defiance against man. Yet, if one looked closer, they would be able to find a cabin tucked away between the mountain groves.

This bamboo forest with its dangerous beasts was supposed to be a no-man's land. Yet, someone was actually living here.

The cabin wasn't much to look at as it was made entirely out of bamboo. It seemed hewn together somehow without a single nail or peg to hold it in place. The cabin felt like a building built out of LEGO blocks, with how seamlessly the bamboo interlocked with each other.

It was obvious that whoever built it was a master craftsman.

There were a few split logs scattered on the ground, and a hatchet stuck in a block of wood. Still, what was supposed to be a messy courtyard exuded a strange sense of harmony.

Meanwhile, the few household items that could be seen through the window had been neatly arranged. Everything seemed to be where it needed to be, with not a single speck of dust in sight. That could only mean that the owner was likely to be a meticulous person.

However, they were nowhere to be found.

Moss had crawled up the massive rock outside the cabin. Nevertheless, the words etched on the rock could still be seen as clear as day-Verdellis Cabin.

The calligraphy didn't seem like anything special. Still, one would notice a seemingly defiant aura exuding from it if they took a closer look. It was an aura that could sweep whoever was standing before it right off their feet with the force of a cavalry 10,000 strong.

Just then, a tall figure could be seen ambling through the bamboo forest. He had six scars on his scalp, scars that could only be formed through scarification. He had a long white beard, a string of rosary beads around his neck and wrists.

His lips were moving as he wandered around the bamboo forest.

Oddly enough, he made no sound despite stepping on the thick blanket of bamboo leaves, making him ever so mysterious.

A few minutes later, he finally made his way to the cabin, clasped his hands together, and murmured solemnly, "Amen."

Then, he continued, "I have come a long way, old friend. Aren't you going to invite me in for tea?"

Leander would've recognized this mysterious man if he were here. After all, this was none other than Master David Branson. The same person who had gone all the way to Highcliffe to stop Galen from blowing himself up.

Nonetheless, David had also been a good friend of the most powerful man in Astria -the Dragon Emperor.

When he spoke, his words seemed to echo through the valley. However, it did not carry any malice. Rather, his voice seemed to meld with nature itself.

Alas, all he got in return was silence. David continued to stand by the cabin, silently waiting.

The bamboo leaves danced with the wind, filling the air with their whispers. David didn't budge as he felt the breeze flutter. Instead, he thumbed his rosary beads as he murmured hymns under his breath.

This stall lasted for 30 minutes. Yet, he had never once taken another step toward the interloper.

Suddenly, a figure appeared deep in the bamboo forest, his gait uneven and tentative. It was a middle-aged man with a scruffy beard. He looked unkempt with his long, messy hair that he'd thrown over his shoulders.

He was carrying a stack of firewood on his back. Now that he was closer, one could tell that his swaying steps were just an illusion. Instead, his steps were steady as he strolled through the bamboo forest like just an ordinary Joe.

Still, it was strange how he, too, made no sound despite trampling the leaves on his way home.

He brusquely walked past David, saying nothing. The two men continued doing whatever it was they were doing, behaving as though they were mere strangers.

The middle-aged man's eyes shone. His eyes didn't seem to fit the rough hemp clothes he was wearing. Regardless, he didn't bother offering David a stool, nor did he question David. Instead, he rolled up his sleeves and went about chopping wood.

Alas, it didn't look like he had the strength to do so, what with how his hatchet had only left a shallow cut on the bark.

It took him a good 20 minutes just to complete a task that a full-grown man could've finished in minutes. Yet, he kept at it anyway, continuing what seemed to be an arduous activity for little gain.

David never once moved a muscle despite how wooden chips would come flying his way.

The silence between them seemed to stretch on forever. By the time the middle-aged man had finally gone through all the firewood, the sun was already readying itself for bed.

Only then did he set his hatchet aside as he started bunching the logs together. Although he had been hard at work for hours, his hands showed no signs of stress. His fingers looked like works of art as he continued to work the logs together.

Soon, a stool was formed under his deft hands. He had somehow hewn the logs into place without any glue or nails. He was so skilled that even the world's finest carpenters could only watch in awe.

A smile bloomed on his face as the stool came to be. Then, he slid the furniture to David.

"It takes quite a bit to make a sturdy chair. Thank you for your patience, David."

He had referred to David as though they were good friends, his tone casual and friendly.

