886 Episode 48 Avatar (9)

I paused at that part for a long time.

This world is fake.

It was just one sentence.

Even so, I couldn't fully fathom the temptation that Yoo Joonghyuk had to resist in order to reach the conclusion of that one sentence.

「"Stop joking and come out. I now know that this world is an illusion."」

The feeling of having to deny his own end after reaching the end he had so desperately wanted.

Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk hoped that no one would answer his question while saying those words.

「[That's amazing, Supreme King. How did you figure that out?]」

A voice that shattered illusions.

He was a constellation that I also knew.

One of the twelve gods of the great <Olympus>, and the constellation that provided a story to Cheon Inho in the 40th round.

「Hermes, the master of the Skywalk.」

It was the moment when the identity of the '896th round' was finally revealed.

「[I'll ask again. How did you find out?]」

In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk's actual incarnation body was still in the 895th round, and he was on the verge of death.

However, <Olympus>, which acquired his incarnation body that was on the verge of death, delayed his death and connected it to Hermes's 'Big Data System'.

As a result, <Olympus> succeeded in making Yoo Joonghyuk wake up in the 'Terrarium', an imaginary world created based on Yoo Joonghyuk's memories. Not only that, they even led him to believe that world was the '896th round' and live there.

The so-called 'Terraria Project'.

It was the ultimate trap designed by <Olympus> to uncover the secret of [Regression] and find out Yoo Joonghyuk's scenario pattern.

「"I just knew it."」

Yoo Joonghyuk calmly accepted all of the facts and answered.

「"There's no way I could be this lucky."」

Looking back at his surviving comrades, seeing his wish that had never been fulfilled come true before his eyes, Yoo Joonghyuk blinked his eyes indifferently.

He then grabbed his sword in reverse and aimed it at his heart.

「[Wait. Stop!]」

Hermes stopped Yoo Joonghyuk.

「[I can leave this world for you.]」

「"What's the point of that?"」

Yoo Joonghyuk's blazing anger turned to Hermes.

He had been robbed of his freedom, his comrades. He had been robbed of the truth. He had been robbed of his joy and sorrow. And now, in front of the stars who had taken away even his story and turned it into their amusement, Yoo Joonghyuk was speaking.

「"Until the day my life ends, I will never forgive you guys."」

「[Of course. But there are no constellations left in this worldline for you to take revenge on. They were all destroyed by the aftershock of probability while trying to imitate your [Regression].]

The ending of the Terrarium Project was terrible. The constellations of <Olympus> were caught up in the aftershock of probability in the process of digging up the secret of the 'Oldest Dream' and [Regression] that they had been desperately trying to know.

While recreating the [Regression] stigma based on Yoo Joonghyuk's memories, they failed to calm the 'Great Tale' that caused the myth-grade constellations to run wild, resulting in a catastrophe that caused the entire <Star Stream> to collapse.

Yoo Joonghyuk mocked Hermes.

「"There's still the next round, and the one after that."」

Hermes replied with a bitter smile.

「[I know. You'll try to kill us again and again. Just like you did in your past life. Your lonely revenge on the constellations who don't even remember the last round will continue forever. But are you really satisfied with that?]」

「"What are you trying to say?"」

「[The puppet of the Oldest Dream.]」

Hermes was silent for a moment after saying that. Although his thoughts were not described, I, who was reading the story outside the lines, could feel Hermes's emotions that were not described.

「[Do you really think that this world you lived in is an 'illusion'?]」

In the <Star Stream> where the constellations died, the only world that survived now was the 'Terrarium' where Yoo Joonghyuk exists.

「[The world of the <Star Stream> where you lived is also just a dream of a great cosmic being. If that's the case anyway, wouldn't it be okay to stay in the terrarium I created?]」

In the 895th round, which was on the verge of destruction, Yoo Joonghyuk was the last 'story' left to Hermes.

