928 Episode 53 Record War (4)

Two piercing eyes twinkled in the pitch-black darkness of the theater.

The sound of someone regularly knocking on the theater door. Asmodeus ignored the noise and focused on the screen.

「"Haha, hahahaha! I, I can become strong now! You son of a bitch, Kim Dokja! You didn't know that!"」

A man shouted on the screen. A middle-aged man, splattered with demon blood, was stabbing the fallen 'Dark Guardian' with a groundhog knife.

「"Immortality? You idiot! What kind of immortality is immortality in a world like this? That's why someone like you can't be a leader! Do you understand—"」

Thump, thump, thump. The knocking on the theater door grew louder. Asmodeus frowned, sighed in annoyance, then turned off the screen and opened the theater door.

【What's going on, Hermit?】

'Hermit' was an assistant recorder Asmodeus had recently recruited. While his writing style was gloomy, he demonstrated a talent for manifesting [Fate] in shorthand, and he was thought to be a useful one to have.

He seemed somewhat self-conscious, but he was relatively reserved. He had achieved the 'Red' rank in Bicheonhori, so I thought it wouldn't be a problem to recruit him...

【I told you not to come unless it was urgent.】

【Excuse me. Demon King of the Cinema, I have an urgent report to make.】

Asmodeus watched Hermit rambling on faster than he could transcribe [Fate], deciding to listen to his story.

【...In Bicheonhori's 'Record Archive'? Is that true?】

【Yes.】

A summary of Hermit's words was as follows.

A recorder wearing a 'white fox mask' appeared in Bicheonhori's subspace, the 'Record Archive'. But the mysterious recorder had 'traded' information that sounded unusual at first glance.

【The food the Oldest Dream hates? Was he really suggesting a 'trade' using that information?】

【Yes, so...】

【Ahaha.】

Asmodeus's sudden laughter made Hermit look puzzled. Asmodeus cleared his throat slightly and added,

【I'm curious. That archive: which city is it connected to?】

At Asmodeus's expression of interest, Hermit's voice brightened significantly.

【The access point for that archive is—】

It was then that a small murmur was heard from a corner of the theater.

「Oh—」

A child's singing voice. While Hermit paused at the strangeness in the voice, the other children in the audience began to speak one by one.

「O o o o o o o o」

The children sang in unison.

A strange probability gripped the theater.

Hermit, feeling a terrible dizziness, stumbled.

【Ah.】

He looked up and saw Asmodeus, his expression enchanted.

As if he had forgotten the story he had been hearing, Asmodeus left Hermit behind and trudged to the audience, where he collapsed.

A moment later, a video began to appear on the torn theater screen.

「...The King of Fear is strong...」

The mere sound of the chorus made his stomach churn. The story of 'fear' resonated within Asmodeus, and he began to cry.

【I see. A truly fitting return for you.】

Above the 'New Murim District', the King of Fear descended.

The shrieks of the Recorders of Fear. Even amidst all this, the desperate struggle of the recorders continued, trying to write down even one more sentence.

「The forgotten Watcher of Dreams has finally revealed himself.」

「The master of the temporal rift, revered by all the stars...」

「The boy from the old house, resonating with the sorrow of the vanished...」

Gazing upon the battlefield on the margins, where the desire to write, read, and survive swirled, Asmodeus spoke to the Hermit, who was leaning against a corner of the theater, trembling.

【Look, Hermit. This world is a 'one-line battle'.】

A single line determines life and death, a single line writes someone's [fate]. And a single line can determine the end of a world.

The crucial question is who writes that 'last sentence' and how.

【The end of the worldline is truly near.】

'Constellation hunting' was beginning.

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「"Don't use the 'Second Mode'."」

The moment I activated the story, I instinctively recalled Han Sooyoung's words.

「"Your 'Second Mode' is still unfinished. If you misuse it, you might be consumed by the story."」

The second mode Han Sooyoung spoke of was to borrow the power of the 'King of Fear'.

[The story, 'King of Fear' is resonating with you.]

The moment I stepped into the 'Great Hall', the darkness of the world spoke to me.

【Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh】

The screams of Outer Gods scattered throughout the <Star Stream>. Distant Outer Gods, scattered across each worldline, gazed upon me.

【Ki ng of Fear】

Even though I would normally panic, I wasn't afraid. Perhaps it was because I subconsciously realized they weren't hostile to me.

【Wel co me to our play grou nd】

Of course, not all Outer Gods were so welcoming.

【The scent of cons tel la tions】

【You are ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■…?】

The next moment, with an incredible spark, a story flowed out from within me.

[The story, 'Heir of the Eternal Name', wields his power.]

[The giant tale, 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', begins its storytelling.]

The Second Kim Dokja's main story, the giant tale, 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', was stirring.

A context incomparably more distant than the existing stories began to sweep through me.

「The 'Giant Tale' is like a natural phenomenon. Its story does not compromise with the incarnation, but only realizes itself through the incarnation's body.」

Amidst the searing pain in my brain, my sense of self gradually became blurred.

Is this why Han Sooyoung told me not to use it? I desperately recalled the story of the 'second'. To master this story, I needed to emulate its master, even if only a little.

「Who is the 'King of Fear'?」

The source of the <Star Stream>—a being born from fragments of the 'Oldest Dream'. The master of the 'Time Fault' who dreams and delights in interpreting them.

