920 Episode 52 Light Sword Emperor (5)

[This room has an 'entry keyword'.]

I frowned at the unexpected message. I wondered if I could enter here either, but thankfully, there was a hint.

[Would you like to check the keyword 'hint'?]

I nodded, and the hint immediately came to me.

[Please answer the true name of the recorder who created the great 'Record Archive'.]

The owner of the great record archive.

It couldn't have been anything other than an incredible coincidence.

【Wang Weilong.】

The moment I answered, a strange tension filled me.

Considering the room's entry requirements, there was a high possibility that there would be more useful information than I expected.

Because the 'recorders' in this room were at least 'those who knew the true name of Bicheonhori'.

[In this 'Room of Narrative', the use of 'skills', 'stigmas', and 'storytelling' intended to harm others is restricted.]

Then, a warning message flashed before my eyes. Restricting [Skills], [Stigmas], and [Tales] that could harm one another meant prohibiting conflicts between the recorders within.

For me, it wasn't a particularly disadvantageous restriction.

[Entering the 'Room of Narration'.]

I blinked, and a sentence appeared on the pure white background.

「A recorder is someone who shows off their butt to others.」

Written in a single stroke.

The moment I read the meaning embedded in the sentence, I realized. This was the legacy of Bicheonhori.

「Therefore, the key to becoming an excellent recorder lies in two things: either create a pretty butt that anyone can see, or make your butt not look like a butt.」

It was a peculiar author's theory. If Kiyeon hyung had been there, he would have nodded in agreement.

Indeed, the recorder who wrote 『100 Strongest』 was different.

The background was brightly lit. In the clean room, chairs were lined up around a long table in the center. The chairs were all different shapes. Some looked like the chairs of company executives, while others resembled convenience store chairs. Some were more like benches than chairs.

I recalled a story associated with those chairs.

「The Meeting of the Seven Kings of Seoul」.

When the 'Seven Kings of Seoul' were chosen in the 'Meeting of the Kings', each king sat on that chair and discussed Seoul's future.

In essence, Bicheonhori had created this place based on that 'Meeting of the Kings'.

This, too, was an homage, if you will.

As expected, three dolls were sitting in the room.

【Then, let's begin the meeting... huh?】

The first to react was the recorder wearing a yellow mask. He wore a peculiar mask, but more accurately, his entire face looked more like a symbol than a mask.

Is that... a 'scale'?

【A rare newcomer.】

Then, a soft voice spoke from an orange mask. It seemed to be a mask shaped like a mountain. Above the mountain, something like a cloud floated, and curiously, a beam of light streaming from the cloud seemed to engulf the mountain.

【...】

Finally, the owner of the red mask looked at me. The entire head of the mask resembled an old monitor. A mask that glowed red, like a screen—its ominous light sent a chill down my spine.

I took in the gazes of the three dolls and calmly examined their faces again.

Yellow scales.

Orange mountains.

Red monitors.

I could tell from their aura alone that these recorders were of a different class from the 'Unchanging One'.

Their masks were yellow, orange, and red, respectively. In other words, they belonged to the top three ranks of the seven tiers of 'red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet'.

Even at first glance, the orange mountains and red monitors were particularly striking. Of course, it wasn't as overwhelming as when I faced Bicheonhori, Cheon Inho, and Asmodeus in the 40th round...

[A white mask?]

[Was there a mask of that color?]

While the scales and the mountain muttered, I calmly walked over and sat down on a chair.

The chair I chose was transparent. A 'transparent chair' so transparent that you couldn't even tell if you were sitting or not.

As I chose the chair, the red monitor opened his mouth, seemingly intrigued.

【How did you get into this room?】

The tone of the question sounded like a broken television.

I calmly answered.

【I answered the question correctly.】

【Who told you that answer?】

It seems Bicheonhori's true name is a secret among the recorders.

I shrugged and said.

【Isn't this a place where information is traded? If you want to learn something from me, you'll have to pay a price.】

The yellow scale looked surprised at my response, while the orange mountain looked intrigued.

The red monitor replied in a cold voice.

【I have no intention of interacting with someone whose identity I don't even know.】

【Isn't it equally true that we don't know each other's identities? Seeing all of you wearing masks, it doesn't seem like we're here to have a deep conversation.】

The three recorders flinched simultaneously at my answer.

I observed their reactions, then grinned and added.

【I will answer your first question for free. As for how I came to know the true name of Bicheonhori—】

Since we're not going to fight right now, there's no need to provoke undue hostility until I get the information.

So, I can answer this honestly and with a generous heart.

【I just knew it all along.】

[Someone is activating 'Lie Detection'!]

[Lie Detection] doesn't seem to be a particularly harmful skill, so it seems it can be used here as well.

['Lie Detection' has confirmed your words.]

The three recorders reacted differently to the confirmation message from [Lie Detection].

Yellow Scale shrugged, as if surprised again, while Orange Mountain crossed his arms, seeming even more intrigued.

And...

【You 'just' knew the true name of the owner of the archives? Are you expecting me to believe that now?】

Sparks flew across the red monitor's screen.

Orange Mountain quickly intervened.

【Stop it, Hermit. Since he answered the question and entered the room, we have no right to sanction him.】

Hermit. Is that the red monitor's nickname?

Orange Mountain turned to me this time and spoke.

【And White Fox, you came here to gather information, too, I suppose. I didn't mean to be territorial. Instead, I apologize.】

I think it was said that the recorder's mantras were influenced by the stories they recorded.

