923 Episode 52 Light Sword Emperor (8)

A light spark flickered in the air. A playful voice followed.

【Since when did you know?】

I felt a space opening, and a monster wearing a 'white fox mask' identical to mine appeared before my eyes.

Despite the 'perception blocking' effect, I could sense the intensity emanating from his entire body, and I was certain.

【Since you started playing pranks like the 'white fox mask'.】

Weilong, King of Bicheonhori.

The master who created this secret subspace was right before my eyes.

【Interesting. You already knew about it then?】

【Isn't it strange? I entered the space you created, and 'that mask' suddenly appeared as an option for me, as if it had been waiting for me.】

【So, do you like the mask I gave you?】

I looked at Bicheonhori, who was spinning. Perhaps because he was a high-ranking recorder, he didn't produce any records like the other recorders. That must mean he's in complete control of himself.

I decided to throw a rock, sending ripples through that serene mask.

【Since when have you been interfering with my [fate]?】

Bicheonhori seemed to hesitate for a moment, then replied in a brazen voice.

【What are you talking about? Even I find it difficult to interfere with [fate] without you noticing.】

That's right. If he had directly interfered with my [fate], I couldn't have failed to notice the shift in the context surrounding me. However.

【If you were controlling the [fate] of others, not mine, it would be a different story.】

What if the sentence he wrote wasn't about me?

From the 'Unchanging One' who heard Bicheonhori's true name to my entrance into this room—did all of those events truly rely on 'coincidence'? Instead of answering my question, Bicheonhori let out a light laugh, then added in a rather serious voice.

【Still, wasn't it a pleasant encounter thanks to me?】

I glared at him for a moment.

Perhaps even my encounter with Cloud Mountain here was recorded in his records.

【Is Cloud Mountain really who I think they are?】

【Is there any point in confirming that here?】

【Why did you lead me here?】

Of course, I was glad to meet him again, even briefly. But I also thought it shouldn't have ended this way.

【Is there any information you can extract from me? Are you still curious about the tomato story?】

【Really. I didn't bring you here for any particular evil purpose.】

A mysterious light began to flow from the eyes of the white fox mask.

【Now that you've become a 'recorder', it's time you received your proper title.】

At the same time, a message rang out from the air.

[The Recorder of Fear, 'Name Maker', grins.]

I flinched and looked around.

But there didn't seem to be any other Recorders of Fear besides Bicheonhori.

So, the name 'Name Maker' must be another epithet for Bicheonhori.

Thinking about it, it wasn't strange.

He was the author of the meditation-based work, 'The 100 Strongest'. He was the historian who personally gave countless characters nicknames.

【You're going to give me the epithet of a recorder.】

【I see.】

【Do you give all the epithets for the new recorders?】

【Most of them.】

Bicheonhori's mask grinned.

I quietly admired his smile and said.

【I have no intention of being confined by the 'context of modifiers' you created.】

The 'name' of everything in the <Star Stream> is imbued with a story. That story grows with its existence, becoming a destiny, and eventually a crucial indicator of its existence.

In other words,

【Isn't that how you're going to bestow [fate] on me?】

In the <Star Stream>, modifiers are the very fate of that being.

【I expected you to say that. But strictly speaking, this isn't a 'modifier' I'm bestowing. I simply choose the piece of story that suits you.】

I understand what Bicheonhori meant. Both he and I are merely recorders of this <Star Stream>. And the one who completes the record is not the one who writes it, but the one who reads it.

【It's not me who grants you power—】

【It's the <Star Stream>, right?】

Then a series of modifiers appeared before my eyes.

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1. The Scribe of the End.

2. Knight of Salvation.

3. Witness of Infinity.

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Perhaps these three are the candidates for modifiers.

After I remained silent for a long time, Bicheonhori asked.

【Don't you like any of them?】

【All three clearly described me in some way.】

【If you don't like any of them, you can make one yourself.】

To make one myself.