Everyone who has ever recorded his life struggles to leave behind even a single line of interpretation, and every star that has seen him retreats in a fear that light cannot interpret—

「The Strangeness of the <Star Stream>.」

Unlike the first, who was somewhat talkative, I rarely spoke to the second.

However, I remembered the scenery I had seen with him in the 'Big House'. His feelings about the 'Time Fault'. His Outer Gods—the compassion he showed to Outer Gods. His curiosity that did not ignore the stories of mere extras or villains.

「He was a monster born to love all stories.」

Merely maintaining my existence felt like my mind would collapse.

Barely holding onto my senses, I walked the path of the 'Great Hall'.

A path of stars and darkness. Through gazes mingled with fear and awe, the exit from the 'Hall' finally came into view.

「The 'King of Fear' will once again listen to stories.」

Ashen shade seemed to descend upon every landscape of the world.

「The Lord of Fear, who sees the world with his eyes closed and hears the truth with his ears plugged, will descend.」

Living things burned to death, not even a single collar left. The traces of all beings fading away were trampled upon my eyes.

「I hate sadness.」

This was the world the 'King of Fear' had seen.

[Nonsense, nonsense—]

The god of flames, burning the earth, looked up in astonishment.

[There's no way that evil being could still be alive—!]

Have you ever seen a god terrified?

[A very small number of constellations are attempting to leave the channel!]

I was watching.

「"If you must reveal your power early..."」

While all living things that felt 'fear' were hesitant to raise their heads, I slowly walked toward the God of Flame.

「"Show them the difference in strength clearly. No one in the <Star Stream> can ignore you. That's how you protect what's precious to you."」

The presence of the 'King of Fear' filled the entire 'New Murim District'.

「E xis tence Void E xis tence Void E xis tence Void E xis tence Contribution」

「Light Rem nants Light Rem nants Light Rem nants Light Rem nants」

「To■toto■toto■toto■toto■toto■toto■toto■to」

The maddened recorders were spewing out meaningless sentences, confronted by a fear they couldn't interpret.

Agni, too, was watching me, reading something entirely different.

「The man who saw the end of a world was there.」

The end of the world. The scene of the 'Final Wall' reached twice through the 'King of Fear'. The possibility of an apocalypse that all constellations both awe and fear.

[Th- Aaah, Aaaaaaah—!]

The god, having glimpsed this possibility, began to shed tears of blood from his entire body.

[Some of the Recorders of Fear are fleeing the scenario battlefield!]

Some of the recorders, sensing ominousness, finally attempted to escape the scenario.

【Bihyung.】

At my call, sparks swept across the entire 'New Murim District'.

[The Administration temporarily prohibits departure from the scenario in this area.]

[The 'Recorders of Fear' in this area are in deep confusion!]

I will not let a single one escape. I will not let you escape the sentences you wrote. I will not let you ignore the old sorrow.

「The backlash of the destroyed [Fate] will return to those who unleashed it.」

With every step Agni took, the groans of the Recorders seemed to echo in my ears.

[The giant nebula, <Veda>, cannot hide its bewilderment at your presence.]

[The giant nebula, <Veda>, provides additional probability!]

Agni, barely regaining his composure after receiving the probability from <Veda>, shouted as he endured the aftershock of probability.

[Recorders. Do not panic. That's not the real 'King of Fear'. He's already dead. His death has already been recorded! That's nothing more than the remains of a dead fear—!]

He was right. Right now, I couldn't use the overwhelming power of 'fear' that the 'King of Fear' had displayed.

His sanctuary, the Fear Realm, had already been destroyed, and the 'time faults' he controlled had all been closed.

Now, I was just Kim Dokja, wearing the 'King of Fear's' clothes.

[The Recorders of Fear begin to repair the records!]

Like cornered rats, the recorders were gathering again. Now, they too were desperate.

It was only natural. If Agni died here, they would die too.

Looking at the recorders, I quietly smiled.

「They have no idea what the 'King of Fear' is.」

They would now understand what it meant to achieve a balance of probability with the great Lokapala simply by 'existing'.

I slowly opened my mouth.

【Fox That Commands the Skies, Bicheonhori King Weilong.】

As if the world had stopped, all words in the world fell silent before the tranquil mantra.

【Demon King of the Cinema, the Demon God of Wrath and Justice Asmodeus.】

The sky turned pitch black, and the constellations held their breath. The recorders, who had stopped recording, focused on my words.

【A warning to them and all 'recorders'. Whoever stands in my way, whoever dares to write [Fate] before me—】

As if engraving a mantra into their souls, I record their fear.

【That [Fate] will be your final sentence.】

This is a kind of apocalypse.

Agni shouted hysterically.

[Don't listen to nonsense. He is merely a shell. According to the information just now coming down from the nebula…!]

And in the next moment, an unusual aftershock began to ripple through his body.

[What?]

The sentences surrounding him were disintegrating. All the stories that had reinforced, praised, and protected his probability were crumbling.

「In an instant, Agni realized what had happened.」

Agni, astonished, hurriedly turned and glanced into the empty air.

[<Veda>! Right now… !]

「The power of the 'King of Fear', the 'End that No One Can Ignore'.」

With this power, all the recorders in this scenario area have just heard 'information they should not hear'.

[All 'Recorders of Fear' entangled in the 'Fate' proclamation of the 'New Murim District' are now in a 'Recording Interruption' state.]

Agni's incarnation, strengthened by the recorders' [Fate], weakened, and the god's incarnation, unable to contain the probability condensed within, began to swell.

[An...!]

With a blast of probability, Agni's entire body exploded before my eyes.