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

Chapter 6 : Escape (4)

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"Damn, fuck...!"

The bandit boss spat out curses between clenched teeth.

He had underestimated the boy before him, and now the situation had turned dire.

Blood showed no sign of stopping from his wounded armpit, and whether the blade had grazed something vital or not, all feeling was completely gone from his right hand.

To make matters worse, he had gotten so agitated that he'd even thrown his weapon, leaving him empty-handed.

'Shit... I thought he'd be an easy target. At this rate, I might actually die.'

They had only exchanged a few blows, but he understood immediately.

'The rumor about him being a hopeless idiot was complete bullshit.'

The boy's swordsmanship and skill were on a level that utterly dwarfed his own.

'Are we just from fundamentally different roots?'

The bandit boss had only increased his strength and physique by picking up a cheap martial art by chance.

His only fighting skills came from street brawling learned during raids.

But the boy's techniques had to be the essence passed down by a great swordsmanship family.

Street brawling versus the authentic techniques of a top clan.

It wasn't even worth comparing.

'And on top of that...'

The bandit boss swallowed dryly, staring at Ian.

'What's with that damnably calm expression?'

All his life, he'd fought as if it were daily routine while making a living through pillage—even then, facing a foe with blades, he would feel at least some tension and excitement.

But this guy...

'Not a shred of emotion—it's spine-chilling.'

It was as if he was wearing a mask of indifference.

Maybe the boy's nerve even outclassed his own.

'But!'

Still, he was just a fourteen-year-old brat.

He wasn't about to make the same mistake of letting his guard down again.

'Even if he learned swordsmanship from his family, even if he was born with nerve, no matter how talented, there's a limit to the amount of aura a fourteen-year-old can accumulate.'

Between himself and the boy, there had to be a gap in aura due to their age difference.

'If I can't win with swordsmanship, I'll just crush him with my aura.'

The boy might have the edge in swordsmanship and technique, but the bandit boss's advantage was in aura output.

Considering the age, Ian's aura, at best, would be at an entry-level user, a bit stronger than an ordinary person.

Meanwhile, the bandit boss's aura proficiency was at mid-user level.

He could wrestle a bear to the ground and toss it.

'A brat whose body hasn't even finished growing yet—I can crush him like a rotten watermelon.'

The bandit boss had already folded seven men in half with his bare hands.

'All I need is to get my hands on him, somehow.'

If he could just grab him, it would be his victory.

'I'll snap both his arms like twigs!'

A sinister smile slowly spread across the bandit boss's lips.

A smile dripping with malice.

Just imagining the boy despairing after losing his arms made him grin involuntarily.

"Tsk."

Ian looked at the bandit boss with contempt.

'I can see right through what he's thinking.'

Since he couldn't win with swordsmanship, the boss planned to use brute force.

'It's not a bad strategy.'

In fact, it was textbook.

Taking back the initiative with one's strong suit is generally an effective approach.

No matter how skilled Ian's swordsmanship was, if the bandit boss overpowered him physically and grabbed both his arms, there'd be no way to escape.

'If not for the Authority of Projection, that is.'

If all Ian had was swordsmanship, he might have lost due to the difference in size, but with the Authority of Projection, there was an insurmountable gap between him and the bandit boss.

— 《Power of Projection》 —

◆Trait

[Orc's Strength Lv.15]

————————

'Maybe I'll use this.'

An adult orc could casually lift rocks weighing over 500kg.

If Ian used the orc's strength stored in the Authority of Projection, he could exert at least eight times his current physical power.

'But that alone won't be enough to counter completely.'

The aura emanating from the bandit boss felt like intermediate-rank aura user.

Orc's strength was just a notch below that.

'But if I use orc's strength to supplement my fighting technique, I can definitely overwhelm a lowlife like him.'

Mediocre technique gets crushed by brute strength, but overwhelming technique surpasses size differences.

And if orc's strength narrows that physical gap, Ian simply couldn't lose to the bandit boss, even if he tried.

