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

## Chapter 9 : Sword Selection Ceremony (3)

Sword Selection Ceremony (3)

In front of the main entrance of the Hisperion banquet hall.

"May I see your invitation?"

The doorman at the banquet hall bowed his head to Ian and courteously extended his hand.

— Swish.

Ian pulled the invitation from his coat and handed it to the doorman.

After checking the invitation, the doorman gave an even more respectful bow.

"Welcome, Lord Ian of House Greysel. And the lady accompanying you is...?"

"Sophia. Sophia Marigold. She's my partner."

"Ms. Sophia Marigold. You are confirmed. Please enjoy your time."

The doorman of the banquet hall bowed again and returned the invitation.

Ian put the invitation back in his pocket and walked into the hall together with Sophia.

"Oh, wow!"

The inside of the hall was like another world.

Golden chandeliers hung from the ceiling, historic paintings and banners adorned the walls, lavish tables and dazzling foods covered the floor.

And filling all the spaces between were people of various backgrounds.

"W-we really made it in! The world's most luxurious banquet! I'll be bragging about this for the rest of my life!"

Sophia bounced as she clung to Ian's arm.

But when she noticed all eyes on her, Sophia wilted a bit and smiled awkwardly.

"... I guess I stood out too much. Hehe..."

"No need to be so self-conscious. Just act as you normally do."

"Uh, but—if I do, you'll get scolded! People will say you brought some country bumpkin with no manners..."

"... I picked out that dress myself. If it looked country, you should have told me."

"Ah, no! You know I didn't mean it like that! I really love this outfit!"

"I'm just teasing you. But I really meant what I said—no need to be self-conscious. Just look over there."

"Hm?"

Ian pointed to one side of the hall.

Sophia followed his hand with her eyes.

— Gulp, gulp, gulp!

— One more drink!

— A-already!?

— I'm going with the whole barrel!

— Woooooo!

Over there, people were having a drunken contest more typical of street revelers.

"Uh, what's going on over there...?"

"And look over there, too."

Ian pointed to another spot this time.

— Aaargh!

— Give it all you've got, kid.

— Kyaaaaah!

— Even a granny worm could beat this.

A woman barbarian and a young nobleman were arm-wrestling in that spot.

— Go for it! You can do it, my lord!

— As expected! Our clan's champion! But don't let your guard down!

— Young man! If you use your wrist, you can win! Use a trick!

People crowded around, clutching bags of coins, each cheering for a different contestant.

From the look of it, that was a betting game too.

"Uh... This is quite different from what I expected. There's betting going on everywhere."

"Right? More than half the people at the Hisperion banquet are swordsmen, knights, or mercenaries—people who live for the battlefield. Not many here stand strictly on ceremony or etiquette."

Of course, that didn't mean there weren't any at all.

Ian glanced at the unpleasant gazes looking down at him from the second-floor balcony.

"I was worried, but it looks way more fun! I think I can really enjoy myself!"

"That's good."

While Sophia was gawking all around, soaking in the sights, Ian's calm eyes were also scanning the room busily.

'Yuria... She's not here, as expected.'

She had never liked crowded places.

Ian looked up at the indoor balcony on the second floor.

There, the officials, senior nobles, and foreign guests of Hisperion were gathered in small groups, conversing.

'She definitely wouldn't be there.'

Yuria detested court politics—a place where all sorts of schemes played out on slick tongues—more than anything else.

'I guess I'll have to wait until the Sword Selection Ceremony begins to find Yuria.'

In his previous life, Yuria had been chosen by the Divine Sword Genesis on this very day.

If the Sword Selection Ceremony unfolded just as it had in his previous life, Yuria would once again be chosen by the Divine Sword Genesis.

'No, it doesn't even matter which sword chooses Yuria.'

Whether she was chosen by the divine sword or allotted a rusty iron blade—

As long as he could confirm she was alive, that was all that mattered.

'Time left until the Sword Selection Ceremony... About two hours.'

Would the Rite play out exactly as in the past? Would Yuria show herself? More than that, would she even be alive?

He couldn't be certain of any of it until he confirmed with his own eyes.