The orange mountain's mantra had a strangely gentle tone, and the rhythm evoked a certain longing in me.

【Since you're a newcomer, why don't you introduce yourself? White Fox, you have a nickname, right?】

Nickname?

Before I could even ask, Yellow Scale, with his shoulders hunched, spoke.

【You can call me 'Moral'.】

The yellow scale, with its strangely ominous, submissive demeanor—'Moral'.

I thought for a moment, listening to his mantra.

Unlike the 'Unchanging One', the three recorders before me were somewhat higher-ranking beings. Perhaps, like Bicheonhori and Asmodeus, they too were characters from 'Ways of Survival'. Next, the nickname was revealed: 'Orange Mountain'.

【Please call me 'Cloud Mountain.'】

The orange mountain with its clear and gentle mantra—'Cloud Mountain'.

It was an intuitive nickname that suited the mask well.

I tried to think of characters related to 'mountain' or 'cloud', but there were so many of them in 'Ways of Survival', it was difficult to deduce their identities.

【'Hermit'.】

Finally, the red monitor—'Hermit'.

One character immediately came to mind when I heard the keyword 'Hermit'.

But I didn't have time to think deeply about it. It was my turn to answer.

【A nickname. I can just make up anything, right?】

I was thinking something like 'Friend of the Dirt-Eater' or 'Disciple of the Transcendently Beautiful Girl Author' would work, but Hermit spoke with sparks flying.

【What nonsense are you talking about? Didn't you read the entrance notice when you came in?

【Entrance notice?】

【Here, you must choose a nickname that has even a slight connection to your 'story'.】

The moment I heard Cloud Mountain's comment, I had a realization.

「Either you create a really pretty butt that you don't mind showing off to anyone, or you make your butt not look like a butt.」

I see. Was that what this room's entrance notice meant?

In short, the 'nicknames' here were a kind of game devised by Bicheonhori. A 'game' where you reveal important clues about yourself to guess others' identities.

So, I had to choose a nickname that was related to me while ensuring my identity would never be revealed.

【My nickname is...】

Come to think of it, there was one nickname that would be appropriate at this point.

['Kim Dokja'.]

Eight years after the fall of the Fear Realm. Even eight years ago, stories about the 'Kim Dokja fragments' were spreading, and recalling my conversations with Cho Jincheol and Reinheit, the name 'Kim Dokja' felt quite commonplace.

「"You think you're 'Kim Dokja' yourself?"」

It was highly likely that there were others pretending to be 'Kim Dokja' while I was gone.

In that sense, the name 'Kim Dokja' was the perfect 'butt' to reveal my identity while simultaneously concealing it perfectly.

【Hmph...?】

Someone groaned, perhaps startled by my butt.

【What did you just say?】

【'Kim Dokja'.】

Actually, I chose the nickname 'Kim Dokja' not simply to hide my identity.

「Kim Dokja is the true name of the 'Oldest Dream'.」

According to the setting of 'Ways of Survival', the 'true names' of all high-level beings in the <Star Stream> are restricted.

Especially, those of lower ranks can sometimes suffer a severe blow simply by mentioning the true name of a higher-level being. This was likely the reason why the 'Unchanging One' fainted upon learning the true name of 'Bicheonhori'.

However, the name 'Kim Dokja' alone never inflicted damage upon the speaker.

Common sense dictates that no constellation exists higher than the 'Oldest Dream', so anyone who invoked its name should have suffered a blow close to annihilation.

However, this has never occurred.

I have two hypotheses regarding this.

First, the name 'Kim Dokja' does not refer to a single being.

Second, the story surrounding 'Kim Dokja' and the 'Oldest Dream' is so distant that no one has ever been able to trace it.

Because they didn't quite understand.

But that was only for ordinary incarnations or constellations who didn't know well. I wondered what it would be like for the recorders.

High-ranking recorders like Bicheonhorin and Asmodeus could call out the name 'Kim Dokja' without hesitation, but what about the other recorders?

【Dare.】

With sparks flowing through the air, Hermit slammed the table in a fit of agitation.

A pale aura hovered above his monitor.

He seemed poised to attack me at any moment.

Of course, according to the room's rules, I wouldn't be attacked, so I stared at Hermit for a moment before looking around at the other recorders.

Moral looked dazed, as if he'd just experienced something unpleasant, and Cloud Mountain's reaction was difficult to discern.

Cloud Mountain spoke.

【Hermit, calm down. It's just a nickname.】

【...】

【You're an interesting person. Are you sure you want to use 'that name' as your nickname?】

【Yes. Is there anything that wouldn't work?】

【Of course not.】

Unlike Moral and Hermit, who seemed to be strangely averse to the nickname 'Kim Dokja', Cloud Mountain seemed even more interested in me after hearing my nickname.

【Now that we've finished our introductions, shall we share the keywords from the information we've shared?】

【How about we start with the newbie? Since we're only going to talk about keywords anyway, the order doesn't matter.】

At Moral's words, the three recorders looked at me simultaneously.

They say that, but if they feel it would be detrimental to them after hearing the keywords, they won't engage in the exchange. When I refused to open my mouth, Cloud Mountain chimed in.

【If it's inconvenient, I can speak first. I could demonstrate, too.】

【Would you mind?】

I was grateful.

There was plenty of information to use as a bargaining chip, but before that, I needed to figure out how much they knew and what they wanted.

【The information I brought...】

For a moment, I felt the mask on the cloud mountain smile.

【It's about the disciple of Breaking the Sky Sword Master—the 'Light Sword Emperor'.】