— CLANG!

Ian dropped the sword in his hand once again.

It was a taunt to lure in the bandit boss's attack.

— Flick.

When Ian flicked his finger, veins bulged on the bandit boss's temple.

'Dropping his sword again?'

The bandit boss's wicked smile deepened.

'You cocky bastard! Trying the same trick again!'

That kid had some tricky feint technique.

If he fell for the bait and charged in, the boy would draw a sword from who knows where and counterattack.

'Fine! Just one more time—I'll fall for it!'

But, in return, this time he'd take the boy's arms.

— RUN!

The bandit boss raised his fists and charged like a bull.

'I'll use my numb right arm as a shield and grab his arm with my left hand.'

If he could just catch him, the boy's body would be as helpless as a ragdoll.

'He'll regret dropping his sword for the rest of his life! I'll twist and tear that shoulder right out like a drumstick!'

— SWOOSH!

In an instant, the bandit boss closed the gap and swung his right fist toward Ian's face.

'Come on! Take the bait!'

If the kid drew a blade and countered, he'd endure that blow somehow and trap him with his left hand.

That was the bandit boss's plan.

However—

Ian did not perform the feints or sword attacks he expected.

— POW!

Instead, a solid punch flew straight at him.

That one punch shattered the bandit boss's shoddy plan.

'Huh?'

— PEEEE!!

A bright flash filled the bandit boss's sight, then the world tilted with ringing in his ears.

'What the—?'

— THUD!

When he barely regained his senses, his face was already smashed into the ground.

"Urgh, ughhk!"

At the same time, a dreadful pain tore through his jaw.

'Urgh, w-what the hell hit me!?'

The bandit boss clutched at his jaw in a hurry.

'Ah— aagh!'

His jawbone must have been dislocated; it made a clicking noise and a sharp pain spiked through him.

"Argh!"

If he stayed down, he'd only get hit again.

The bandit boss scrambled up, clutching himself.

In front of him, the boy bounced lightly on his feet with both fists raised.

A perfect boxing stance.

'F-fists?'

The bandit boss gaped, slack-jawed.

Had he actually been dropped by that kid's punch?

'What kind of child's punch...!'

He had lived his whole life with violence and had tasted every kind of fist, but never had he been punched so painfully.

And coming from a kid like this, no less—

'How is that a child's punch...? Feels more like being hit by a mace...!'

It was the moment the bandit boss's confidence in his own durability and experience—he even called himself a punch sommelier—came crashing down.

"Are you just going to stay dazed like that?"

"Ugh...!"

"Then I guess it's my turn now."

— SWOOSH!

As the bandit boss staggered, trying to retreat, this time Ian dashed forward first.

"Wh-what!?"

The boss tried to raise his arms, but dizziness blurred his vision, and he couldn't react properly.

— POW!

Ian's punch tore cleanly through his guard.

"Gah!"

A blow aimed precisely at the liver.

For a moment, all air was knocked out of the bandit boss, his strength draining from his body.

He almost hallucinated the River Styx before his eyes.

But Ian's assault was just getting started.

— POW! WHACK! CRACK!

"Ghk! Gah, urk!"

Whenever the downed boss tried to get up, Ian pummeled his temple, and when he crawled, he drove kicks into every pressure point.

For about fifteen minutes, a downpour of violence rained on the bandit boss's body.

— POW! WHAM! CRACK!

Beaten nearly defenseless, the bandit boss collapsed to the ground, drenched in blood.

"Haa... haa..."

Ian's breath was ragged after not stopping for fifteen minutes.

But it was too early to rest.

'Time to finish this properly.'

— 《Power of Projection》 —

◆Item

[Iron Sword Lv.10]

———————

— SHICK!

— SHLING!

Ian projected an iron sword with the Authority of Projection.

Not a temporary projection, but a full projection.

The dull color of the iron blade peeled away like dust, revealing a sharp silver blade.

