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

Chapter 5 : Escape (3)

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The human trafficker grumbled as he unlocked the padlock.

"Fucking bitches. Leave the two of you alone and you're having a grand old time, huh? Oh? Looks like you're full of energy today?"

— Clank! Clack!

As soon as the stiff lock was freed, the human trafficker roughly flung the door open, glaring fiercely.

— Bang!

"All right. I'll work you so hard you won't even be able to make a peep.... Huh?"

There should have been two captives in the storage.

But for some reason, only one woman was visible.

"Where's the other brat...?"

The moment the trafficker widened his eyes and took a step into the warehouse—

— Thud!

"Ku, kuh!?"

"Amateur bastard."

Ian, who had been hiding by the door, slipped into the trafficker's chest in a flash, plunging a jet-black blade into his torso.

"Kk, kehehehehe...."

— Thud!

The trafficker collapsed right there, unable to even scream.

He wanted to shout and call his comrades, but with a blade stabbed deep in his lungs, he couldn't breathe out at all.

— Padadak!

Ian hurried to act before the man adapted to the pain.

First, he pulled a dagger from the man's waist and immediately drove it into the man's groin.

"Kk, aah!! Kkheeeuugh!!!"

The man let out a scream, caring nothing about his torn lungs, overcome by the unbearable pain he had never experienced before. But, because Ian firmly covered his mouth, no sound escaped outside.

Ian grabbed the dagger stuck in the man's groin and pulled it upward.

— Crunch! Crack!

He felt the sensation of the dagger severing muscle and scraping bone.

"Gkkk...!"

The man rolled his eyes back and trembled violently, then died on the spot.

From the split in his belly, his intestines oozed out, steaming in the air.

— Swish! Swish!

Ian wiped his blood- and filth-covered hands roughly on the trafficker's clothes.

Sophia watched all of it, jaw dropped.

"W–Wow. You did it.... You really killed him...!"

"Keep your voice down. I'll untie you now."

"Pl–Please be gentle...!"

Ian cut Sophia's ropes with the trafficker's dagger.

While rubbing her sore wrists, Sophia asked,

"But, h–how did you make that knife just now? You were empty-handed!"

"I'll explain later. Escape comes first."

Ian approached the fallen trafficker again.

There was no real need to finish him off, but Ian nevertheless cut the man's throat to make sure he was dead.

Then, he wiped the blood and fat from the dagger as thoroughly as possible on the corpse, and took two more daggers hanging from the man's belt.

He released the iron sword he had summoned with the Authority of Projection.

Having seized the traffickers' blades, there was no need to keep using aura and maintain his own.

"Sophia. Hide here."

"Huh, huh!? What are you going to do!?"

"I need to take care of everyone outside before we try to escape."

"A–Alone!? That's...! That's too reckless!"

Sophia glanced at the half-basement window and lowered her voice.

"I know you're good with a sword.... But the boss out there can use aura! He's the guy who smashed the carriage we were riding in with his bare hands!"

"Ah, right."

Back when Ian and Sophia were kidnapped.

The head of the traffickers rammed into their carriage head-on, smashing it to pieces.

Then, he twisted the horse's neck bare-handed and killed the innocent coachman with a single blow.

Since Ian was treated like an invisible person in his family, he had no escort, and the coachman had been hired at the city gate, so if he didn't want to get hurt, the only choice was to obediently follow the traffickers.

Back then, Ian was a 14-year-old kid who'd never even killed a goblin, so he couldn't even think of standing up to his fears and fighting.

But now, it was different.

Currently, the soul of a battle-hardened, veteran Swordmaster resided within Ian's mind.

For Ian as he was now, the bandit boss was an easy opponent.

But Sophia, unaware of this, only found Ian's actions reckless.

"It's impossible alone! Let me come with you! Give me a sword!"

Ian flicked Sophia on the forehead as she held out her shaking hands.

— Flick!

"Ow!"

"Calm down. Don't act on emotion."

"... Ugh. Look who's talking."

"Sophia. Promise me one thing."

"Pr–Promise?"

"Take this seriously. I'll give you a knife, but no matter what, stay hidden here."

"What? What about you?"

"Keep your voice down. If anyone comes in, just stab them right away. Got it?"

