

The Dice Must Roll
Chapter 5: A Real Fight
By Draconicon

Charlie did his best not to stare at the body of the monkey he'd summoned, nor at the pool of blood that was gradually dripping off the table top. It was not going to help to think about what that lightning bolt could have done to him, nor what it might do to those that were around him if he dodged around too much and started letting that lightning hit everything but him. The thought alone was nearly enough to leave the panther puking.

But he had to do something. He had to do something.

Spells, gear, snake...god, what do I do?

Dresnath was a powerful wizard, at least, possibly a sorcerer. That meant that he probably had a number of spells that would require either a reflex save or a will one, and he doubted that he'd have the best of luck with those. Better to go on the offensive, if he could, and hope that he got a lucky hit.

I'm a druid. I have higher hit-dice...I just...have to hope that I rolled high enough to take those hits.

"Well?" the dragon muttered. "Are we doing this or not?"

"Uh...is the option of not doing it while still not siding with you on the table?"

"Not really."

"Yeah...I didn't think - catch!"

He whipped his arm around, the snake at his wrist suddenly going flying. He hoped that it wasn't too freaked out...then again, being freaked out was probably a good thing.

Rattle-rattle went the rolling in his head, and the dragon -

Caught his snake just behind the head. The little thing was squirming and flailing, trying to bite, but it was pinched right in the wrong place. The dragon leaned his head back, chuckling softly.

“A nice try, I’ll give you that. But I already knew you had this. You might have wanted to pick a different surprise.”

“Well, I’m kinda low on those right now.”

“Clearly.”

He could feel the initiative order passing from him to the dragon, knowing that they’d just left the surprise round. Charlie dropped the d20 from the box, letting it rattle and roll as he waited for the result.

$5+3=8$.

He groaned. Not a very good initiative roll, and really not one he expected to beat -

The dragon suddenly lunged forward, claws blazing into flame. Charlie yelped, throwing himself backwards, but not before one quick slice took off the bottom of his shoes, ripping through them and leaving his feet scorched.

He landed with a yelp behind the barista bar, panting for breath, and Dresnath chuckled.

“You really are hopeless.”

“We’ll see about that.”

“Yes, I suppose we will. Your move.”

It was strange to have the game play out like this. They were in the middle of a battle, and yet they were talking about it like it was a chess game. He knew that it was supposed to be running in real time, that the game was supposed to be playing out like this just to allow people to take their turns, but he...he really did feel like it was more strategy than tactics now.

At least he’d been able to kick the dice back here before he fell backwards. That was something. He kicked it as he decided what he wanted to do.

Another summons. Something to keep him off-balance, something to divide his firepower. That was not what he was rolling for, though.

“Get out of here! Everyone, get out of here!”

Diplomacy, don’t fail me now...

15+6=22.

That was good enough. The room cleared quickly, most of the people around him screaming at the top of their lungs as they ran for the front door. He noticed that the aprons and slight hipster apparel of most of the employees and customers had been replaced by something more risqué, but his attention was all on the dragon...and the wolf that had popped up just behind him.

Just as he hoped, Dresnath turned to face the wolf instead of him. And just like with the monkey, it died in a single hit, the fire-fist of the dragon's spell still obviously working and still just as deadly.

As the wolf went down, the dragon looked over his shoulder, arching an eyebrow.

"Is this your only trick? Summoning animals?"

"It's keeping me alive, isn't it?"

"It's something, I suppose...but it won't last for much longer. You're too low-level to keep this up for long."

The dragon was more right than he knew. Considering that he was only level six, he would be lucky to get more than two more worthwhile summons out before he was down to nothing but cantrips, and considering that those were almost never worth a damn outside of distractions...

Think of something...it's your turn, think of something!

Ding ding.

The dragon and the panther paused, turning their attention towards the front door. Two familiar voices were coming from outside as the speakers stepped indoors.

"I'm just saying that they looked like whores. One of them was taking my money, too, so there must have been some truth to it."

Ryker.

"You're delusional. There's never been a brothel in town."

Lorkos.

"And just because there's never been means that there never would be? What sort of thinking is - what the hell did we walk in on?"

The folf and wolf were both dressed as their classes, now. Lorkos had a sort of robe going on, one that had a fold over the crotch - which was fitting for his sexualized class - and he wore sandals rather than boots. Ryker, on the other hand, was decked out in leathers...and not leather armor, either, but more of a dom's harness and a belt, with leather trousers that were showing off way too much of his crotch.

The both of them, however, pulled out their dice and the d20 in particular.

"Well, well, well, looks like you got into some trouble there, Charlie," Ryker said with a small chuckle. "Need a little help?"

"I wouldn't say no," the panther muttered.

"Alright...what are we dealing with?" Lorkos asked as the wolf and folf split, forming the two ends of a triangle with the dragon in the center. "Sorcerer, or -"

"Can't really be sure. Definitely magical, but he might be a cross-class."