"Spare... me... urgh..."

"..."

Ian looked down silently at the bandit boss, who squirmed on the ground like a worm...

Then reversed his grip and plunged the sword deep into the boss's buttocks.

— SHUNK!

"Aaaaaaaaaagh!!"

The bandit boss let out an scream louder than ever before.

— SHUNK!!

Ian pressed harder, driving the sword through the boss's groin and deep into the ground.

"Gkah! Uh, uhhhh, gah!"

Pinned by the sword, the boss flailed helplessly on the ground like an insect.

"Huff..."

Ian caught his breath, wearing a satisfied smile.

"How refreshing."

It was a fate more than fitting for a pest.

Ian watched the bandit boss, now stuck in the ground and unable to move, then turned away indifferently.

A pest who had traumatized Sophia in his previous life, sullying her brightness with shadow.

He was nothing but a worthless bug, no longer worth even the least concern.

* * *

Ian quickly washed the blood off at a nearby well, then headed down the semi-basement steps to the storehouse where Sophia hid.

He also filled a bucket to bring water to her—after three days, she had only drunk puddled rainwater, so she must be terribly thirsty.

"Sophi—"

— CLATTERING!

He hadn't finished calling her name before a rush of footsteps approached from deep in the basement.

"Young master!"

— CLING!

— POW!

"Cough!"

Sophia basically tackled Ian in a hug.

She squeezed him so tightly that the bucket of water in his hands spilled helplessly.

— SPLASH!

"Hey! Sophia, ease up...!"

"I thought I'd never see you again! I regretted not just following you so much!"

"Hiding inside was the right thing to do. You did well."

"How about your injuries!? Oh my, look at all this blood!"

Sophia frantically checked all over Ian's body.

"Calm down. It's not my blood. I'm not injured. Everything's over. As soon as we leave here, we're safe."

"Hold on, let me see! You're not hiding wounds, are you?"

She lifted his arms and pulled up his shirt, checking for injuries.

"Hey! Where are you touching! I told you, I'm fine!"

"Huh? Y-you're really fine!"

"See? Okay, let's go. Before we leave, let's look for something to eat and grab anything valuable."

Ian turned and headed up the steps.

"Yep. I'll grab some water first... huh?"

Sophia started up the stairs after Ian but suddenly stopped.

"Huh?"

Now that her worry eased, a strange sense of discomfort crept up on her.

"Y-young master... wait a moment."

"What?"

Ian turned to look at her.

Sophia blinked her big eyes, wearing an unusually serious expression.

"That magic you showed me earlier."

The reason Ian could come back unscathed after fighting seven grown men and even an aura user had to be because of that magic.

But...

In the chaos earlier, she hadn't thought deeply about it, but looking now, it made no sense.

Ian was born with a deformed dantian and mana circuit, making him unable to accumulate mana.

Sophia had watched Ian suffer from this disability closer than anyone; she knew it best.

Ian shouldn't have been able to strengthen his body with aura, let alone use magic requiring complex internal mana control.

More than once, Ian had collapsed from overdoing training and she'd nursed him a whole day—

"Young master, because of your dantian and mana circuit, magic is..."

For Ian, wielding mana was like chasing a mirage: always out of reach.

Yet suddenly, he acted as if he'd never had that disability, using magic freely...?

To Sophia, it was a deeply unsettling situation.

"I fixed it."

Ian answered calmly.

"Whaaat!? When!? No, how!?"

"I found a way."

"Huh!? But you never said a word to me!"

"... I only fixed it about thirty minutes ago. You saw it right after I did. Honestly, it was pure luck."

"R-really?"

"Y-yeah..."

Ian paused.

He wasn't lying, but it felt oddly like he was.

Maybe he should tell Sophia about his regression.

He would keep displaying abnormal feats in the future, thanks to the Authority of Projection, his Swordmaster experience, and knowledge of the future—so handling a barrage of questions every time sounded exhausting.

He didn't want to keep confusing Sophia endlessly.