"No, no! I don't get it at all! What are you going to do all by yourself!?"

Ian explained calmly.

"Listen. Sophia, you wouldn't be any help even if you came. If they target you, it'll just put me in danger too."

"... But going alone doesn't make sense! There are more than five thugs outside twice your size!"

"I have a plan. I think you're misunderstanding, thinking I'm trying to die as a martyr or something. That's not it. Both of us can survive."

"Wh–What are you thinking?"

"Watch."

Ian projected the dagger he held, manifesting another in his free hand.

— Fwoosh!

With black smoke, a jet-black dagger materialized in Ian's palm.

"H–How! Young master! This... So I wasn't seeing things earlier! Is this magic!? Since when could you...."

"... Something like that. I'll explain later. Anyway, we need to move before those guys outside start sensing something's off."

"... You're sure it's okay? Alone?"

"Yeah. If you hadn't hesitated, we'd already be free right now, enjoying our freedom."

"... Sheesh. Fine. I'll stay hidden here like you said."

Ian nodded.

"Good. No matter what breaking sounds you hear from outside, don't come out until I call you."

"... If I hear your scream, I'm coming out right away."

"... Sure. Got it."

It was time to head out.

Ian tucked the two daggers stolen from the trafficker's corpse into his belt and turned away.

"If you get in trouble, just shout!"

"It'll be over quick. Don't worry."

"... How can I not worry...."

Leaving Sophia behind, Ian stepped out of the warehouse.

Outside the door, the right side was blocked by a stone wall, while a staircase ascending upward appeared to the left.

— Murmur murmur.

The voices of the thugs chatting could be faintly heard from above the stairs.

'Yeah. I remember this scene.'

The traffickers' hideout was a small lumber mill deep in the woods, far from people.

Judging by how the building wasn't very old, they likely hadn't settled in an abandoned spot, but rather killed the owner and took over.

'Vermin bastards.'

They were the type Ian hated most, even before his regression.

People who couldn't live without harming others.

Just by existing, they were so noxious that the world would be better off without them.

'I'll exterminate every single one.'

Ian drew a dagger from his waist and ascended the stairs.

* * *

— Rip!

"Argh, arrrgh!!!"

A trafficker whose wrist was nearly severed by Ian's counter cut gripped his wobbling hand, screaming.

— Thud!

Ian threw a jet-black dagger into the back of the thug crouched on the floor and finished him off.

'That's six now.'

About three minutes ago, as Ian came up the basement stairs, he immediately subdued four traffickers playing cards right in front of him using throwing daggers.

The screams quickly brought out two more from their quarters, awakened from naps, and both were promptly taken down by throwing daggers as soon as they saw Ian.

One especially tough guy got up again and charged at Ian, but Ian manifested a longsword and severed his wrist.

That was the one he just killed with a dagger to the back of the head.

It had taken barely three minutes to butcher six men.

Most of them died slowly, writhing in pain after a projection dagger struck their belly and spilled their guts.

'Now it's just the boss left.'

"... What the hell is this."

Speak of the devil, and he appears.

Just as Ian thought of searching for the boss, the man showed himself.

"Came back from taking a dump."

A tall figure standing well over 2 meters.

Muscles reminiscent of an orc, and a face more like a gorilla than a human.

The bandit boss who led the group of seven traffickers.

"All my underlings are dead."

The bandit boss grabbed his head with both hands.

"Hey. Kid. Who the hell are you?"

"..."

"I thought you were a dunce?"

Something Ian himself had told the boss about four days prior.

Right after capturing Ian, the bandit boss had asked why a young noble was traveling through their territory without a guard.

The boy replied that he was talentless and had fallen out of his father's favor.

He said they'd left him behind for an important event in Hisperion, so he'd tried to catch up alone.

Of course, his bravado had led to the deaths of an innocent coachman and horse, and wound him up as their captive....

From the boss's perspective, it was a stroke of luck.

After all, the boy was the son of the powerful Greysel family, a house so wealthy that everyone in the region knew their name.

He figured he could ransom a hefty sum.

And it was also widely rumored that the young Greysel lord was a dunce.

Even if he was the son of a famous swordsman, it would be true that he couldn't use aura at all, so there was nothing to fear.