「[You just have to forget. If you just forget that this world is a lie, you can be happy again. You can reach the ending that you couldn't find in the <Star Stream>.]」

「"The 'ending' I want doesn't exist in the world you created."」

Yoo Joonghyuk stabbed his own heart without hesitation.

Hermes muttered bitterly.

「[Lonely regressor. You will make even the stars that have come to like you lonely.]」

With those words, the 'Terrarium' created by Hermes collapsed, and Yoo Joonghyuk's real '896th round' began.

Why did Kim Dokja tell me to read this round?

I couldn't quite understand it.

Could it be a hint that this world wasn't the real 1,863rd round, but a kind of 'Time Fault'?

However, I couldn't feel the time density characteristic of a fault at all.

Furthermore, there was no task that was announced when entering the 'Time Fault'.

Or simply, Could this world also be a 'Terrarium' created by Hermes?

I took a moment to gather my thoughts, then slowly reviewed the contents of the 896th round I had just read.

Upon closer inspection, I saw a passage that I had overlooked earlier.

「It was a difficult and arduous task to build a 'world' to deceive a regressor who had repeated hundreds of lives.

…

So, Hermes thought. The one who would create this 'Terrarium' should be Yoo Joonghyuk himself, not himself. In other words, it should be a world where the regressor himself deceives himself.

…

To help with that process, Hermes borrowed a unique skill, and the name of that skill was…」

The moment I read that far, a sharp ringing sounded in the air.

Beep beep—

As I opened the door and went outside, I saw people busily moving around the base.

"What's going on?"

"It's an attack!"

It was early morning.

It was definitely a time when it was vulnerable to an attack, but who would dare attack this base?

Once again, a kung sound rang out and the upper part of the building was destroyed.

At that moment, Kim Namwoon, who had come running down from the upper floor, asked.

"Whoa! Ahjussi, are you okay?"

"Yes, I’m okay, but—"

"Don’t crawl out for no reason and stay here. Got it?"

I couldn’t really stay still just because I heard those words.

The sound of sergeants clashing and screams could be heard alternately from outside the base.

As I hurriedly went down to the first floor, I saw Lee Seolhwa, who was waiting with the medical team. Beyond them, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Kim Namwoon, and other members of <Han Sooyoung Corporation> were engaged in a fierce battle with something.

But the sight of the opponent engaged in a fierce battle seemed familiar.

If my eyes weren’t wrong, it was definitely one of the 12 gods of <Olympus>.

Ares, the ferocious god of war.

But it was different from the 'Ares' I knew.

He was not the 'Ferocious Lord' who boasted of his splendid armor and relics.

His skin was distorted by burns like a burnt zombie. His muscles were cut off here and there, making him look ugly.

I was able to recognize him because of the story fragments floating around his base.

[Story fragment, 'Echoes of Ferociousness', continues its storytelling.]

It wasn't just Ares.

All the twelve gods of <Olympus> that I knew, including Hephaestus, Artemis, and Athena, were roaming the battlefield like zombies.

"They're the dregs of the constellations."

Lee Seolhwa said.

"They're like the wills of dead constellations. Constellations that had powerful stories sometimes remain as stories and wander the world even after death."

As if to prove her words, the twelve gods were speaking.

[Evil... Director... ]

[The <Star Stream> you destroyed… will not forgive you… ]

[You… cannot see… ■■… ]

[No one in this world… ■■… wants… ]

I don’t know what they’re talking about, but it was clear that they had hostility towards this side.

Even if they are dead, a constellation of the highest rank is still a constellation of the highest rank.

The fierce waves of the Lion’s Wrath that flowed from Ares’s mouth swept through the base.

"Hyunsung ahjussi!"

Lee Hyunsung’s [Area Defense] skill covered the party. However, there were enemies who entered through the gap.

Hephaestus, who had climbed over the defense wall with his half-twisted limbs. Even the constellations of <Olympus> were following him.

"Damn it! The left side is pierced!"

"Shin Yoosoung!"

