

# SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

## Chapter 16: The Contribution of a Death Row Inmate

Despite having anticipated it, Ashe's heart still skipped a beat upon hearing that the Blood Moon Tribunal was indeed a death sentence.

Deep down, he had held onto a sliver of hope that perhaps the people here would recognize he was not the Cult Leader, that perhaps he would undergo an extended trial phase, or maybe even receive a two-year reprieve...

This fantasy peaked after entering the Prison, as in Ashe's view, how could a death row inmate possibly have such a well-appointed room with its own bathroom?

How could a death row inmate be allowed to move freely within the Prison?

How could a death row inmate receive so many privileges?

Langna's words shattered all of his naive expectations—the inmates were treated well precisely because they were going to die.

"The Prison is fattening us up just to make our deaths more pitiful?" Ashe asked with difficulty. "Isn't that a waste of resources?"

"Do you ever complain that fireworks aren't spectacular enough?" Langna laughed. "I'm surprised you don't seem to understand the Blood Moon Tribunal—it's a live show broadcasted in every city. Most citizens stay home on the 1st and 15th of each month, turning on their Holographic Screens at eight in the evening to watch the downfall of each sinner, with ratings nearing 70%."

“By the way, compared to the advertising revenue generated by the ‘Blood Moon Tribunal’ show, the cost of keeping us in the Prison is trivial.”

‘Execution watching’ is actually a popular Entertainment in this world... Ashe forced a smile: “That’s outrageous. How can 70% of the people be watching a live show at eight in the evening? Don’t they have to work overtime? It seems to me their jobs aren’t demanding enough...”

Langna wasn’t surprised by Ashe’s impotent rage at all.

He had seen too many death row inmates reveal their worst during the approach of the Blood Moon Tribunal—from cursing the social system to condemning the ignorance of the masses. If you’ve been in this Prison long enough, you’ve seen it all.

“But if you want to escape the Blood Moon Tribunal, there is still a way.”

Ashe perked up immediately: “What way?”

Langna didn’t tease him, saying bluntly: “Although someone inevitably dies in every Blood Moon Tribunal, there are eight contestants, and the spots are not fixed—they are ranked by ‘Contribution points.’”

“Each death row inmate starts with 50 Contribution points, with 10 points being deducted each month. But reaching zero doesn’t really matter; the Prison won’t do anything to inmates for that.”

“The higher the Contribution points, the later the Judgment sequence; the lower the points, the earlier one is in the sequence. In theory, the first eight in the sequence will be the participants of the Blood Moon Tribunal.”

“There are many ways to earn Contribution points, the simplest being to create value. Although our memories have been extracted by Memory Masters before entering the Prison, and our intelligence is worthless, we still have plenty of ways to contribute:

Some entered for dereliction of duty and corruption—they can offer system improvement proposals to reduce the possibility of future misconduct;

Some came for illegal experiments—they can continue to conduct legal experiments and write papers while in Prison;”

Some individuals possess various talents, even writing best-selling books within the Prison, which naturally counts as creating value.

“However, in this Prison, most are those who committed murder and inherently despise labor and glorify plunder—like me,” Langna pointed at himself and then to Ashe, “like you.”

“So how do we acquire Contribution points?” Ashe realized something, “You just said participating in a Deathmatch comes at a cost...”

“Beyond death and pain, the greatest cost of a Deathmatch is the transfer of Contribution points,” Langna explained. “Each Deathmatch requires both parties to wager a certain number of points. The winner escapes the Blood Moon, the loser faces judgment.”

“If the Blood Moon Tribunal is the end of a dead-end road, then the Deathmatch Society is the sea of blood along the way—almost all Death row inmates will eventually join a Deathmatch, betting their last Contribution points, bleeding out their last drop of blood, then ascending to the broadcast room in the most desperate of states for all to watch.”

“This is how we make our contribution—by eliminating the weak, we maintain our ferocity!”

“This is also why the Prison allows the existence of the Deathmatch Society.” Langna’s voice was as calm as if he was discussing someone else’s affairs, “Before going on stage, actors must put on makeup.”

Actors must put on makeup, or else the audience won’t enjoy the show.

Even without ever having watched the Blood Moon Tribunal, Ashe understood Langna's point.

Just as they would create elaborate Portraits for characters in mobile games, the so-called 'Deathmatch' is a process that transforms a Death row inmate into a Portrait: gambling, Battle, despair, fear, pain... Nothing stirs the blood quite like a fight with life on the line.

When a Death row inmate turns hysterical from pain after multiple Deathmatch losses, or becomes desperate and mad from fear, he becomes the 'main dish' that can be served up. What is presented to the audience then is a Portrait of a creature full of ferocity, fighting spirit, despair, and fear.

Compared to a numb and withering 'person,' a 'beast' that seems to still dare to resist is much more entertaining to watch being killed.

It's an Open Conspiracy, one that the Death row inmates cannot refuse.

Not only does the loser become the product the Prison requires, fetching a 'good price' on the live broadcast, but the winner is also merely delaying the inevitable, and one day, they too will appear in the live broadcast, walking the same path.

From the beginning, the Death row inmates only have one outcome: to be drained of all value by the Prison and then die. The dormitory with its own bathroom, good food, comprehensive facilities—all are just to fatten them up.

The so-called Judgment sequence is actually an Internal competition mechanism, a zero-sum game where it's either you or me facing the Judgment.

But this is also reasonable—who made them commit crimes and become Death row inmates?

Moreover, if a Death row inmate doesn't want to be exploited, they can just lie down and wait for death. It's only the desire to live that drives the Internal competition.

If Ashe were on the outside, he would surely applaud this system and watch the spectacle from the sidelines.

It's a shame that Heath, of all people, ended up a Cult Leader—and such a weak one at that. It dragged him down so deep into the Prison that he's got no choice but to look for another way to make a living.

“Having heard all this, do you still want to join the Deathmatch Society?”

“Of course!”

Langna wasn't surprised. He finished his milk with a burp, “Then follow me. If we're lucky, we might even see some fresh, hot corpses.”

“People fight to the death this early in the morning?” Ashe asked curiously.

“The thing about Deathmatches is that you don't have to bet a lot of Contribution points at the start. The first fight only requires a bet of one point, and each subsequent Deathmatch requires one more point than the last. The second fight needs two points, the third needs three, and so on.”

“While the stakes gradually increase and can become significant, you still have a chance to turn things around after the first five matches, even if you lose them all. That's why everyone tries to use the first five matches to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of others and to assess their own power within the Prison.”

“So, Deathmatches are quite frequent, having one every day is normal. We're only a few days away from the 15th, and those at the end of the ranking are desperate to escape the judgment through Deathmatches. I reckon the Arena will be stained with blood these next few days.”

“Speaking of which, are you interested in buying meat?”

Ashe blinked, “Meat? What meat?”

“The meat that falls in the Arena. It’s one of the few ways we can spend our Contribution points. The meat that falls in the Arena belongs to the Prison, and we can buy it back from them.”

Langna turned to look at Ashe, flashing a row of pale, even teeth: “If you’re lucky, you can get some thigh meat. Whether you eat it as sashimi or cooked, it tastes great. I highly recommend it.”