'My hands are shaking. It's been a long time since I wanted something this desperately.'

"Young master?"

At that moment, Sophia suddenly stuck her face in front of him.

"What is it?"

"Hehe~ So you're nervous too?"

Sophia gave a mischievous grin.

"You act all cool, but you're just like me!"

"Who's nervous?"

"Oh, it's obvious~ Don't worry! I won't leave you alone!"

Sophia poked Ian's cheek playfully, her smile sly.

Ian let out a quiet laugh in spite of himself.

"Go on. Tease me all you want."

"Oh! I thought you'd get mad."

"I only got to come here thanks to you, so I'll let it slide."

"Huh? What did I do?"

Sophia blinked her big eyes for a moment.

"Getting here was basically all your..."

"If you hadn't swiped the invitation from the Greysel mailbox, I wouldn't be here."

It had happened even before the point when Ian's return began.

Before the incident with the bandits.

If Sophia hadn't sneaked out the Sword Selection Ceremony invitation from the Greysel mailbox, his father would have thrown it away.

He would have thought it disgraceful for a half-wit who couldn't even use aura to attend the Sword Selection Ceremony.

If that had happened, there would have been no way Ian could attend the Rite at all.

Getting the chance to attend before he turned fifteen had been thanks, solely, to Sophia.

"Ah, ah... Th-that's just... hehe..."

Sophia scratched the back of her head, grinning as if embarrassed.

The teasing look had vanished completely.

"For now, should we eat something? Follow me. I'll show you how it's done."

"Yes! Salmon! I want that salmon!"

"Alright."

"Woohoo! Salmon!"

"....."

Ian and Sophia filled a plate with food from the buffet and found a cozy table.

"Once we finish this, let's go watch that arm-wrestling contest! I'm pretty confident in my strength, too!"

"If it's without aura, you might actually do pretty well."

"What about you, young master? Want to have a go right here with me?"

"No..."

Since childhood, Sophia had been naturally stronger than her peers.

Without aura, if they competed, Ian's arm would probably snap like a rotting twig.

He still had the delicate arm of a boy who hadn't even hit his second growth spurt.

'Hmm. Now that I think about it...'

Thanks to comparing with Sophia, Ian realized her mana circuit and dantian were also of a remarkably good shape.

'Just by her natural foundation, she'd make a fine swordsman or knight.'

In fact, she had real talent.

'... Should I teach her the sword?'

In his last life, he'd been far too overwhelmed to even consider teaching Sophia swordsmanship, but this life was different.

'With all the know-how I have from my past life, she could become strong together with me.'

Besides, Sophia was sixteen.

Two years older than Ian.

While late to start by the standards of swordsman families, in general terms, it was not too late to learn the sword at all.

It was actually the perfect time: her joints and ligaments had matured enough.

"Sophia."

— Munch munch.

"Yes?"

Sophia looked at Ian while her cheeks bulged with food.

Ian gazed quietly into her eyes, then spoke.

"Do you want to learn the sword?"

"Mmh... Whaat!? Cough! Pfah! Hack, hack!"

"....."

Sophia spit out some of her food.

Fortunately, not that much came out.

Ah, damn. Salmon on her cheek... and broccoli in her bangs...

"....."

Ian took a handkerchief and wiped the food off her cheek and bangs.

Was that really such a shocking question?

— Gulp, gulp, gulp!

Sophia downed her glass of water in one go and said,

"The sword!? Me? From you? Seriously? For real!?"

"Seriously. For real."

"Why all of a sudden!?"

"It'd be good for you to have some means of protecting yourself."

...

For a moment, scenes from the past flashed through Ian's mind.

Three years before humanity perished.

The day Yuria was crippled. Sophia died.

By the time he'd somehow gathered Yuria's nearly lifeless body, and found Sophia, it had already been too late...

Ian squeezed his eyes shut in pain.

"I can't always be by your side."

"... Huh? Are you going somewhere far? Oh no! Is this a goodbye gift or something? No way!"

"No, that's not it."

"... Phew. If that's not it... well... hmm..."

Sophia began collecting the food scattered on the table with a napkin, looking thoughtful.