Is that even possible?

【But in that case, it'll be difficult to properly receive the blessings bestowed upon a name. The <Star Stream> is inherently harsh on those who seek to change their own fate.】

【Can I delay choosing a modifier for a bit?】

【Is there something else urgent?】

Actually, even as I listened to Bicheonhori, my mind was busy with the external scenario.

According to what I heard from Cloud Mountain, right now wasn't the time for me to leisurely choose a name.

Bicheonhori looked at me intently and then blurted out,

【Is it because of the Light Sword Emperor?】

As expected, hiding one's true feelings in front of a high-ranking recorder was difficult.

When I nodded, Bicheonhori said,

【It'll be too late even if we go to her now. The constellations of the great nebulae have begun to chase that child.】

I knew the Light Sword Emperor was in dire straits. However, what I was curious about was how he was able to grasp the Light Sword Emperor's situation so thoroughly.

【Bicheonhori, how far are you recording?】

Even a high-ranking recorder can't keep track of every scenario.

If he was focusing on the Light Sword Emperor, a mere incarnation, then the implications were clear.

【Was it you who gave her the nickname 'Light Sword Emperor'?】

【She's a character who will be named one of the 'Top 100 Strongest People' in this world.】

I hurriedly looked around. I had to get out of here immediately. It wasn't just any recorder, but Bicheonhori who was watching over the story.

「The Light Sword Emperor will soon face a serious crisis.」

It meant a story worthy of a recorder's coveted record was about to begin.

【I have to go.】

【I told you. Even if you go now, you'll be late.】

I'm already eight years late. Even if I'm even later, I can't refuse to go just because I'm late.

Bicheonhori looked at me intently and said,

【There's one way you won't be late.】

I asked, trying to grasp what he meant.

【Do you know the exact location of the Light Sword Emperor?】

【Is that all there is to it?】

A sudden realization dawned on me.

Bicheonhori was speaking. If I accept his offer, he'll tell me how to save the Light Sword Emperor.

【What do you want?】

【I like how quickly you talk.】

Since we were just talking about 'modifiers', perhaps the deal was to ask me to choose one of the modifiers he'd created.

But Bicheonhori's offer was unexpected.

【Read the story records I wrote, and I'll tell you how to save the Light Sword Emperor.】

【Read the records?】

Normally, I would have readily accepted. Even if it weren't his request, the records of a high-ranking recorder were worth reading.

The problem was timing. Now wasn't the time to leisurely read his records.

【Didn't you want to know 'where the Light Sword Emperor is now'?】

The moment I heard those words, a strange feeling struck me.

Where is she now?

Bicheonhori wasn't simply talking about the Light Sword Emperor's 'spatiotemporal coordinates'.

「To truly understand someone's situation, you must ultimately understand their history.」

Bicheonhori was saying.

【If you truly want to save her, shouldn't you first understand why she came to the 'New Murim District'?】

Perhaps this was Bicheonhori's trap. He could be using my identity as a 'Kim Dokja fragment' to plot some kind of scheme.

【Understood.】

Even so, I had no choice. Perhaps it was because I, too, am a reader before being a writer.

【Show me.】

【Good thinking.】

Bicheonhori nodded readily, and a dazzling sentence began to float through the air.

「This is a story about a certain madness.」

The records began to be viewed.

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With a ragged breath, the stories scattered. Perhaps it was the wounds from the previous clash. The skull mask covering her face rattled. She had to find a place to hide.

"Find her! She's nearby!"

Hidden deep within the abandoned building, the Light Sword Emperor took a deep breath.

[The special ability, 'Immortal', is activated!]

If it weren't for the power of 'Immortal' inherited from her master, she would have collapsed long ago.

But even with this level of ability, dealing with the enemies pursuing her was no easy feat.

[The constellations of the giant nebula <Olympus> are tracking you!]

[The constellations of the giant nebula <Veda> are tracking you!]

