

SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

Chapter 18: Beautiful Beast Igor

“The new cult leader wants to Deathmatch with ‘Beautiful Beast!’”

“Beautiful Beast won’t even let go of a single Contribution point?”

“Could it be that the cult leader has already been ensnared?”

“Oh ho, this isn’t about just one Contribution point anymore. Beautiful Beast might rake in 50 points this time...”

Listening to the buzzing discussions in the spectator stands, Ashe, who was wrapping his fists in bandages, forced a smile: “It seems you really are playing possum.”

“On the contrary, I think it’s you who’s concealing your strength to lure me into a trap,” said Igor, with his blond hair, blue eyes, and fair skin smiling. “After all, you’re the Cult Leader who dares to oppose the Blood Mad Hunter, whereas I’m just an ordinary fraudster. By all accounts, your power level should be higher, right?”

Indeed, before the Deathmatch with Igor, Ashe had asked Langna about Igor’s criminal record.

After all, almost every Prisoner would first appear on the news channels for self-introduction, making the criminal records transparent amongst each other, just like how everyone now knows Ashe was the little cult leader taken down by the Hunters.

Igor Bukin, also known as the 'Con Artist', worked in the insurance industry and ended up in Prison for defrauding several Wealthy individuals of a significant amount of money. He was a Mind Sorcerer with 'Contract' among a series of spirit abilities to manipulate the psyche.

Although the Prison theoretically prohibits the use of spirits, this prohibition is only 'direct,' not 'complete.'

For Mind Sorcerers like Igor, who focus on mental cultivation, they can still trigger the effectiveness of their spirits through conversation, suggestion, body language, and the like, as when Igor extended an invitation to Ashe to form a team in the hall. Once Ashe agreed, the spirit would silently leave its mark on Ashe's psyche.

It seemed that Igor indeed lacked direct combat capability, but—

Ding!

The Lighting around the Deathmatch Society dimmed again, leaving only the Holographic Screen above the Arena, capturing everyone's gaze.

'Igor Bukin stakes 46 Contribution points'

'VS'

'Ashe Heath stakes 1 Contribution point'

In a Deathmatch, everyone only stakes the minimum amount, which means Igor has already fought in 45 Deathmatches!

And according to Langna, Igor has won all of his past 45 Deathmatches!

So why did Ashe agree to this Deathmatch?

Because he had already agreed.

When Igor jokingly asked Ashe if he would come to the Deathmatch, Ashe responded with an equally jesting ‘Sure, why not?’ At that moment, he had fallen into the trap—he could no longer back out of the joke.

It’s hard to describe the sensation. It wasn’t that his body was being controlled, but rather his beliefs were altered. It was as if he had acquired the absurd notion that ‘water is deadly poison,’ and Ashe was absolutely certain that he must Deathmatch with Igor.

What the consequences of refusal were, Ashe didn’t know, because the thought of ‘refusal’ wouldn’t even surface in his mind. It was as if even the freedom to think had been shackled.

“So, in the future, don’t just casually respond to any invitation.”

Swordswoman leaned against the railing, speaking languidly, “You’re an Apocalypse Observer, you know. In my opinion, you should reject any kindness or malice from anyone, say ‘no’ to everything, use your own power to take everything, set the rules for all things with your own will, and rule the world like a demon lord—”

“No!”

“... You little rascal...”

As Swordswoman was left speechless, transparent barriers rose up around the Arena, signaling the start of the Deathmatch.

With the sound of a ‘ding’ in his head, Ashe felt as if a shackle had been released inside him—the neck chip no longer restricted them from attacking each other!

At the same time, Igor crouched and charged, his agile body pouncing like a cheetah!

Ashe immediately raised his arms to defend and moved to dodge to the side, however, Igor seemed to anticipate Ashe's reaction early on, sliding in with a tackle that knocked Ashe off balance, causing him to face-plant into the ground!

Even as Ashe quickly got back on his feet, he couldn't avoid Igor's follow-up attack, taking a heavy punch to the abdomen that almost made him spit out bile.

"Bite down hard," Igor 'kindly' reminded him, before landing another punch on Ashe's temple!

Ashe was left dizzy, backed up against the wall, arms guarding his vital areas, but Igor seemed to predict his every move, landing straight and hook punches in spots Ashe failed to defend. In no time, Ashe's face was bruised and swollen, and he was in a sorry state, running and taking hits at the same time.

He roared in his mind: 'Hasn't the experience transfer started yet? At this rate, I'm going to get beaten to death!'

'Ouch! Swordswoman, come on and take over my body to smash this blondie!'

'Swordswoman Mama, save me—'

Swordswoman responded very perfunctorily, "It's coming, it's coming. The more you get hit, the faster the experience transfers. And don't just take hits, try to strike back!"

'Does striking back speed up the experience transfer?'

"No, but it makes the Deathmatch look a bit more interesting. After all, watching you get one-sidedly thrashed is actually quite boring."

Although she said that, Swordswoman was actually somewhat surprised inside.

It was within her expectations that Ashe would be beaten around like a ball; after all, this is Shattered Lake Prison, and Ashe joining a Deathmatch here was like a little lamb willingly walking into a pack of wolves—it would be strange if he wasn't devoured to the bone.

