

# SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

## Chapter 17: Deathmatch Society

The first impression that the Deathmatch Society gave Ashe was one of dimness.

Unlike the rest of the Prison, which was well-lit everywhere, the Deathmatch Society was sparing with its Lighting. Aside from the incandescent lights shining over the central Deathmatch Arena, the spectator stands on the raised platforms around it were almost entirely dark, with the audience seemingly submerged in shadow. Between heaven and earth, only the two combatants on the Arena remained, fighting to the death.

This was also the place where Ashe saw the most Prisoners. He had followed Langna all the way here, encountering only a few scattered Prisoners along the way. Passing through the library and Gymnasium, Ashe had seen about a dozen inmates. However, upon entering the Deathmatch Society, even without the aid of bright light, the whispers and the vague silhouettes in the darkness were enough for Ashe to deduce that there were almost a hundred people here!

“Langna, you’ve arrived?”

“A newbie? ...Oh, the Leader of the Four Pillars, huh? Tough kid, daring to mingle with the Four Pillars.”

“Gourmet Langna is here!”

“Langna, is that your new boyfriend? Changing your taste, are you?” a muscular man teased with a chuckle.

“Desmond, if you spout that nonsense again and jeopardize the relationship between me and my boyfriend, do you believe I’ll bite you to death!?” Langna retorted with feigned anger, which sounded a bit shy rather than truly infuriated.

However, the laughter around them quieted down, and the brawny man named Desmond hastily apologized with his hands together, “Haha, Langna, I didn’t mean it like that. By the way, aren’t you going to introduce the newcomer?”

Langna grunted, seemingly deciding not to pursue the matter further, and Desmond breathed a sigh of relief before quickly shrinking back into the crowd.

Ashe, observing this, quietly moved a little further away from Langna.

He could already sense that any seemingly ‘weak and easily bullied’ bald passerby might be one of the most notorious killers in the Prison.

“Ashe Heath, a newcomer who’s been here for just a couple of days. He wants to take part in a Deathmatch, so I brought him here to have a look,” Langna said with a smile. “Who’s fighting now?”

“‘Diamond’ Taig against ‘Blind Beast’ Rudo.”

“How come Rudo... Ah, Taig is an old-timer after all, why doesn’t he spare even these Contribution points. Didn’t you guys seek out Rudo to challenge him?”

“We definitely wouldn’t pass up such a juicy opportunity either, but Rudo hasn’t seen Taig in a Deathmatch before, thinks he’s easier to bully, and besides, Taig’s bets are high, so...”

Ashe stepped up to the front of the spectator stands, watching the one-sided slaughter happening down in the Arena – an old man with white hair, looking

quite advanced in age, was locked in unarmed combat with a muscle-bound green-skinned orc.

Indeed, it was a one-sided slaughter. Despite both combatants attacking relentlessly without defense, the white-haired old man remained steady and breathless, even after taking orc-sized punches; not even a red mark was left on his skin, as if the green-skinned orc was merely a baby tapping on his chest.

In contrast, each of the white-haired old man's punches was immensely heavy. When they landed on the green-skinned orc, they made a sound like cracking stone, sending shivers down the spine of anyone who heard it.

By the time Ashe arrived, the green-skinned orc had been beaten to a bloody pulp, his body devoid of a single unmarred spot, several teeth missing, and his eyes swollen as if squinting.

With a heavy hammer strike, the green-skinned orc was sent flying several meters and smacked into the wall with a thud. A smear of blood trailed down the wall as he sat on the ground, unable to rise again.

However, the white-haired old man glanced at the ceiling and then rushed forward, continuing to punch the green-skinned orc mercilessly.

He was like a bathhouse attendant scrubbing away old grime, each punch flaying flesh from the orc's body.

Ashe couldn't bear to watch: "Isn't the fight already decided? Why hasn't it ended?"

"Decided? Not yet." Someone nearby chuckled. "Try reaching out your hand."