It was actually quite daring of him. After all, David was in charge of the Ancient Lingster Sanctum and was known to be one of the strongest people alive. He had achieved unimaginable heights with his cultivation.

So much so that he could eliminate Infernal Crown Transcendent martial artists with a flick of his fingers.

His name was known far and wide for at least a century. Furthermore, most, if not all, of the martial artists in Astria had received his teachings. Yet, this middle-aged man was referring to David without his rightful title?

What was even crazier was that David didn't mind at all! Instead, he merely smiled and sat on the stool.

"It's been 70 years. Yet, I can see that you haven't lost your touch," David replied with a slight bow.

The man chuckled as he grabbed a flask of wine from his belt. "You're in luck. Not only do you get to sit in a new chair I've just made, but you could also have a taste of this fine drink I have with me."

Then, he took a swig from the flask before tossing it over to David.

David, who had been serving the Lord for decades, didn't bother with pleasantries and courtesies. Instead, he tossed his head back and chugged it down as though he was just another drunkard by the streets.

After a beat, he smacked his lips and remarked, "This is some fine wine. I didn't think you'd be able to master the skill of brewing whilst working on your carpentry. I can already imagine the pain of yearning for a wine as fine as this once leave."

Pel

The middle-aged man plopped himself on the ground as he faced David with a genuine smile on his face. The two men painted a strange picture After all, who would ever picture a rustic Villager with O someone as renowned as David?

Yet, it was obvious that they had a relationship that went way back.

"It's called Verdelle Springs. I brewed it with the spring water I specially curated from this grove. So, it's naturally going to be one of the best wines you could ever taste in your lifetime," he said lightly, his voice devoid of any signs of bragging.

Just then, something caught his attention. He had noticed something off with the

string of rosary beads in David's hand. There was one bead missing.

His eyes narrowed at the sight.

"David, you—"

David stopped him with a raised palm, his lips curling into a serene smile. Suddenly,

a strong force burst forth, shattering all his rosary beads.

"The man you knew as Master Branson is no more. Call me David, the Wanderer. I've decided to leave seclusion. What about you, Dragon Emperor?"

That scruffy man in front of him was no mere villager at all. Instead, he was once a

mighty man who'd ruled over Astria's martial realm. He was none other than the Dragon Emperor of Astria, Caelius Valedrake.

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 558[1,391 words]

"What about you, Dragon Emperor?"

David's eyes fell on Caelius, his gaze turning distant as he recalled the day they first met 70 years ago.

Astria had been in turmoil at the time. The Western Navy had bombed its way through Astria's ports, while the Jesundese cavalry had gouged a ruinous path through Astrian soil. Two forces were frothing at the mouth to have their cut of Astrian riches.

A devout cleric like David couldn't just sit on the sidelines upon witnessing the death and destruction wrought about his nation. So, he left the church, ready to devote himself to the war effort. He wanted to save the people and chase the invaders away.

Caelius had been the first person he'd met after leaving the church.

The King Phase was a thing of the past during World War II. At least, it had been a thing of the past for 30 years. However, it could erupt at any moment. How did they notice? Simple, the two of them had noticed something amiss during the chaotic times.

The Arbitration Office and the Western Church had sneakily sent King Phase martial artists to Astria, turning already murky waters even murkier.

As if that weren't enough, Jesund had summoned several King Phase demons to possess their military men to conquer Astria in the name of their nation.

So, Caelius and David had formed a Martial Alliance. They had joined forces with the Twinfang Sect, the Righteous Sect, the Clarity Palace, and other powerful Astrian sects to keep invading forces at bay.

Caelius and David had fought in countless battles together. During that time, they crushed many Western and Jesundese King Phase figures and won the respect of Astria's martial world. In time, people began to revere them as the Paragons of the Martial Alliance.

They had boosted Astrian morale with their prowess in battle. Soon, the invaders were driven out of the nation one after another. Still, not all of them left, especially not the King Phase martial artists.

There had been 15 King Phase martial artists lurking in Astria. Of 15, 10 belonged to the Arbitration Office and the Western Church.

Caelius and Branson ran themselves ragged, trekking across Astria just to punt them back to their respective factions. Eventually, they managed to do just that, dirtying their hands with some of the invaders' blood.

The Arbitration Office flew into a rage upon learning about their loss. So, they started using the King Phase Accord as a justification to call for Caelius and Branson's heads. Sure enough, 16 Supreme Arbiters descended upon Astria and swarmed Caelius like a plague of locusts.

