The Genius Son-in-law of the Swordmaster Household—Blessed by Authority

Chapter 3 : Escape (1)

Escape (1)

He had returned to the past, fifteen years ago.

It took a full three days to accept this unbelievable phenomenon.

"....."

At first, he naturally thought it was a dream, but by the second day, he had accepted that it wasn't.

From what Ian had experienced, there had never been a dream so vivid, so continuous, and so clear-minded for such a long time.

After confirming it wasn't a dream, he suspected for a moment that he had fallen under Lilith's vile illusion, but that hypothesis was quickly dismissed as well.

If it had truly been Lilith's illusion, things wouldn't have been going so decently; besides, he wouldn't have been able to suspect it was an illusion in the first place.

'So... the most plausible hypothesis is...'

That he had actually returned to the past, no less than fifteen years ago.

'But how...?'

Some clues did come to mind.

Right before Ian died, he faintly heard a dry, emotionless voice near his ear.

[Goddess... World's Protector... selection....]

[Goddess's arrangement... authority of projection... forced succession....]

[Reconstruction of the worldline... proceeding....]

He didn't hear it properly since he had been gnashing his teeth with murderous intent at Lilith, but because the voice dug so deeply into his ears, he remembered a few words vaguely.

"....."

Selection, Goddess, worldline...

These words didn't tell him much, but at least one thing.

He could guess that his regression was by no means a coincidence.

Clearly, something had deliberately selected him and sent him back fifteen years to the past.

Based on the words he remembered, it was probably the existence called 'Goddess' that sent him back.

'Goddess...? Goddess, huh...'

He'd never been interested in religion, so he couldn't even make any guesses there.

'There's a limit to what I can figure out just by thinking. To get a real grasp of the situation, I need to escape from here first.'

Ian stretched his stiff back and looked up at the ceiling.

The old, mold-stained ceiling entered his view.

This place was the semi-basement storehouse of some bandits.

Ian was currently in a situation where he had been kidnapped by human traffickers.

'Of all the possible times, why did I regress to this moment...?'

This occurred when Ian was fourteen years old.

He was on his way to a grand event held by the Hisperion family, and had been abducted by these bandits.

They were the sort who kidnapped young nobles or sons of wealthy families to extort a high ransom from their families.

In his past life, he was ultimately rescued by knights of the Greysel family, but not before suffering all manner of humiliation at the hands of the bandits.

Today marked about the fourth day of captivity.

"Uuu... Young Master... I'm hungry..."

A maid, tied to the pillar across from him, whimpered in a crying voice.

'Right... she was here with me, too...'

Ian's personal maid, Sophia.

When Ian was all but treated as invisible in the Greysel family, she was almost the only one who became like family to him.

She was the closest person to him before he became a knight of Yuria, but in his previous life, she had died three years earlier than Ian.

'I missed her so much... But to see her again like this...'

"Uu... How can a young master who's supposed to be a swordsman be kidnapped like this... Why are you so weak, Young Master...?"

'How annoying.'

Sophia was timid, cried a lot, complained a lot, and had a big appetite...

Still, she was a good kid.

"Just wait. I'm thinking of a way to get us out."

"... I can't hold it any longer..."

"Hold what?"

I'm seriously losing my mind... The words almost slipped out, but Ian managed to swallow them back.

Now wasn't the time to quarrel with Sophia.

'I have a mountain of things to check once we escape.'

Now that Sophia, who had died, was alive like this, the probability that Yuria Hisperion—Ian's master—was also still alive somewhere was very high.

But until he saw her with his own eyes, he couldn't be certain.

Ian wanted to personally confirm Yuria's fate, as soon as possible.

'First, I need to free myself from these restraints.'

- Crack!

'No good by force...'

The ropes were tied so meticulously that his arms and legs didn't budge at all.

If only he had his former body as a Swordmaster, he could have torn them apart with brute strength even without aura, but now, not only was his body weak, he didn't even have any aura.

'I've really gone all the way back to my old body. My mana circuits and dantian are a complete mess again.'

The dantian and mana circuits that Yuria had painstakingly healed in his previous life had completely reverted to their wretched state of old.

If he had just half a fistful of aura, he could have easily torn through these ropes, but due to congenital defects in his dantian and mana circuits, even practicing aura cultivation was impossible.

'Haaa... What should I do...'

If only he could get the ropes off, he could deal with the bandits outside even without aura.

His soul was still imbued with the sense for the sword that he had never neglected in his previous life.

Some of the bandits outside could use aura, but at best they were just intermediate users.

That level of difference in ability could easily be overcome through the combat skills Ian had honed in his previous life.

But with his hands and feet bound like this... he couldn't make use of even a fraction of the swordsmanship he'd trained so tirelessly in his past life.

At this rate, he'd just end up repeating the darkest history of his previous life.

He absolutely could not let that happen.

'Looks like I have no choice but to try this.'

[Would you like to begin the 《Authority of Projection》 tutorial?]

[※Notice: There is a reward for completing the instructions!]

[Yes / No]

It was a strange blue message that had been blurring his vision for three days.

'Seeing as Sophia's not reacting at all to this, it must be visible only to me.'

Just what on earth was this?

He could guess it was something meant to guide him on using the Authority of Projection.

But the Authority of Projection was the power that Yuria possessed.

It was a supernatural ability she had obtained from ancient ruins with great difficulty.

So why did he now possess Yuria's power, the Authority of Projection?

'Another thing I can't figure out right now.'

He had pondered for three days but, unsurprisingly, had come up with nothing but hypotheses.

All he could assume was that this, too, had a background similar to his regression.

'At any rate, this is the only thing I can try right now.'