As Ashe extended his hand, he encountered an invisible barrier in the air, causing ripples to spread. Invisible barriers appeared, completely isolating the lower Arena from the surrounding spectator stands.

“The barrier only disappears when one of the fighters is dead or completely unconscious. Then the Medic will come through that door,” the person pointed to an inconspicuous door in the Arena, “and drag the body back to the infirmary for treatment.”

“As long as the barrier is up, you can’t let your guard down. You must keep pressing, crushing, and annihilating your opponent.”

“Moreover, there’s no surrender in a Deathmatch. The loser only has two outcomes: death or loss of consciousness.”

“Who knows how many fools, overconfident in their own martial prowess and underestimating their opponents, have treated this place like a friendly competition. They stop fighting mid-match and then get killed by their opponent, losing a ton of Contribution points and jumping up in the Judgment sequence... But that’s also the point of the Deathmatch Society: transferring Contribution points you don’t deserve to someone who does.”

Thud!

Hearing the dull sound of a punch, Ashe felt like even the base ingredients of a hotpot would be blasted out of the orc and couldn’t help asking, “Can he really be saved?”

“He hasn’t lost consciousness yet. But even if he can be saved, it’s no different from being dead. Look up there.”

Ashe looked up and realized that what was illuminating the ceiling was a Holographic Screen displaying the match information:

‘Taig Noris bets 35 Contribution points’

‘VS’

‘Rudo Yaxi bets 5 Contribution points’

Ashe was startled: “The stakes are uneven. Why would Taig wager so much?”

“As long as both parties agree, even uneven stakes can be valid,” the person replied casually. “And it’s rare to have equal stakes in a Deathmatch. According to the rules, each time you participate in a Deathmatch, you must bet a little more than the last time. Taig has fought in 34 matches, so this time he must wager 35 Contribution points.”

“Is this Rudo’s fifth Deathmatch?”

“No, it’s his tenth. Each Prisoner starts with 50 Contribution points, and according to the rules, you add one point to your bet each match. He’s wagered a total of 45 points over his previous nine matches, leaving him with only 5 points for his tenth.”

The person nearby sneered.

“So, if Rudo loses this match, he’ll be out of Contribution points and won’t be able to earn more through Deathmatches. Unless he can pull gold coins out of his stomach, he’ll forever be at the top of the Judgment sequence.”

Ashe gave an “Oh” of realization, suddenly grasping something, “Wait, that means he’s lost the last nine Deathmatches!?”

“That’s why they call him ‘Blind Beast’ Rudo; he always picks opponents he can’t beat.”

Thump!

With the sound of a crushing blow, the green-skinned orc’s head seemed to explode. At the same time, the Holographic Screen on the ceiling chimed, displaying the words “The match is decided.”

The barrier around the Arena instantly dissipated, and the door inside the Arena swung open. Three figures in Black Robes wearing Crow Masks entered the Arena. They didn’t bother with a stretcher; they simply dragged the green-skinned orc’s body away.

“The old man’s too cruel, pretending to be weak to scam the orc’s Contribution points.”

“How is that scamming? I knew from the beginning the old man was tough to deal with—Rudo’s not just bad at picking opponents, he’s not too bright either. Anyone could think with their toenails and realize that old folks, women, and kids who manage to survive in the Deathmatch Society are not to be trifled with.”

“How many people has the old man taken out now?”

“Just counting from when I arrived, the old man’s taken at least five people out.”

“You’ve got so many Contribution points already, old man. Next time, leave these opportunities to us younger folks. That beast really, sending Contribution points for nothing, might as well have given them to me.”

The darkness was filled with a noisy commotion, and the white-haired man wiped the blood from his fists with a towel, then suddenly coughed violently, spitting out several mouthfuls of bloody phlegm, and said in alarm, “That Orc had quite a punch. I think I might have internal injuries...”

“Who would believe you?!”

The crowd roared in unison, indicating they had seen such tricks before, falling for the old man’s act of playing weak only to be deceived twice.

“On this Arena, he’s very strong.”