Caelius had been forced to flee for his life from those 16 martial artists, whereas David had been wounded by three of the strongest Supreme Arbiters in their ranks.

Ever since then, one had been living in hiding in the wilderness while the other had returned to his church. Neither had bothered showing their faces in public ever again.

Time passed, and it had been 70 years since their defeat. Yet, David could still remember the terror they had experienced on that fateful day.

His eyes blazed with determination as he looked at Caelius. Honestly, he had already made his intentions known the second he had chosen to discard the title "Master".

A cleric was supposed to uphold harmony. He should strive to perfect his hymns and cultivate inner peace. However, a wanderer was free to do whatever he pleased. He could play the good Samaritan; he could chase away the evil forces lurking in the shadows.

Freedom of duty was what separated a cleric from a wanderer.

Caelius' beard flapped against the wind as silence fell upon them. After a while, he said lightly, "You know full well what happened that day. Those 16 Supreme Arbiters will hunt us down if we leave seclusion."

David grinned as he replied nonchalantly, "Are you telling the great and mighty Dragon Emperor is afraid of some lowly worms from the Arbitration Office?"

Caelius' eyes sharpened at the jest as he answered solemnly, "I'm not afraid of any of them, but have you considered what would happen if we do this? What do you think would happen to Astria? No, that's not quite right. Have you considered that our decision will cause another world war?"

"Do you want to see another War of the King Phase?"

David's pupils contracted as he envisioned the bloody consequences coming to life. Both he and Caelius represented the Eastern faction's King Phases. If they showed their faces, the 16 Supreme Arbiters from the West would be the least of their problems. They would also have to face the Western Church and their King Phases. When that happened, the world would be embroiled in war once more. That wasn't even considering the amount of destruction that would happen once they, as King Phases, battled it out.

After all, the amount of destruction they could wreak upon the Earth was on par with modern superpowers of the 21st century.

It had been peaceful thus far. So, David was well aware that Caelius would rather suffer this indignity than trigger a war that would cost at least millions of lives.

He let out a thoughtful hum before saying, "I understand your concerns, Dragon Emperor. However, I know something you don't. Would you like to know what it is?"

Caelius tilted his head in question, waiting for him to spill the beans.

David slowly rose to his feet and continued, "The King Phase Rankings have returned."

A powerful aura surged forth the second those words fell from his lips, threatening to overwhelm him with its might.

The looming bamboo stalks toppled down with a resounding thump, and each stalk had been snapped in half

through the middle. It was as if the aura was like a rippling blade slicing square meter circle.

Joe stalks in a 500.

Caelius' eyes hardened as he turned to David. "The King Phase Ranking has returned? How could this be?"

To them, the King Phase Rankings were a part of history older than even them. That was because it had first appeared 120 years ago. At the time, King Phase martial artists were quite literally kings of their respective nations.

The King Phase Rankings were basically a public ranking of those King Phases' combat power.

Besides, that was 120 years ago, when computers didn't even exist. There was no such thing as the internet, where everyone and anyone had the information they wanted at the tips of their fingers.

So, the rankings had been spread through Morse code and various underground channels before arriving at the ears of those in the martial world.

The King Phase Accord was formed after the War of the King Phase that had occurred at least a century ago. The surviving King Phases promptly went into hiding, and the King Phase Ranking vanished from the face of the Earth.

As a result, it had been 100 years since it had resurfaced.

It didn't even show up when Caelius and David had fought the King Phases from the Arbitration Office and Jesund.

Yet, it has returned?

"It's because of Jeff Ashcroft," David murmured with barely hidden excitement.

"Jeff had wiped out 3,000 soldiers at the borders of Ivoria's Sahar Wastes. I'm talking about an army with several armored vehicles and heavy tanks.

"Then, he sent 21 attack helicopters crashing and sliced apart 10 supersonic fighter jets with a single sweep of his air blade. Yesterday afternoon marked the second day of his monstrous showing, and he has chosen to reopen the King Phase Rankings on that day.

"Do you understand what this means? This is a whole new era! An era that belongs

to the King Phases!"

The solemn look vanished from Caelius' face when he heard David talk about Leander's strength. In fact, he looked rather disbelieving when he heard the part about Leander wiping the floor with 10 supersonic fighter jets.