Ian tried to persuade her.

"Look, Sophia. Outside the city are bandits and monsters everywhere. Even inside isn't completely safe. Shadowy organizations, fanatics, abductions, terror—it all happens pretty often. What happened a few days ago could easily happen again."

"... Y-you're right."

"If you're powerless at times like that, there's nothing you can do but become a victim. We barely escaped last time, but had we taken a bit longer..."

Suddenly, the trauma from his previous life flashed in his mind again.

He saw Sophia's face, tears running down cheeks smeared with dirt, and Ian shut his eyes, anguished.

"Tch."

"... I get what you're saying, young master. You mean I need to become stronger for my own sake, right?"

"Yeah. That's right."

"Hmmm~"

Sophia's expression turned mischievous again.

"You worried about me that much? Was I that important to you?"

"Enough. Are you going to do it or not?"

"....."

Sophia smiled, an indecipherable look in her eyes.

But the playful expression had disappeared completely.

A gentle, quiet smile.

Sophia put down her utensils and began to speak.

"Honestly, when we were caught by those bandits—"

"Yeah."

"I felt truly helpless for the first time. I was really upset. I'd always been confident in my strength... but none of my resistance worked there, it was so frustrating."

"It was."

No matter how strong Sophia was for her age, without aura, she was still just a normal sixteen-year-old girl.

Being strong only meant she could carry one more heavy laundry basket than her peers.

She couldn't compare to a trained adult man.

With only that much strength, if there were more than one opponent, it was all useless.

"In that warehouse, I complained at first and blamed you, but I regretted it right away. You never stopped planning to escape... Not just for yourself, you even risked yourself against the bandits for me. But I just kept thinking about myself... Truthfully, I should be the one protecting you... I felt so pathetic..."

"Uh... Are you crying? Don't cry. You'll get indigestion if you cry while eating."

"I'm not crying!"

— Sniff.

Sophia wiped her nose.

"Actually, I wanted to ask you to teach me first. I hesitated because I worried I'd just be a burden, but hearing you offer first just... surprised me."

"Oh?"

She'd wanted to learn swordsmanship already?

Then the next step was clear.

"So, you're seriously going to learn?"

"Yes. I'm not taking it lightly. I'm not going to quit after just trying it. I need to be strong. I really do want to learn, for real."

"That's a good attitude."

Ian held out his hand to Sophia.

"I'll be joining the Sword Dragon Hall after the Sword Selection Ceremony. If you take my hand, you're coming with me."

"Sword Dragon Hall?"

Sword Dragon Hall.

The world's leading swordsman training institute, gathering trainees from all over—direct descendants, branches, vassals of Hisperion.

"Can I really go there, too?"

"As a direct member of House Greysel, I can recommend a candidate. I'll name you as my recommended student."

"W-what!"

"Well, it'll be tough at first to adjust..."

"I'll go!"

Sophia instantly grabbed Ian's hands.

"Huh?"

Her determination was palpable from her grip.

"I don't care what's waiting for me there! After experiencing what we did, I'd be an idiot to do nothing now. I'll follow you, no matter what! I will!"

"Oh..."

Ian nodded.

Yes. Sophia was always this spirited and strong.

In his previous life, she'd been trampled and broken by the bandits, losing that brightness—but in this life, Sophia hadn't lost her light.

'Because I protected her.'

She kept looking forward, hoping, moving toward the light.

"Are you sure? I'm not going to force you."

"I'm sure! This is my decision!"

"What if you want to give up halfway?"

"I'll see it through to the end! I won't quit!"

"Then it's a promise."

"Promise!"

"You swore an oath!"

"Oath!"

"Alright, let's do it."

They had promised, and they had sworn.

'I will make you into a Swordmaster or higher.'

Of course, the way wouldn't be easy.

No, it would hurt like dying. There'd be times when she'd have to risk her life.

'But don't worry.'

I'll never let you die.

Even if you scream that you want to give up, I'll never let you.

'Sophia. You're surviving to the end with me.'

A deep obsession shimmered in Ian's gaze.

'I'll never let you die again. Not Yuria. Not you.'