She thought Ashe would show a pathetic state, kneeling and weeping for mercy, but despite his sorry appearance, he also did his best: staying against the wall to minimize the area that could be hit, protecting the vital triangle of his face with his hands, and quickly getting up after falling, rather than lying down and being pinned... What surprised Swordswoman the most was that Ashe didn't cry.

For someone who had lived a sheltered life, never experiencing the bloody conflicts of another world, Ashe's will was unexpectedly tough, and he even had some ability to psychologically decompress.

He kept muttering to Swordswoman in his mind, using the conversation to relieve pain, and he wasn't distracted; his defense became more and more efficient, and his reflexes to dodge while getting hit improved significantly—like a sponge that kept on learning.

Swordswoman suddenly had a feeling: even without her, without the Sorcerer Handbook, Ashe, after enduring the initial pains of transmigration, could quickly adapt to this seemingly beautiful but cruel world.

He wasn't inherently weak; once placed in a different environment, his true nature would be revealed.

Indeed... he is an Apocalypse Observer...

Snap!

Ashe felt his arm bones burning as if on fire, and Swordswoman was urging him to fight back. Just as he was getting a little hot-headed, having had

enough of being a punching bag—after all, even a clay figurine has three points of fire in them, let alone Ashe, who wasn't one to suffer in silence.

He had his own way of navigating the workplace; aside from never talking back to his superiors, he was unwilling to be slighted by colleagues.

Moreover, he had the skill to flatter and to make sure his voice was heard when claiming credit, which is why he managed to thrive in the workplace, and why the boss had put him in charge of the operations team for a new game.

Seizing the opportunity, Ashe recalled the military boxing he had learned during military training and threw a horse-stance punch back at his opponent!

“Soft and cute,” Igor mocked.

Igor dodged with the ease of someone strolling down the street, a disdainful smile on his face, deftly avoiding Ashe's fist, and landed a punch on Ashe's face.

“You!”

“You—!”

“You—you—!”

Ashe couldn't help but fail to curse, and he couldn't land a single punch.

Igor's punches could severely injure Ashe, and no matter how Ashe tried to dodge, he couldn't escape, while Igor would slightly twist his body to dodge Ashe's straight punch with ease.

To onlookers, it didn't look like a fight; it seemed more like a performance—Ashe appeared to be willingly running his face into Igor's fist.

“There it is again, the Beautiful Beast's trickery.”

“It looks like the remaining 49 contribution points of that cult leader will all end up in Beautiful Beast's pocket.”

“Hmph, it’s all those flashy tricks. If it were me—”

“What would happen if it were you?”

“If it were me, he’d be crouching down to check if I’m still breathing in no time!”

“Although we can’t beat the Beautiful Beast, Lord Taig can definitely defeat him!”

The white-haired old man, Taig, quickly shook his head: “No, no, the younger generation is getting stronger by the day. An old man like me will eventually become a stepping stone for you all...”

Could you stop twisting the railing into a pretzel before you say that? The crowd thought to themselves, scolding in their minds. Suddenly, someone turned to look at Langna, who was nestled in the arms of a muscular man: “Langna, can you see through Beautiful Beast’s tricks?”

“I don’t know, and talking about it doesn’t help. You have to fight to know,” Langna said with a smile. “But I don’t want to fight Beautiful Beast; he’s not my type. Don’t worry, dear, as long as you’re still breathing, I won’t look at anyone else.”

The muscular man Langna was leaning on was sweating profusely, barely managing a smile in the darkness.

Inside the Deathmatch Arena, Igor shook the blood off his fists and casually asked, “Do you know why I’ve won all 45 past Deathmatches? My physical fitness isn’t that great, and my reflexes aren’t particularly quick, but why can’t you hit me, and why can I always hit you?”

Yes, through the battle that had just occurred, Ashe discovered that Igor’s physical condition was actually not much different from his own. To say that Igor was no match for a ‘Diamond’ like Taig would be an understatement –

even any robust man could overpower Igor. Despite being on the same level, Ashe couldn't touch any part of Igor except his face.

If Igor's boxing skills were outstanding, that would be one thing, but Ashe could feel that Igor's combat level was just mediocre, otherwise Ashe wouldn't have lasted as long as he did.

Both of them were novices, so why was it that only Igor could peck at Ashe?

"I have defeated Orcs, Trolls; many of whom had physical strength far surpassing mine, yet all fell in this Arena, transferring their Contribution Points that didn't belong to them, to me," Igor said leisurely. "The reason you and they ended up as no better than stray dogs is only one—"

"You are all livestock."

"Your lives have never belonged to you."

"From the moment you stepped onto the Arena, your neck has been in the noose I've prepared for you. Until I've milked your last Contribution Point, you are livestock under my control!"

"The fate of livestock has only one outcome—"

"Bleeding, skinning, and then..." Igor looked down at Ashe with his handsome face, stuck out his tongue to lick his lips, revealing a cruel smile, "being butchered by their master into delectable pieces!"

"Continue, Ashe Heath, don't even think of surrendering, there's no such rule in a Deathmatch. Don't worry, I'm very gentle with my livestock; it will all be over soon."

Ashe straightened up, twisted his neck, and spat out a mouthful of blood:

"Yes."

Up in the stands, Swordswoman also nodded, saying lazily, "It's time to end this."