It took a few seconds for Caelius to regain his composure. "Jeff Ashcroft, huh? He

really did make it this far. It seems I wasn't wrong about him."

His lips pulled back into a smile as his eyes glinted defiantly.

"It took two of us to carry the burden of being the Eastern faction's King Phase representatives. Now, we have Jeff in our ranks. I wonder just what @rt of fresh air he would bring to our rickety old bones. Let's go We should get in touch with some of our old friends.

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"Our 70 years of hiding are over. It's now time for the Martial Alliance to bare its

fangs once more!"

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 559[1,257 words]

Leander had no idea that the tides were shifting once more. So, he was currently relaxing in the central pool at Yelem Hotel. It had taken him three days to recover his strength. However, it was worth it as his spiritual strength had become stronger after his battle. He could tell that he was a step away from reaching his peak.

Since he was relaxing in the pool, he only had a pair of shorts on. So, Celia, who had come from the garden, couldn't help but flush at the sight of his well-defined muscles on display.

Nevertheless, she quickly snapped herself out of it and said, "Master Leander, you have a guest."

Leander didn't even budge as he replied lazily, "Nathan and the others have already returned to Astria. Maeve has gone on tour. So, who is it?"

Celia sat by the pool, scooped a handful of water, and poured it down his shoulder. "It's someone from the government. She's very insistent on seeing you, saying that it's important. Oh, and she said she's General Leon's daughter?"

"General Leon's daughter, you say?" Leander's eyes fluttered open as he slowly straightened himself out of his lazy slouch.

He quite liked Darrow. After all, he had defended him multiple times in the past.

Although Leander didn't exactly need the help and could easily resolve those annoyances, it would definitely result in a few... or more than a few deaths. All in all, it would be way too troublesome. So, he rather respected a man like Darrow.

Therefore, he didn't turn this government official away now that he knew that she was Darrow's daughter. Instead, he immediately left the pool. A second later, the water droplets on his body evaporated, steaming off his skin.

"Let's go and see what she wants."

It must be something important. After all, she had come all the way to Sahar Wastes from Astria. He casually threw on a bathrobe, uncaring that it had left a wide expanse of his chest for the world to see as he strode out the door.

A woman was standing outside the Yelem Hotel's presidential suite. Her posture

was as straight as an arrow, and every move she made screamed military discipline. All it took was one look, and anyone could tell that she came from a well-to-do family.

However, it was the military edge to her actions that proved that she was definitely Darrow's daughter, Dahlia Leon.

As she stood by the door, she couldn't help but look down at her watch with a frown. She'd been waiting at the door for 30 minutes, which was definitely out of the norm. With her status, she could count on one hand the people who would dare to keep her waiting this long.

Then again, the person she was waiting for was no ordinary man. Although she was somewhat annoyed, she still continued to wait patiently out of duty and curiosity.

Suddenly, she heard the sound of footsteps. Her head snapped toward the sound. Only to find a young man in a bathrobe approaching her.

The young man standing before her was undoubtedly handsome with his deep eyes and sculpted figure. However, his bathrobe and his bare feet screamed, "Improper!" Dahlia, who hailed from a military family, could barely keep a grimace off her face at the sight.

Could he be General Ashcroft? she wondered, somewhat in disbelief.

Leander's voice brought her back to the present as he said, "I'm sorry for the wait, Ms. Leon."

He sounded nothing as he looked at the moment. His voice was impassive, catching Dahlia off guard.

Although Dahlia found Leander's choice in clothing a little... off-putting, she quickly rallied herself and nodded respectfully in greeting. "Good day, General Ashcroft. I'm Dahlia Leon, a special investigator stationed at Mornwick."

Leander nodded in understanding and opened the door with a flick of his wrist. "Come with me."

Then, he walked to the floor-to-ceiling window and looked over Yelem's skyline. He seemed like a proper King Phase just then as he looked at the scenery with the arrogance of a king.

He now had a proper gauge of his strength after sending 10 supersonic fighter jets crashing down the Sahar Wastes all by himself.

Dahlia followed him into the suite.

Leander turned to look at her and gestured to the couch. "Have a seat."

Dahlia nodded and sat across from

him. Even though he was in his bathrobe, he didn't feel discomfited at his lack of proper clothing. His

eyes remained as in

remained as impassive as ever despite being in the same room with someone as influential as Dahlia.

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Celia busied herself with making them tea.

