925 Episode 53 Record War (1)

「"Whether we record it or not, what happened happened, and what will happen will happen. So, aren't you curious? Why, and for what purpose, do we strive to record stories?"」

—Bicheonhori King Weilong

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【You know, right? Even if we run at full speed now, we'll be late.】

Bicheonhori was right. Even if we escape the subspace right now and go rescue Jung Heewon, we'll be late.

By the time I arrive, the [fate] of the recorders will be fulfilled, and the heat of Agni, the purifying flame, will burn everything in the area, including Jung Heewon.

Fortunately, I had a way to resolve this spatiotemporal disparity.

[The story, 'Heir of the Eternal Name', begins its storytelling!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', activates!]

Being located in the subspace created by Bicheonhori proved to be a great help.

[This space, strictly speaking, is a place created by processing 'dreams'. Therefore, it's an infinitely suitable space for you to use your 'power'.】

At this point, I'm starting to suspect if the whole thing wasn't just a ruse by Bicheonhori, but now I was in no position to be picky.

Furthermore, another obstacle remained. For [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] to activate, both I and the target had to think of each other simultaneously.

「Making her, who is nothing, special.」

Thankfully, the obstacle was naturally resolved.

「Once Cheon Inho, now Kim Dokja. Protecting that person. The desire to protect him.」

The moment I read that sentence, my breath caught in my throat.

Eight years had passed, but Jung Heewon still remembered me.

My heart pounded.

I could read her, leaning against that sentence. I would be able to see the world through her eyes once more.

I definitely should have.

[The connection with the target is currently not smooth.]

Why? Even though the activation conditions were met, the 'first-person perspective' didn't activate. What's the problem?

I turned around and saw Bicheonhori looking at me with a puzzled smile.

【Why, what's not working?】

That old man clearly knew I couldn't properly activate [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

【Is this why you called me here?】

【Heh heh, I don't understand what you mean.】

I let out a light sigh and concentrated. If I couldn't use [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint], there was only one way to help her in this situation.

Tsutsutsutsutsu.

That was to manifest the 'power' of the Recorder of Fear.

「It was finally the end of the Light Sword Emperor.」

The [Fate] emblem granted by the Recorders came to mind vividly, clinging to Jung Heewon like a binding.

I reached out for the emblem without hesitation.

Tsutsutsutsu.

The moment my hand touched it, sentences overflowed through my fingers like living loaches. I gripped the slippery words tightly and applied force. Then, the edges of the sentences I touched began to crumble.

「It was finally the end of」

Bicheonhori, who was watching me next to me, sighed.

【Surprising. Have you already realized the power of 'record'?】

The power to record the legends of characters in real time. To be precise, the power to force the history of a 'specific direction'.

That was the power of 'record' that the recorders had.

The method itself was not difficult. [□□] With a feeling similar to when using the skill, I just need to twist the sentence that comes to mind into the shape I want.

Tsutsutsutsu!

Every time I intervened in the sentence, a threatening afterstorm rushed near me.

Maybe it's because they got wrong with the 'probability' that other recorders put in.

[The 'Recorders' cheering for the Great Nebulae express their bewilderment at the reversal of their 'fate'.]

[The 'Recorders' cheering for the Great Nebulae once again call out 'fate'!]

I felt the context of the story shift violently. Sentences, swarming like insects, clung to my hand. The mere touch of their handwriting elicited a sense of discomfort.

I grabbed hold of the words once more and forcefully crushed them.

「The end of the Light Sword Emperor」

This was the way the Recorders fought.

[The 'Recorders' cheering for the Great Nebulae look around!]

[The 'Recorders' cheering for the Great Nebulae have noticed your presence!]

A battle of records to determine the future of each character—in other words, their [fate].

「The end of the Light Sword」

Despite the Recorders' struggles, the dominance of the records was gradually shifting to my side. Of course, it's much easier to erase existing sentences than to write new ones.

[The probability of 'Fate' is distorted!]

[Some of the 'Recorders' cheering for the Great Nebulae are hit hard and retreat!]

Bicheonhori spoke, seeming to enjoy the scene.

【Indeed, you're no ordinary recorder.】

【I just erased a few words.】

【The better the story, the harder it is to erase.】

It seemed like I'd heard something important, but I didn't have the presence of mind to respond.

Even if the binding power of [Fate] had weakened, Jung Heewon was still in danger. Before her stood Agni, the flame of purification, half-descended. Jung Heewon, whose incarnation body had reached its limit, was in a state of peril.

As if trying to help me, Bicheonhori spoke.

【There's no time. Although they've retreated for a moment, the Recorders over there are no pushovers. They'll prepare their position and pounce soon.】

【Isn't there a way?】

As if waiting for that, Bicheonhori added.

【If you sign a 'Record Contract,' you'll be able to describe the character's future with much less probability.】

I see.

I immediately attempted the 'Record Contract'. But...

