929 Episode 53 Record War (5)

[The Recorder of Fear, '...', is unable to overcome the shock of the recording interruption...]

[The Recorder of Fear, '...', lets out a terrifying scream...]

...

It was the first time I'd ever witnessed such a violent storm of messages.

The sentences that had been strengthening Agni shattered beyond recognition, and Agni's story, which had filled the incarnation body, swelled and burst forth.

[Gaaaaaaaaa!]

Agni's roar echoed through the scene, resembling a volcano erupting.

[Most constellations within the channel are shocked!]

<Olympus>, <Veda>, and the other constellations of the 'New Murim District' were all engulfed in the suffocating atmosphere.

A moment later, a staggering shadow of a god appeared through the acrid smoke.

[I, can't, forgive... ]

Is the constellation that reached 'Lokapala' truly different?

Even after being struck by that horrific aftershock, Agni remained alive. Although severely damaged and reduced to less than half his size, he still radiated a force befitting a great man.

Agni, staggering, swung his broken axe at me.

[Only you—]

Even if his strength had been diminished, it was a threatening blow for me, who still lacked the full power of the 'King of Fear'. But I didn't panic.

「The 'fighter' who protects the King of Fear will be there.」

The light sword, which had endured through the ages to avenge its master, was rushing toward me.

「The sword, tinged with the light of the spirit, cut through the god's waist.」

The trajectory of Jung Heewon's [Breaking the Sky Sword] swung slashed Agni. The dehorned goat collapsed with a groan, and the god's massive body collapsed to the ground. Jung Heewon, exhausted of all her power, collapsed to the ground, as if leaving it to me.

His upper and lower body severed by the Breaking the Sky Sword, Agni’s voice leaked out from the cracks in the shattered stories.

"No, no, no…"

Even the last of his pride, his mantra, crumbled, and the great star's wretched inner self was revealed to the world.

"Don't look at me! I say don't look!"

A star so dazzling that even a glimpse was impossible. Where its brilliance had faded, a grotesque figure lay.

It was a tiny baby.

Its skin burned as if scorched by fire. A pitch-black body soaked in oil. From its small head, long-rotted, rotten eyeballs oozed out.

For a constellation that had lived a life of feasting on stories, perched atop the great heavens, its true form was absurdly pitiful.

[You have achieved a wondrous feat!]

[A new 'story' has sprouted for you!]

[The growth response of stories accelerates with wondrous achievements!]

[A new story has been born!]

Hunting 'Lokapala', the reward for that achievement was appearing before my eyes in real time.

[You have acquired the story, 'Witness to the Truth of the Stars'.]

[The story is of 'quasi-mythical' grade.]

[Another story related to this achievement is sprouting.]

I approached Agni, feeling the pulsating story.

Agni was crawling desperately. He was desperately trying to survive, to get as far away from me as possible.

【Flame of Purification.】

I called out his modifier. I accurately analyzed the constellation context and grasped his true name.

【One of the eight cardinal directions of the Vedas. The seat of the southeast. Agni, who eats oil.】

His expression, soaked in fear, trembled, as if he already knew the [fate] he had been given.

【I understand your sorrow.】

The King of Fear's other power is 'collection'. All beings who succumb to him and become 'fears' are trapped in the 'time fault' he created.

【I hate sadness. So—】

Agni's story began to be sucked into my hands.

Agni, the flame of purification, his brilliant history as a Lokapala of the Vedas entangled with my fingertips.

【That's all I need to say.】

A shadow floated over Agni's expression. The shadow of a wall filled with distant strings began to envelop his soul.

「His ■■ was written there.」

"Ah, ah. Aaaah—"

The constellation cried out like a newborn baby. His trembling body seemed to reject its own ■■, yet at the same time, it seemed to finally accept it.

The soul of the constellation, facing eternal rest, was dispersing. All of its records were seeping into that distant 'time fault'.

But at that moment...

[Stop.]

Someone stopped me.

A constellation radiated a light far more divine than Agni's flame, though not as fiery.

[Wouldn't that be better? Wielding that 'power' would be a great burden even for you.]

I thought I heard a train whistle coming from somewhere.

He was so powerful that he could face me in 'King of Fear' mode. The dazzling light emanating from his entire body proved who he was.

[Foolish humans, unaware of the exaltation of the throne of God.]

The constellation of Veda that had stopped Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk in the Demon Realm.

【God of Supreme Light.】

The strongest Lokapala, rivaling Agni. The supreme god of light, Surya, directly attacked the 'New Murim District'.

[The constellation, 'God of Supreme Light', gazes upon you.]

Amidst the overwhelming whirlwind of probability, I suddenly realized what had happened.

「I thought it was strange.」

The moment Agni exploded, caught in the aftershock of probability, the scales of probability should have tilted back toward me. The opposite scale had lost its opponent, a worthy opponent for my 'class'.

But the scales didn't tilt, and the aftershock didn't blow.

「Because before me was a sun god with even greater probability than Agni, capable of single-handedly incinerating a planet.」

His arrival here must have meant that Veda had decided not to stand idly by.

I asked nervously.

【Have you come to fight me?】

No matter how strong I'd become, I wasn't in a position to engage in a full-scale war against a single giant nebula.