The notable part was: [※Notice: There is a reward for completing the instructions!]

He had no choice but to bet his way out on this so-called reward.

'But how do I start...?'

There was a [Yes / No] that looked like a button, at least.

[Thank you for your selection! The 《Authority of Projection》 tutorial will now begin!]

Oh. It worked.

He was just wondering if he'd have to press with his tongue since his hands were tied, when the Yes button was triggered automatically.

It seemed to function at a higher level, responding to intent.

'So far so good. Now let's see if this can actually be useful.'

From what Ian knew, this authority could only be used if you had aura in your dantian or mana in your heart.

But returning to fifteen years ago had restored his body to its feeble, old state. Currently, the amount of aura Ian had in his dantian was less than a fingernail.

With so little aura, he literally could only project something about fingernail-sized.

[The 《Authority of Projection》 is a transcendent power—an artifact the Goddess laid in this world to protect it—which stores projections of anything before your eyes, and allows the user to duplicate and manifest them at will.]

[In order to use the 《Authority of Projection》, you must first project the desired target. Project, copy, and manifest a target—all require the user's magic. The type of magic doesn't matter: mana, aura, or demonic energy.]

[First, let's try 'projection'.]

[Please look at anything in front of you that you'd like to project.]

'Projection... meaning I should look at the target I wish to duplicate.'

The target he most desperately wanted to duplicate.

There was one thing he truly needed right now.

Ian looked at Sophia, tied up across from him.

More precisely, her heart.

He focused his will, wanting to see through Sophia's mana circuits.

Naturally, strength gathered in his eyes.

"H-hik? W-where are you looking, at a time like this! You cockroach!"

[Insufficient user magic to project this target at present.]

"... Damn."

"What do you mean by that?!"

He couldn't project, and all he got was being scolded by Sophia.

Judging by the minuscule aura in his dantian, he'd have to set the bar pretty low.

If he couldn't even project a mana circuit, then anything else was out of the question.

He might as well go for something that used the absolute minimum of magic.

Like, say, that single strand of straw lying on the floor.

[Excellent! You have successfully projected the target 'straw'!]

[Projected targets are stored in the Authority of Projection's list.]

[Below is the current list of projected items.]

—《Authority of Projection》—

◆Items

[Straw Lv.0]

◆Traits

[None]

◆Skills

[None]

————————

[Once projected, the target is stored permanently in the authority and can be duplicated and manifested at any time by expending magic.]

[Now, let's proceed to the next step: 'manifestation'.]

[Please select any item from the stored list and manifest it using magic.]

'I think I get the gist.'

Ian had never used magic before in his life, but using the authority was no harder than moving his own limbs.

It really felt as if a new organ devoted to projection and manifestation had sprouted inside him.

—Fwoosh.

Ian selected the straw and poured the tiny wisp of aura into it. Immediately, black smoke rose from the ground, and a single strand of straw appeared.

However, it was not the original yellow color but rather pure black.

[You have successfully completed your first manifestation! Congratulations!]

[Now let's move on to the last step: 'full manifestation'.]

[The manifestation you just performed was 'temporary manifestation', which uses little magic but continuously drains magic while maintained, and the projection appears black like a shadow regardless of the original.]

[Full manifestation consumes more magic at once but, once manifested, persists until destroyed without further magic drainage, and the projection perfectly copies the original's appearance.]

[Please use the authority to infuse magic into the temporarily manifested projection to upgrade it to full manifestation.]

'Haaa... My aura's practically empty already.'

He could feel it—like swinging a heavy greatsword to the point of exhaustion.

If he tried full manifestation with his remaining aura, his dantian would shrivel and his whole body would be wracked with pain.

'Just making a copy of a straw is this hard. My body really is in a terrible state.'

But if Ian could overcome this feeble body's handicap again and regain his power from the previous life, the usefulness of this authority would change by 180 degrees.

Yuria Hisperion, the original master of the Authority of Projection, had wielded truly godlike power at her peak.

She could summon rains of blades to sweep through hordes of monsters, repair collapsed walls higher than before in an instant, and even raise fallen heroes like shadows, taking on legions all by herself.

Of course, because of that, even after becoming the head of the family, she was checked by countless nations and factions, and when she suffered a joint attack from the Grand Dukes of the Demon Realm, she fought alone to the end without help, becoming crippled in the process....

"Tsk."

Thinking of the past left a bitter taste in his mouth.

Now that he'd returned to the past, he would never let such tragedies repeat again.

'I need to confirm Yuria's fate as soon as possible.'

—Fwoosh!

Ian scraped up all remaining aura from his dantian and poured it into the straw.

Quickly, the black straw shifted from soot to yellow, taking the precise appearance of the original.

'Ugh.'

For a moment his vision spun and his lower abdomen felt stabbed by a knife, but the outcome was certain.

[Excellent! You have successfully completed full manifestation!]

[The 《Authority of Projection》 tutorial is now complete.]

[You may now receive your tutorial completion rewards.]

[The rewards for completing the tutorial are as follows.]

[1. Opening a mana circuit optimized for authority use.]

[2. Registering basic items, skills, and traits in your storage list.]

[3. Full recovery of health.]

"...!"

Each reward was far greater than he expected.

Every single one was of immediate practical benefit.

Most notably, number one—the opening of a mana circuit optimized for authority use.

'Opening a mana circuit? D-does this mean I can begin aura cultivation right now?'

If so, he could become a Swordmaster much faster than in his previous life, even without Yuria's help.

Like giving an ogre wings... no, like gaining a dragon heart.

And now we know how they initially met.

He got rescued, like a damsel in distress.

And we got Sophia as a comic relief.

I hope this doesn't become a harem.