"Well, I bet he can't take too many sneak attacks. You guys think you can get him pinned between you?" the folf asked.

"Maybe. He's fast, and he hits hard," Charlie said.

"I believe that we're in the middle of a fight?" Dresnath cracked his knuckles. "Can we get back to that?"

"Free action," the three players chorused at once.

As the dragon rolled his eyes, the other two rolled their dice. The numbers came up quickly.

Lorkos: 17.

Ryker: 25.

"Looks I get first move," the folf said. "Alright...I'm gonna wait. See if you can pin him. Lorkos?"

"I have an idea..."

The wolf started to move his hands, obviously starting a spell -

And it was the worst idea. The dragon spun around, flicking his hand out with something that he'd obviously been preparing. Charlie groaned under his breath, knowing exactly what had happened.

Attack of Opportunity. The dragon must have had some sort of feat that let him attack with ranged weapons.

It was no use telling Lorkos to look out. He was already in the middle of spellcasting, and a reflex check would cause the spell to shatter. And it wasn't like it would be likely to succeed, either, and if -

“Ha! Knew he'd try something!”

Charlie let out a hiss of relief as Ryker threw himself between whatever the dragon was throwing and the wolf, his dagger blocking it from going any further. The panther thought he saw a cluster of dice, but that seemed impossible. Why would -

POOF!

The dice disappeared in a cloud of smoke, replaced with a growling, hissing beast. A shaggy, brown-furred thing stepped back out of the smoke, a long, canine muzzle looking down on the two canines, its growl filling the room.

POOF! POOF!

Two more busts of smoke followed, and the beginnings of a werewolf pack filled the room. Three big ones, all brown-furred rather than the silver fur of an alpha. Charlie supposed that was something. At least they weren't going to be getting their asses handed to them instantly.

“I'll leave you to deal with this,” Dresnath muttered, disappearing out the door.

“Okay...” Charlie swallowed. “Uh, guys...guys? I have two of them looking right at me.”

“You're the druid,” Lorkos grunted. “Don't you have some sort of animal empathy or something?”

“Come on, you're not going to make me fight them both at once, are you?”

“We're the squishy ones over here; we've got our hands full,” Ryker called back.

The werewolves had taken control of the situation, that was for sure. Whatever they'd gotten for initiative, they were taking their turns to creep forward, separating him from his friends and them from him. It was clear that they meant to end this as quickly as possible.

Fuck, fuck, fuck, he thought, looking around for any sort of inspiration. *Snake's on the other side of the room, but venom's not much good against regeneration. Spells are almost completely tapped out for the night. No weapon...*

But...

He looked at the barista equipment. It was halfway towards being transformed into something else, so it probably wasn't any good for shooting hot water. But the shine on the metal...

One of the werewolves lunged at him, and he rolled his dice again, hoping that the tumble check would be enough to beat the sudden attack.

16+6=22.

He leaped backwards, throwing himself along the edge of the counter. The werewolf's claws snagged on the wood, and he grabbed one of the stir sticks that were next to the cups. He swung it around, bringing it down on the canine's knuckles -

“AWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

Silver...thank Christ, it's silver...

The werewolf yanked its paw back, growling over the burned knuckles. The other one retreated by a few feet as well, both of them keeping out of reach as they started to circle again, obviously trying to think of a better strategy.

He felt another dice roll in the air, and suddenly, the werewolf in front of Lorkos fell to his knees, panting, humping the air.

“Is that the same spell you got me with earlier?” Charlie called over.

“The next level up.”

“Well, he's out of the fight. Someone give me a hand!”

Another clatter-clatter.

POOF!

Ryker disappeared from where he was standing, only to reappear behind one of the werewolves. One dagger came up, held at the neck, while the other one went low, pressing just above the werewolf's sheath.

“Surprise...”

Whimpering, the werewolf leaned back almost submissively, paws held up like a normal dog might have done if it was on its belly. The last of the werewolves, however, was still growling, still nursing the wound that it had taken to the fingers. It obviously was angry as could be, but it had lost its numerical advantage.

Charlie grabbed another of the silver tools, coming out from behind the warping bar. The coffee machines had finally disappeared, as had most of the other barista equipment, replaced by knives, beer, and kegs. He guessed that the coffee shop was turning into a tavern of sorts, but that was secondary to this.

Lorkos and Charlie stood on either side of the big wolf, glaring at it, and the werewolf kept turning, looking at one of them, then the other, then back again. It growled, slashing the air in either direction.

“Do you have initiative?” Lorkos asked.

“I think you do.”

“Alright...gonna try for another spell. Think you can get him if he goes for me?”

“That’s the plan. Out of character planning?”

“Yes.”

Either the loophole was working, or the werewolf was too stupid to realize what they were talking about. Whatever the reason, it kept clawing in either direction in a series of moves that almost looked like a video game idle animation.