Or so he thought....

"You said you were a talentless idiot!"

How could any idiot butcher so many hardened men with a few knives?

When he heard it from the boy himself, he thought fortune had smiled on him....

The result of believing that was today's disaster.

"... Was it all a lie from the start? ... No, it doesn't make sense."

Even if being a dunce was a lie, could a clean-shaven kid really kill all his men single-handedly?

Why did such a rumor exist in the first place?

A boy not even finished growing had slaughtered his men like livestock—how could anyone call that a dunce?

"Shit... This couldn't get any worse."

The boss ran a hand down his face.

"This is why you can't go believing rumors...."

"How long are you going to mutter to yourself out loud?"

Ian spun a dagger in his hand as he spoke.

"Or are you just scared?"

"What?"

The boss's temples pulsed with bulging veins.

"Don't get cocky, brat."

— Flex! Snap!

— Crack! Crack!

The boss cracked his knuckles loudly.

"You got some confidence after taking down a few weaklings who can't even use aura, huh? You're making a huge mistake. I'll cut those arms off first. You'll never hold a sword again."

Taking care of the kid was becoming less interesting anyway.

If he sent the boy's severed arms home to the family, he'd get his ransom that much faster.

The Greysel family might come for revenge later, but with all his men dead, there'd be no loose ends.

He could just disappear and go on the run.

— Shing!

The bandit boss drew his saber.

"If you move, it'll just hurt more. Sit still."

"Finally in the mood to fight, huh?"

— Thud!

In contrast, Ian dropped his dagger to the floor.

"?"

The boss tilted his head.

"You're dropping your weapon?"

But that wasn't the end of the boy's strange actions.

— Swish.

Ian raised his fists and took a barehanded fighting stance.

"H-Huh...?"

Was he really so cocky after killing a few weaklings?

Was he seeing the boss as one of those third-raters lying on the ground?

To the boss's eyes, he was just acting out of childish arrogance.

"Stupid bastard."

He had no idea what the kid was thinking, but there was no doubt he was making a colossal mistake.

Here stood an aura user who could enhance his body with mana.

He could strangle a bear to death with his bare hands—a mid-level master.

Even if this boy was hiding aura, what could he possibly do—maybe he'd only just entered that world.

Even the prodigies of the famous Hisperion sword family first manifested aura by the age of twelve, and he doubted some second-rate noble beat them to it.

Even if, by some miracle, this kid was a genius and awakened aura a year or two ago, he'd be a low-level beginner at best.

So, even if he'd kept his sword, he would've lost. But now he'd even thrown that away?

That was basically a signal begging to be butchered.

"You're sticking your neck out, begging me to kill you."

— Swoosh!

The boss raised his saber and kicked off the ground.

— Bam!

His leap was like a warhorse's charge.

'I'll start by slicing his forearms!'

Just as he swung down with absolute confidence—

— Slash!

"...?"

A slippery sensation ran across the boss's armpit, and all strength left his arm.

"Wha? Aaaargh!!"

A searing pain, as if branding iron bit into his flesh, stabbed under his arm.

He reflexively touched it—blood soaked his fingers.

"U-Ugh!"

What had gotten him...?

He was sure he'd swung, but the boy had vanished from in front of him, and now he was like this.

"W-What the hell...!"

The boss turned his gaze.

"... What?"

The boy was now holding a jet-black longsword.

"W-Wasn't he empty-handed a moment ago...!?"

When had he drawn a sword?

That black blade wasn't one of his men's, nor Ian's previous one.

Where on earth did he suddenly get such a sharp, new sword?

"Wh-What the hell, how did you do that?!"

The boss gripped his wounded armpit and yelled.

But Ian had no intention of answering.

— Wide open!

This time, Ian spread his arms wide, as if inviting an attack.

"Is one cut all it takes to make you surrender?"

"Y-You little shit! Don't get cocky!"

— Whoosh!!

Enraged, the boss flung his saber at Ian.

He'd hurled it with aura-imbued arms, like firing a cannonball, but Ian dodged simply by shifting his footing.

Though it was so fast he could barely see it, the trajectory was totally predictable.

"Shit!"

The boss had lost his only weapon.