"Ms. Leon, why did you come all this way to Yelem?" Leander leaned against his couch as he asked with a slight smile.

Dahlia was ready for that question. She turned her laptop on as she explained, "General Ashcroft, I'm sure you've heard about what happened online recently."

Leander replied calmly, "Are you talking about that video that's been trending recently?"

Dahlia nodded in in affirmation as she continued, "The video first appeared on the International Martial Network. That isn't the issue. The problem is that it was later spread across the web two hours later. We still couldn't find the source.

"Now, it's not just being reported by all major newsletters in Astria, but has also been shared to every major news company and social platform worldwide. In fact, it's now trending everywhere, and I mean everywhere.

"You're one of the strongest generals we have. So, we've used all our resources to keep things hush-hush. The government haonet"

already made a public

overnet

announcement informing the that the video was

masses

generated by AI. hope you can understand why we've done this."

Leander waved her concerns away. "I'm fine with letting the government take the lead when it comes to this. I'm fine with any of their decisions."

He knew that martial artists would be thrust into the spotlight if the government admitted that the video was real. This knowledge would only cause unwanted panic in the masses.

Anyone who was taught since childhood that superpowers and superheroes were just fiction would find this insane. After all, what else could they call martial artists who could shrug off military-grade attacks without breaking a sweat?

Just then, Celia served Dahlia and Leander tea. He took a sip of the premium brew and asked, "This isn't the only reason why you're here, right?"

"That's right." Dahlia clicked on a few things on her computer, logged into a particular website, and turned the screen toward him. "Take a look at this, General Ashcroft."

He took a cursory gaze at the screen and saw that she had logged on to the International Martial Network. However, it was the crimson banner right at the top of the website that caught his attention.

His eyes narrowed as he muttered, "The King? What is that?"

Dahlia tensed as she looked at him solemnly. "This banner suddenly appeared on the International Martial Network two days ago. The government has pooled our resources into digging up any relevant information on this banner. "Fortunately, the Shadow Division King shared some of his information with us yesterday.

"The King refers to the King Phase Rankings. It's a global ranking specifically for King Phase martial artists. It far surpasses that of the International Combat Units. The last time it appeared was 120 years ago."

King Phase Rankings... Leander fell into deep thought.

"I'm here because of the King Phase Rankings," she added as she clicked on the banner.

The page loaded to a gladiator-arena style scoreboard. It was the King Phase Rankings page.

However, it was surprisingly empty. Instead, there were only a few words in Astrian script on the page.

'Iron Sovereign, Jeff Ashcroft!'

Leander's name was the only name on the King Phase Rankings!

From Outcast to Overlord The Unyielding Heir (Leander Ashcroft) - Chapter 560[1,281 words]

"What?"

Leander couldn't help but be surprised at the sight that greeted him on the screen.

He'd made a name for himself back at Aorinth Peaks. After all, he had crushed Khaedor, the God of Madness, who had ranked first in the International Combat Units. Then, he'd taken down 15 Supreme Arbiters from the Arbitration Office.

When the International Martial Network refreshed the rankings, Leander had naturally come in first. In fact, he had dominated the global rankings.

Now, a ranking that had disappeared for 120 years had resurfaced. As if that wasn't enough, it had resurfaced with just one name on it—his.

Everything about it screamed conspiracy.

So, he couldn't help but suspect the motives of the International Martial Network's owner.

Dahlia closed her laptop and started, "General Ashcroft, according to the Shadow Division King, the King Phase Rankings had once listed 20 King Phases. At the time, those King Phases had been rulers of their respective nations.

"So, don't you find it fishy that the only name on it is yours?"

Leander rested his chin on his palm as a smile appeared on his lips. "Just say what you want to say."

Dahlia's eyes sharpened as she intoned gravely, "I'm here at the Shadow Division King's behest and as a representative of the government. It is a great honor to be the only name on the King Phase Rankings. However, this... special treatment can also spell disaster.

"The second the ranking was out, you became Public Enemy No. 1 in the eyes of every living King Phase martial artist out there."

Her eyes never left Leander's figure, waiting to see even the slightest bit of discomfort from him. Alas, all Leander did was smile at her.

"I know."

Although he was smiling, there was no mirth in his eyes as he spoke. "The International Martial Network's owner has painted a massive target on my back. It's not just the King Phases that are going to come after me.