[You cannot perform the 'Record Contract'.]

When I turned around, Bicheonhori said, still smiling.

【The 'Record Contract' is a sacred ritual. Only those who hold the 'Formula' can perform it.】

It was then that I realized something.

That cunning fox knew from the beginning that I would sign the 'Record Contract' to save Jung Heewon.

In the end, I had to choose a 'Formula' to help her.

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1. Scribe of the End.

2. Knight of Salvation.

3. Witness of Infinity.

+

A dazzling beam of light floated before my eyes, accompanied by modifiers.

Bicheonhori must have foreseen this situation and created a modifier specifically for me.

[The name you chose will help you.]

If I choose one of these modifiers, I will receive the blessings of a high-ranking recorder and overcome this crisis.

【Yes. I have chosen.】

A dazzling beam of light slowly floated before my eyes, accompanied by a modifier.

Bicheonhori stared at the modifier for a moment, then licked his lips and asked.

【Are you really going to make that choice?】

【You've been watching me all this time, so you must have anticipated what I would choose.】

Naturally, the modifier I chose wasn't the one Bicheonhori had suggested.

【You know the price of creating your own modifier, right?】

I nodded.

【The combination of words you chose is too heavy and harsh. I'll ask again. Are you really going to use that slur?】

【I'm prepared. I didn't become a 'recorder' just to change a few words.】

What was on Bicheonhori's mind at my words? For a moment, something akin to worry flashed across his eyes.

【Being a recorder doesn't mean you can escape 'fate'. All we can do is change the sentence to 'interpret' the predetermined future differently.】

Interpreting the predetermined future differently... I said, mulling over the words.

【Even if it's just a play on words, a twisted interpretation is fine.】

If a writer decides to intervene in a character's [fate], they must also be prepared. No matter what events, no matter what adversity befalls them, they must navigate the entire story together with their characters. Even if it ends in catastrophe.

【If someone reads that pun and believes it, it could become reality.】

We must keep in mind that that catastrophe could become the eternity of this world.

[The Recorder of Fear, 'One Who Rewrites Eternity', requests a 'recording contract' from incarnation 'Jung Heewon.']

The One Who Rewrites Eternity.

That was the 'modifier' I had chosen as a recorder.

I looked at Jung Heewon on screen, anxious.

Please accept it.

But Jung Heewon on screen simply stared blankly at the message flashing before her eyes, a confused expression on her face.

【Oh, you make mistakes too.】

A mistake?

【Any good recorder should first listen to how the character feels before writing the 'record' they desire.】

A series of facts belatedly came to mind.

Damn, I see.

【She lost her teacher to the [fate] of the recorders.】

I forgot about it for a moment in the urgency.

【If you suddenly offered her a recording contract in that situation, there's no way she'd accept it...】

Bicheonhori, who had been saying that, made a dumbfounded expression.

I, too, stared blankly at the screen. As if she could see me here, Jung Heewon was facing me across the screen.

「"...Dokja-ssi?"」

How could that be possible?

She was speaking to me, as if a character had broken through the [Fourth Wall].

「"It's Inho-ssi, right? It's you, right? Right?"」

It was unbelievable. Even from so far away, Jung Heewon had clearly sensed me.

Then, sparks flew from her eyes.

[The story, 'regret, exhaustion, obsession', ripples.]

[The story, 'regret, exhaustion, obsession', senses your presence.]

「ImustprotectImustprotectImustprotectImustprotectImustprotectImustprotectImustprotectImustprotectImustprotect」

A brilliant ray of light burst, a faint link appearing between me and her.

['Record contract' has been signed.]

The world's landscape shifted, and Jung Heewon unleashed [Vermilion Divine Treasure] to dodge Agni's strike.

Perhaps it was because of her different movements from before, Agni frowned and asked.

「[What have you done?]」

I slowly opened my mouth, assessing Agni's predicament.

【Heewon-ssi, listen carefully. The situation is truly dire.】

I wasn't sure if he could hear me clearly. She had little magic left, and her incarnation body had long since reached its limit.

【Nevertheless—】

Still, I had to speak. I had to offer even the most obvious words of encouragement. Because in this world of stories, even the most obvious words can serve as a connecting adverb that turns the tide of battle.

【We can win.】

The enemy was no less than one of the Lokapalas of Vedas. A narrative-grade constellation comparable to Surya, the 'God of Supreme Light'.

「However, with Jung Heewon now having achieved the 4th stage of Transcendence, the odds weren't against her.」

[The Recorder of Fear, 'One Who Rewrites Eternity', explains the strategy.]

If only we could properly record this battle—

[The constellation, 'God of Supreme Light', looks upon the Emperor of Light.]

[The constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', observes the Emperor of Light's battle.]

[The constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', cannot contain his excitement.]

[The Constellation, 'Monarch of the Small Fries', observes your record.]

We will be able to obtain a 'giant story' comparable to 「Spring in the Demon World」 in this city.