Ashe looked to the right and noticed that the Swordswoman had reappeared.

And unlike the others, the dim lighting didn’t affect her at all. She seemed to emit her own light, dispelling the darkness, sitting very conspicuously on the railing.

But what was even more remarkable was that she had changed into a different set of clothes, appearing to be a tight-fitting training outfit for swordplay, her red hair tied up, transforming into a striking Female Swordsman.

Ashe blurted out without thinking, “Why is he strong?”

“Because this Arena, while it allows for physical attacks, still Restricts arcane energy output.”

The person beside Ashe and the Swordswoman said in unison.

The Swordswoman glanced at Ashe, who had covered his mouth, and continued, “There are many types of Sorcerers: Craftsmen, Warriors, Scholars, Physicians... But most Sorcerers can only channel spirits with their arcane energy. Limit their arcane output, and Sorcerers are no different from ordinary people.”

“But a small number of Sorcerers, even without spirits, still possess strength far beyond that of mortals—that’s the Martial Sorcerer.”

“In general, any Sorcerer involved in physical cultivation can be called a Martial Sorcerer, such as Swordcerers, Fist Sorcerers, Gun Sorcerers, Spear Sorcerers, Axe Sorcerers... Given the right weapon, they can also fight multiple opponents. However, compared to physical prowess, they just have an advantage in ‘technique,’ and their bodily qualities aren’t much stronger than ordinary people.”

“And there are Martial Sorcerers who strengthen their bodies through relentless conditioning, even using spirits to alter and transform the very structure of their flesh and bones, wielding their own bodies as if they were weapons. This grants them a level of violent power that’s nearly overwhelming. Even without their spirits, the enhancements within their bodies

do not vanish. In other places, this might not make much of a difference, but in this Prison, where spirit use is forbidden, their advantages are maximized!”

“These Martial Sorcerers are known as—Physical Sorcerers.”

“Physical weakness is not in their bodies; their bodies are no longer made of mere flesh and blood.”

Ashe looked over and saw that the white-haired old man, as he left the Arena, casually dragged his fingers across the railing, which crumbled to pieces!

‘Diamond’ Taig... So that’s what it meant!

“Since you’ve come here, you might as well start fighting,” the Swordswoman suggested. “Just don’t challenge that old man. Ah, and for your first Battle, it’s best to pick an opponent who is unarmed, and you should be unarmed as well.”

“Why?”

“Because your body is too weak. If you were to wield a real sword, you would probably be incapacitated before you could swing it a few times; and if your opponent also uses fists, you’ll at least have the chance to spar with them for a few rounds, allowing time for experience transfer,” the Swordswoman explained with her arms crossed. “Actually, I’m more afraid of you losing your sword to your opponent and getting beheaded in one strike—to avoid such an unsightly scene, you should stick to unarmed combat for your first match.”

“I’m not expecting you to know how to fight, but you can take a hit, right?”

Ashe, amenable to good advice, accepted the Swordswoman’s suggestion and turned to the person who had been chatting with him, asking, “I want to participate in a Deathmatch, preferably against someone who is unarmed. Do you have any recommendations?”

“Unarmed combat? Then you’ve asked the right person, brother. I specialize in unarmed combat; come have a match with me, I promise I won’t take advantage of you.”

“Alright, alright, but this is my first Deathmatch, and I’ll only bet 1 Contribution point. Even if you’re pretending to be a pig to eat a tiger, you won’t make much off me,” Ashe joked.

“Don’t worry, brother. I won’t just refrain from taking your Contribution points; I’ll actually be giving you some. I’m very weak, after all—”

At that moment, the Lighting in the Deathmatch Society suddenly brightened, and the darkness of the stands was consumed by the light, making everything visible.

Only then did Ashe realize that the ‘good Samaritan’ he’d been talking to was a familiar face he had seen not long ago.

“—Even you want to take a swing at my face.”

Igor smiled at Ashe, saying, “We meet again, Ashe, the one with the cute fists.”