As soon as Lorkos started to make the motions for his spell, though, the werewolf turned, lunging for the attack of opportunity. Charlie did the same, lunging forward with the sharp sticks, aiming for a vital point. One more roll, using the same d20 that he’d been kicking around for this whole session.

$13+2+4=19.$

It was a successful hit, and the silver points drifted upwards, going right for the werewolf’s armpit.

“AWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

The werewolf toppled over, desperately trying to pull the sticks free of its armpit and failing. If anything, it was only driving the increasingly-jagged edges further in, but it couldn’t stop. Wouldn’t stop as it tried to keep itself alive. The werewolf spun and scratched and clawed at itself, but the pieces of silver kept going deeper until -

“Awoooooo.”

A weaker howl escaped the werewolf. Charlie guessed that the points had found its lungs, or perhaps something worse. Either way, it went still, its breathing slowing bit by bit until it stopped completely.

Even Ryker stopped what he was doing to stare at that.

“I...wow...Harsh, Charlie.”

“It was going to kill Lorkos if I didn’t do something.”

“Yeah, but...still. Wow. I...Wow.”

“I’m going to...I’m going to sit down,” Lorkos muttered.

Charlie tried to shake it off, but...looking at the body, even as it started fading away, he had to admit that it was hard to take in any way less than seriously. He’d...well, he’d just killed something.

It had been one thing back at the game shop. Throwing the snake at someone and seeing them get poisoned was one thing. Even bludgeoning someone wasn’t that bad. But this...this was something else. He’d stabbed that werewolf, stabbed it and watched it die. Even the fact that it’d been done to save someone else didn’t quite take the edge off that.

He shook, having to sit down, as well.

“I’m just, uh, I’m going to take my guy outside.” Ryker turned, pulling his werewolf along. “I’ll be back in ten minutes.”

“Why so long?”

“Let’s just say that my move wasn’t ‘sneak attack’ so much as ‘surprise buttsex.’”

“And you’re cringing at what I did?!”

“Hey, at least mine’s still alive.”

“Don’t...remind me.”

Charlie sighed, going to one of the tables and leaning his head against the edge of it. It was nice and cool, which was appreciated after the rather heated battle. The panther was doing his best not to think about the outcome, though, and he was failing rather miserably.

The fact was that Ryker and Lorkos had managed to keep their targets alive. Lorkos had cursed his with some sort of arousal, Ryker had managed to sneak behind his target and bring it down with a threat rather than with deadly weapons. And he...the druid that was supposed to be keeping things alive...

He’d been the one to kill.

Who would have thought I'd be the one suffering a crisis of conscience? he thought, grinding his forehead into the table and grumbling. *This was supposed to be a game...*

Well, one thing was for sure. He wasn't going to be playing the 'kill-em-all' characters anymore. He doubted that he'd be able to be much more than a diplomancer in any future games. If there were any future games.

He took a few deep breaths, forcing himself to remember that he had been fighting to protect someone else. Though this was a game, Lorkos didn't have that many hit points to begin with, and if the werewolf had gotten his hit in, his friend would have likely been badly injured, if not flat-out dead. If he hadn't done what he did, then the werewolf would have been free to attack and maul other people, possibly even getting its packmate free.

Killing it was the smart thing...but was it the right thing?

He honestly didn't know. It was a monster, but seeing it die with that quiet awoo felt way too much like watching a pet dog die.

Alright. Next time, figure out how to use the animal empathy stuff. We're not doing this again. Just...no. No, no, no, no, no.

One more deep breath later, he was able to pull his head back up. Lorkos was sitting across from him, and a quick glance to his side showed that the other werewolf was nowhere to be seen.

"Where'd the humping one go?"

"Outside."

"Did you -"

"Thought it could use a friend."

"...Heh, and it'd chase Ryker back in here, right?"

"Heh. Something like that."

He nodded his thanks, even as the folf ran through the door and slammed it shut, hard. Ryker leaned against it, panting as the werewolves scratched at the frame, humping their big, knotted cocks against the glass door and big windows.

"Stay out, you mangy mutts! My butt's not up for grabs!"

"Says the guy that decided 'surprise buttsex' was an appropriate move," Charlie muttered.

“Blame Greg for agreeing to it.”

“Nah, I think I’ll blame you for using it.” The panther sighed. “So...we probably got some experience for that. Anyone level up?”

“Not me,” Lorkos said.

“Annnnnd not me,” Ryker added.

“Well, looks like we’re stuck here til that pack goes home. Where are we, anyway?”

“Looks like a flyer on the wall. Check that?” Lorkos suggested.

Charlie did just that, walking over to the wood paneling that had replaced the posterboard and felt. He pulled the flyer down, then groaned.

“What?” Lorkos asked.

“‘Welcome to the Pink Rose, for all your anal needs.’ Looks like we just hit a brothel.”

“YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

Both panther and wolf facepalmed at their companion’s excitement.

The End