To make matters worse, the healing power of 'Immortal' was also hindered.

[Your incarnation is currently poisoned.]

Perhaps the previous blow had poisoned it. The vitality of 'Immortal' had been fighting the poison, but fighting them in this state was a desperate attempt to end in vain.

[The 'Recorder of Fear' supporting <Olympus Technology> is looking for you.]

More than anything, there were even 'Recorders' over there. Those who arbitrarily judge others' [fate].

'There are only two options.'

Close your eyes, use the energy of the Elaine Forest, and lie down for two hours, or find an antidote.

After a moment of reflection, the Light Sword Emperor called out to someone in her head.

'Can you hear me?'

She called to the constellation that had often helped her on her journey here. But the constellation didn't respond.

He'd been busy with his own constellation recently, so perhaps he didn't have time to worry about this.

'What would he have done?'

The thought struck her, and she smiled wryly.

'He would have found a way.'

She felt the urge to call his name. But perhaps it was the addiction. His name, his face, couldn't readily come to mind.

Consciousness was drifting in and out of her. In her somewhat hazy state, she felt like she was hallucinating.

"Why would Heewon do something like that? You could really die. You heard what it was like. Who the hell is that person?"

She had definitely heard something like that before. It must have been right before she entered the 'Fear Realm'.

She had to answer the questions of those who asked why she was going that far, whether there was a reason for her to do so.

"That is..."

But then she couldn't answer. She lacked the confidence to explain her feelings.

Perhaps that was why she felt compelled to act. She felt that once she saved him, she would understand why. If she met him again and looked into those gentle, narrow eyes, she might be able to explain her feelings.

[Your story mutters bitterly.]

But she had recklessly entered the 'Fear Realm', where she had nearly died several times. She couldn't believe that such terrifying monsters existed. If each and every one of them appeared in the scenario, it would be a catastrophe.

Nevertheless, confronting them, dodging them, and fleeing them—she steadily advanced deeper into the Fear Realm. When she reached the entrance, the middle, and finally the entrance to the End Zone, she was certain.

「He is here.」

At the same time, she had a premonition.

「The Fear Realm is collapsing.」

The world was collapsing, as if crushed by powerful pressure. Beyond the collapsing world, a starlight she knew so well twinkled.

"Inho-ssi."

Jung Heewon started running. She ran, calling out the star's name, whatever it seemed to be.

"Kim Dokja!"

But the star was sucked away somewhere in the fierce storm. Jung Heewon ran frantically, chasing the starlight that vanished without a trace.

She had come all this way, vowing to save him, to bring him back.

"No..."

Watching the starlight scattering in the collapsing storm, Jung Heewon slowly sank to her knees.

The sound of a train could be heard from somewhere. A train carrying the Transcendents was departing, facing a disaster that would destroy a world.

Watching the train's tail dwindle away, Jung Heewon sank to her seat.

「I want to become strong.」

She wanted to become strong. She wanted to become strong enough to protect that person. That's why she swung her sword. She came here, wanting to return what she had received, what she thought she had received.

「Some salvation is completed not by the giver, but by the receiver.」

But she wasn't even given the chance to save that person.

「Her salvation ended here.」

With a sound like a rift in time buckling across an entire region, her world was washed clean.

But at the moment she had given up everything, a faint voice came from afar.

[No, Captain! If you jump from here—]

[Stop! Breaking the Sky Sword Saint!]

At first, she thought she'd misheard. But a moment later, something appeared to be running from the distant, pale landscape. A long shadow was running towards her.

A large hand suddenly reached out and grabbed her.

But the world was crushing her faster. The giant reached out with its other hand and forcibly opened the rift between the worlds, pulling her out. But in return, it lost one of its own arms.

「Even so, some salvation is only complete when you extend a hand.」

The giant's arm was torn apart with a bang. The giant, pouring out a story from one of its arms, asked her,

[Are you really going to die in a place like this?]

And so she met her master.