And if this confusion piled up, turning to doubt and then mistrust—if his relationship with Sophia were to break because of it, that would wound Ian deeply.

'Hmmm...'

But even so, coming clean would be risky.

Would she even believe him? And even if she did, just revealing that he was a regressor was dangerous.

If word of it ever leaked out, there's no way the strong wouldn't target him—whether to restrain him or steal his knowledge of the future.

Of course, Sophia would protect the secret, but in this world there existed ways to extract secrets regardless of will.

Considering all that, revealing he was a regressor was just too dangerous...

"Waaaah! I knew it! I always believed you'd pull through somehow, young master!"

"... Huh?"

"I seriously believed in you~ You've been visiting the study a lot lately—is that where you learned magic?"

"Uh..."

The reason he'd gone to the study often around now was to see if he could find a way to cure his disability.

"I didn't expect you to solve it so quickly. Aren't you a real genius?! *Sniff, sniff*."

Sophia dabbed her tears with her sleeve.

"T-thanks for believing in me."

"Of course. Uuu... the tears are making me even thirstier. But I'm really happy and moved."

"Y-yeah. Let's go get water first."

... It seemed best to let it go for now.

She didn't press further. There was no need to risk everything to explain his regression.

— CLAP!

Ian clapped his hands.

"Alright. Let's really get going now. We'll grab some food, pack only what we need, and head straight for the Hisperion main estate."

"Uu... okay. Eh? Wait, we're going to Hisperion, not home? We look like complete beggars though!"

They'd both spent four days locked in a storehouse; their appearance was a mess.

If they went to the main estate looking like this, they'd be turned away at the door.

"We'll wash properly at a nearby village or inn. And since we'll need new clothes, grab anything valuable here."

The Hisperion main estate was currently hosting one of its biggest yearly events.

He had missed it in his previous life, having been kidnapped by bandits.

The Sword Selection Ceremony.

'A ceremony to receive the sword most matched to one's destiny.'

From direct bloodline to collateral branches, vassals, mercenaries, allied factions, and even well-known outsiders—all gathered for Hisperion's grand event.

At the same time, for any candidate swordsman serving Hisperion, attending before turning fifteen was mandatory.

As a child of a vassal family sworn to Hisperion, Ian was expected to take part.

'Candidates may receive a famed sword or even be chosen by a Divine Sword, depending on their talent.'

So it wasn't just about being gifted a sword.

It was an assessment of each candidate's abilities and future potential.

'In my previous life, Yuria was chosen by the Divine Sword, Genesis.'

The sword of Hisperion's founding lord—a divine blade said to split even heaven and earth.

'In contrast, I never got to participate, so I missed my chance at a fine sword.'

From age fifteen onward, one could not undergo the Sword Selection.

It wasn't a rule, but an unalterable law of the world.

After fifteen, no sword would respond if summoned at the ceremony.

All his life, Ian wondered—

His talent in swordsmanship was objectively exceptional.

He had been born with aura and dantian disabilities, but overcame them thanks to Yuria, eventually reaching the level of Swordmaster.

And even among Swordmasters, Ian was truly exceptional.

'If only I had participated—what kind of sword might I have met?'

Considering both his abilities and disabilities, maybe not the Divine Sword Genesis, but perhaps a top-level sword close to it.

'Of course, the ceremony is only a secondary goal.'

The real priority now was verifying Yuria's survival.

— THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Ian's heart began to race.

The anxiety that he wouldn't be sure Yuria had survived until he saw her with his own eyes—

Excitement that if she was alive, everything could start anew.

'Sophia, who died in my last life, is alive now—so Yuria most likely has survived too. Please... please let her be alive.'

If Yuria was alive—

As for everything else, like the struggle for the head seat, the war against inhuman monsters,

Before the Authority of Projection such problems were laughable; Ian was confident he could handle them all on his own.

Simple premise.

Save the girl, save the world.

Oops, I think that's a different story..