Then, the 'Chimera Dragon' appeared along with a shadow that covered the sky far and wide. With Shin Yoosoung’s signal, the 'Chimera Dragon’s' breath tore through the earth, turning it into scorched earth.

Taking advantage of the time the breath gave her, Lee Jihye grumbled as she crossed inside the barrier.

"There are too many. Damn it, if only we could have used the power of the Apocalypse Dragon—"

The power of the Apocalypse Dragon.

I thought of the power of the other world that Han Sooyoung had used to save me a while ago.

Maybe because they wasted too much probability back then, they don’t have enough energy to deal with the enemies now.

Now that I think about it, where did Han Sooyoung go?

"Lee Jihye! The right side is also pierced!"

Along with Kim Namwoon’s shout, Ares and other constellations came running, limping in their half-broken incarnation bodies.

The direction they were running from was the direction I and Lee Seolhwa were in. Lee Seolhwa, with her expression hardened, was about to step forward, when I pulled out my sword first.

"Please stand back."

If things were like this because of me, I couldn’t just sit back and watch.

I took a deep breath and focused on the story inside me.

I saw Ares, who had noticed me, licking his lips.

[You…?]

I pulled out my sword without giving him a chance to speak. What I needed right now was a quick decision. If they didn’t know my identity, then I had a better chance of winning.

Kiiing!

The ether blade that rose from 'Unbreakable Faith'. The stories I had built up were embedded in the Blade of Faith.

[The story, 'Heir of the Eternal Name', roars!]

I don’t know if it was another narrative-grade constellation, but at least in my current state, I wouldn’t be pushed back by this guy.

Because I’ve already cut him down as the 'Demon King of Salvation'.

[Kuaaaaah!]

As Ares, who was cut by 'Unbreakable Faith', screamed and flinched, I took advantage of the gap.

Kim Namwoon and Lee Jihye rushed forward and struck back, blowing Ares's head off.

"Nice, ahjussi!"

Kim Namwoon cheered and waved his hand at me.

But instead of reacting to him, I stared at the battlefield with calm eyes.

「It was a perfect round.」

No matter how much they were just scraps of constellations, the constellations once represented a single giant nebula. Against them, the members of <Han Sooyoung Corporation> were barely harmed and protecting each other.

「That's why it was an impossible turn.」

A strange sense of discomfort ran down my spine once again.

The wall that Yoo Joonghyuk, who had regressed 999 times, could not overcome even after sacrificing his own incarnation body, was the 'last scenario' of the <Star Stream>.

I knew that Han Sooyoung was outstanding. But even for her, would it be possible for her to reach this scenario with all her colleagues? And no one was hurt—

"Dokja-ssi."

Lee Seolhwa suddenly approached me and asked.

"Are you hurt anywhere?"

"Yes, how are the others?"

"It's okay, there are some with minor injuries..."

I saw patients being carried on beds. The patients were shedding stories from their cuts and torn wounds.

「Shedding stories.」

I blankly stared at the injured, then turned my head to look at Kim Namwoon, Lee Jihye, and Lee Hyunsung.

They were also shedding stories from their wounds.

Of course, shedding stories wasn't that strange. When constellations were injured, they would shed stories from their incarnation bodies. The noble transcendental constellations also shed stories when they suffered deep internal injuries or were struck at their source.

But this case was a bit unusual.

General incarnations don't shed stories instead of blood.

Except for one case.

「If the incarnation is not the 'main body'.」

I thought that was impossible.

Even if it was Han Sooyoung, there was no way that it could be possible.

But the faint sparks that swept across the entire battlefield—the reality before my eyes supported that possibility.

「A way to reach the final scenario without anyone dying.」

Just as Kim Dokja, who had overcome the 'Final Wall' with his comrades, had to shoulder the 'Oldest Dream', there was always a price to pay for those who dream impossible dreams.

So what price did Han Sooyoung pay to get here?

"Seolhwa-ssi."

Lee Seolhwa's eyes were shaking as she looked into my eyes.

As if she already knew what I was going to ask.

"Han Sooyoung, where is she right now?"