"Every nation in the world has set its sights on me now. When they learn that a martial artist who could stand up against the military and modern weapons exists... Well, I'm sure they're eager to get rid of a threat like me.

"After all, they want a world where they are the biggest fish in the pond. They have no intention of allowing another era of King Phases to come to fruition."

His eyes sharpened as he continued, "This time, I have shown them that I could easily eliminate 10 supersonic fighter jets all by myself. My actions have basically told every martial artist out there that it isn't an unattainable fantasy for them to go against the army and survive.

"The King Phases, who had been in seclusion, would start making their moves. It is likely that whatever they have up their sleeves would turn order as we know it upside down. This is what the other nations fear. They don't want our current order to change.

"Not just that, they want to keep the King Phases under their thumbs. The only way they could do this is to make an example out of me.

"If I have become someone to fear when I topped the International Combat Unit charts, then me dominating the King Phase Rankings has given them the justification to eliminate me to maintain order. As for the other King Phases... Well, the first order of business for them is to get rid of me.

"That's because my death would mean that they would have the chance to replace my spot on the King Phase Rankings. My death would be the best debut for their return to the public eye. Nothing else would make a better show of their prowess than defeating me."

Dahlia couldn't help but gape in disbelief as she listened to him meticulously analyze his current predicament.

Only now was she certain that this young man before her truly was the Iron Sovereign. He was most definitely the same man who could defeat an army all by himself.

A surge of admiration rose from deep within her heart upon learning that he wasn't just your

run-of-the-mill powerhouse. He also had the brains to back up his power. He had a strong grasp of politics and understood how his actions could potentially impact the world.

Not only did he possess the strength of more than a thousand men, but he also had the mind sharper than any blade he wielded. There was no doubt that he was the world's strongest being.

"You're right, General Ashcroft. The government has also sent me to inform you that the country working against you is Agylae. They are also the ones behind the International Martial Network."

Celia's eyes widened into saucers when she heard that information. It was so shocking that she could only stare at Dahlia, stunned to silence.

Ever since she became a regular on the International Assassin Leaderboard, she'd managed to dig up a lot of information on the International Martial Network. Even so, she had zero idea who was pulling the strings behind the International Martial Network.

So, to hear from Dahlia that Agylae was the country behind it all?

Suffice it to say, that was information that was nigh impossible to find even amongst martial artists.

A flicker of emotion appeared in

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Leander's eyes. Then, he flashed Dahlia a smile and replied, "I thought as much. The puppeteer of the International Martial Network has been adding stairs to my pedestal ever since my name appeared on the International Martial Network.

"They want me to become a symbol, to have everyone's eyes on me. That's what Agylae is after. They want to shape me into some invincible icon in the martial world. They want newbies to idolize me, to see me as the best of the best.

"That's when they'll strike. They'll come at me with everything they have just to

shatter me. That way, they would be able to terrify the martial world into submission. They'd set up the ambush at Ivoria's border with that precise goal in mind.

"It's just a shame that they underestimated me."

Dahlia's lashes fluttered as her lips curled into a bitter smile. "I see. So you've known all along, General Ashcroft. It seems that I've wasted your time by coming here to warn you."

Leander waved her off as he picked up his teacup. "Don't overthink things, Ms. Leon. I did have my suspicions, but that's all it was suspicions. You coming all the way here to inform me about this has given me the chance to clear the air. Thank you."

Then, he took a sip of his tea.

Dahlia picked up her cup before rising to her feet and saluting him respectfully.

"No, thank you, General Ashcroft. I have learned a lot today. It's truly an honor to see you in person," she replied before drinking her tea.

Leander escorted Dahlia all the way to Yelem Hotel's entrance. Before she left, she suddenly recalled something and said, "Before I go the Shadow Division King asked me to pass a message to you. This is a personal request of his and not an official request."

"Go ahead," Leander said as he patiently waited for her to speak.

"He said that the King Phases from the Eastern and Western factions are about to go to war."

She immediately slipped into the car waiting nearby as soon as she said those words, leaving a terrified Celia and a somewhat shocked Leander in the dust.

"Master Leander, what is the Shadow Division King getting at? Is he trying to say that another War of the King Phase is on the horizon?"

Leander said nothing in response as his eyes glinted with an unnamed emotion. It seemed that he was thinking about Dahlia's parting words.

After a while, he rolled his neck and grinned. "Let's go. It's time for us to pay the Divine Vault a visit."