「Did my calculations go wrong?」

According to information from Doduk, the giant nebulas in the higher-level scenarios were all focused on 'Ragnarok', making it unlikely they'd be deployed here. However, I didn't expect them to use such a powerful force to descend, even after Agni.

If I were to fight Surya now, would I be able to win?

While the situation was different from when Kim Dokja fought in the 'Demon King Selection Tournament', with the ability to use the 'Demon King of Salvation' story, the odds weren't completely out of the question.

The problem was buying time to switch modes.

[You've proven yourself sufficiently. I have no intention of continuing this war of attrition.]

Surya's light, which had been weighing on the area, was fading. Did that mean he had no hostility?

【Why are you stopping me?】

[I will take Agni's soul.]

Slowly bending down, Surya picked up Agni's torn soul. Agni, eyes closed and trembling, drooled in his arms.

[Haven't you already received sufficient compensation? Show mercy to this foolish star.]

【What will I gain in return for that mercy?】

If I could take the soul of 'Lokapala' here, I could use it in some way for a bargain.

Not just any other constellation, but a soul of the Lokapala class, there would be countless stars drooling.

[I will remember that mercy.]

I stared at Surya for a moment, then asked.

【You? Not <Veda>?】

[<Veda> has nothing to do with this.]

As if to prove his point, the probability of <Veda> no longer seemed to be present in the sky.

[It was my will that brought me here. Agni was once my close friend.]

The light emanating from his entire body testified to the truth of his words.

「Agni is the god of flame. Strictly speaking, the source of that flame was the supreme sun, 'Surya'.」

In a sense, 'Agni' was a kind of mediator, carrying Surya's light to the earth.

Thinking about it, I began to understand why Surya had come here.

【I will remember your oath.】

I slowly withdrew my hand and said. Since Surya had already blocked my path, there was no reason to forcefully seize Agni's soul. After all, I had already defeated Agni and obtained the story.

Surya bowed his head to me in gratitude and said,

[The sun remembers your mercy, great recorder of the stars.]

A dull horn rang out from the sky, and Surya and Agni's bodies instantly emerged from the scenario. The constellations, watching for an opportunity to intervene in the fleeting events, began to emit bright light.

[Some constellations are indignant at the 'God of Supreme Light''s intrusion into their scenario…]

[Constellations in the smaller nebulae were surprised by <Veda>'s judgment…]

I looked up at the sky. Unfortunately for the constellations, this was the end of the stage.

I silently summoned Bihyung, and he appeared in the sky with sparks.

[Now, constellations. I will briefly check the channel to determine the probability.]

This was my contract with the Management Bureau.

「"When I signal, turn off the channel for a moment."」

When I signaled Bihyung, he promised to turn off the channel for a moment for inspection.

It was a favor I received in exchange for dealing with the recorders in this area.

—This time, I was genuinely impressed. Perhaps, if it really were you…

The sound of the channel closing was heard along with Bihyung's voice coming through the 'Dokkaebi Communications'.

[Channel operation in this area is temporarily suspended!]

Feeling the starlight fading, I deactivated 'King of Fear' mode. This was to prevent the aftershock of the tilted balance beam after Surya's disappearance.

[The story, 'King of Fear', ceases speaking.]

The Great Hall closed, and my body, deprived of its external powers, plummeted to the ground.

Holding the story of the King of Fear had drained most of my energy, leaving my incarnation body with no energy left to even activate [Way of the Wind].

But...

「There was someone here who wielded [Way of the Wind] better than anyone else.」

A woman ran toward me, calling my name from afar. She, who had inherited the story of the 'Flying Squirrel' from the 'Recycling Center', activated [Way of the Wind] with all her might and rushed towards me.

"...ssi."

Kyung Sein called out, embracing me as I fell through the air.

"Dokja-ssi."

Holding my incarnation body, scorched by the probability, Kyung Sein was calling me Kim Dokja again.

I gently placed my arm around her shoulder, holding back tears, and said,

"I told you. I'm quite strong now."

Jung Heewon, who got up from afar, was looking this way.

We stared at each other for a moment.

Just by exchanging glances, we could tell what each other was thinking.

Jung Heewon was the first to speak.

"You're alive."

I nodded and replied.

"Yes."

Without asking any further questions, Jung Heewon approached silently, leaving me wanting more. There was much to say and hear, but for now, it was time to simply savor this quiet reunion.

The constellations had vanished, and the once-extinguished sky was brightening again. The long night had passed, and dawn was dawning on the 'New Murim District'.

Even though a constellation had disappeared tonight, the scenario still continued.

"Let's go see the end of this world together."

Soon, word would spread among the constellations.

The news that an Outer God who had defeated one of the Locapalas of the Veda existed in the 70th scenario would spread throughout the Star Stream. The Battle of Agni was merely a prelude to the great war that was about to begin.

[Your story resonates.]

As if to prove that truth, the story pulsing within my heart began to beat violently.

Perhaps, by now, across the sky, that guy is thinking the same thing I am.

[Someone in the higher scenario has noticed your return.]

I smiled, thinking of him.

「So, wait in ■■ of all these worlds, my brother.」

The 'final record' of this worldline will soon begin.