

## **Best In Show**

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The rain was dark and silty, a gritty mix of pollution and undrinkable acid rain. It's near daily pour caused dark streaks like deathly rivers long the pock marked white stone of the "colosseum".

It was small compared to its ancient counterpart, weathered by time and modified by many owners. It was a testament to a bygone age, where its name still hung on it with rusted wires and old wood. "Mt. Olympus Resort"

Inside under makeshift covers sat the hundreds of revelers, animal men of all kinds roaring and jeering at the combatants below.

They were glad in pot lids and sheets of metal, their weapons were wooden mallets and clubs, blunted further with foam. Despite the lowered lethality of their weapons they still attacked each other with wild abandon, forced on by guards brandishing fierce looking handguns.

Surrounded by an entourage of his own kind, stood Dell, the fearsome leader of the Timberwolves. Tall and grey like his comrades, with the scratches and dents across his body proudly displayed like medals.

He howled orders to his group as they lurched and defended against the rolling crowd of opponents crashing against his team like waves on a stone at sea.

Noticing that the lines were slowly but surely being beaten back, he called to a smaller white wolf who was crouching low, waiting beside him. They stood, touching their fingertips to their temples and grimacing, a light suddenly glinting out from between their eyelids.

The sky rumbled, and the rain shifted as if by an unseen wind. It lifted up from the backs of the defenders, and floated in the air like beads of twinkling glass. The white wolf suddenly opened their eyes, revealing orbs of light that glowed fiercely. The beads of water immediately rushed and railed over the defenders into the eyes of the attacks, who flinched back for a brief moment.

Seizing the opportunity, Dell howled for his defenders to attack, pushing into the disadvantaged attackers and knocking many of them senseless. The remaining attackers started to retreat back, but were quickly routed; either surrendering or knocked into unconsciousness like their comrades.

Finally, Dell stood surrounded by his team, breath steaming in the air as their chests heaved from

exertion. The white wolf laid weakly against the stone, the glow gone from their eyes.

Above them in a well made seating box lined with shiny metals and bars, a large and bearded human man stood and yelled down.

"Well done team wolf, an excellent use of supernatural abilities! " He bellowed, raising his hands and turning to the crowd of various animal men.

"Witnesses! I now judge the animals below as my forefathers judges your kind in ancient times!" He paused after these words, letting the silence and anticipation reign for several moments.

"Through there many years of bravery and success in the battle arena; I judge them "Best in Show!" He raised his hands as the crowd erupted in roaring applause, throwing pennies into the arena onto the reveling wolves, who started to howl and dance with glee. The only one not smiling was the leader, who waited for the Human above to continue.

"Now, You have earned your freedom into the outside world! Go now!"

Several guards opened a large portcullis on the far side of the arena, and a ruined road choked with weeds appeared outside.

Quickly, lest the human above change his mind, the wolves as one trotted quickly out through the doors, which began to close behind them immediately.

"You who remain, You may earn your freedom like those who have left us, but you must work hard, and -" The rest of his speech was cut short as the doors clanged shut, leaving the wolves looking around in the raining dark of the outside world.

It was in ruins, with large walls behind them representing the life they had left. The air smelled of poison rain and decay.

The leader sniffed the air for a few moments, then took off along the road, gesturing for his pack to follow behind. They headed out of the city, toward an unspoken promise of sweeter air.