

Chapter 1. Shadows in Balance

The rain poured relentlessly, like an eternal punishment for the sins of a forgotten city, lashing against rooftops with rhythmic persistence, turning streets into mirrors where blurred silhouettes of neon signs reflected-red glimmers like fresh blood, blue shadows like bruises on the soul of a tormented detective, purple flashes like deceptive hope fading at midnight. The city breathed heavily, its breath the hum of engines, distant sirens wailing like a wounded beast, the footsteps of hurrying figures wrapped in rain-soaked cloaks of despair, like shrouds for the living dead. This was a world where shadows ruled the roost, and light was merely an illusion, a deception for those still clinging to the remnants of order in chaos. A world where evolution, that capricious, cruel witch with fate's smirk, had torn the fabric of reality, bestowing reason not only on humans but also on those who were once mere beasts-hungry, instinctive, with fangs gleaming in moonlight. We call them the Elevated-wolves with eyes full of ancient fury, cats with a killer's grace, bears with bone-crushing strength, rabbits with trembling ears, eagles with gazes piercing the fog. They rose on hind legs, spoke in human tongues, learned to wield tools in paws, and even create art, but their eyes still glowed with primal hunger, and claws scraped the asphalt, leaving marks that recalled roots in the wild, merciless nature where the strong survive and the weak are food.

It all began in 1997, in the thick, cold fog of a Canadian reserve, where the air was saturated with the scent of wet pine needles, earth, and an impending storm. The first wolf-gray as the ash of a forgotten fire, with amber eyes burning in the twilight-stood up, looked at the scientist whose heart froze in horror and awe, like a man beholding a ghost, and uttered: "I demand equality." The words echoed through the forest like a growl mixed with speech, shattering the silence. This was no prank of nature or lab error-it was a mutation of the EVOL-7 gene, a sudden surge of neurogenesis that spread across the world like wildfire in dry woods, consuming the old order. By 2001, wolves in packs, cats in dark city alleys, bears in mountains, rabbits on farms, deer in meadows-all spoke, argued, demanded passports, housing, jobs, their voices echoing in halls of power. Birds-eagles with sharp gazes, crows with sly cawing full of irony-joined by 2005, soaring over cities and crying for rights, their wings slicing the fog. But the mutation was cruel in its selectivity: only individuals with a specific allele set received this gift-curse, like a ticket to hell. The rest-cows with empty, bottomless eyes, pigs in filthy pens, chickens in cramped cages-remained unreasoning, livestock on farms, meat for those who could now ponder morality but refused the taste of blood, warm and salty. By 2025, 27 percent of mammals were Elevated, humans 73 percent of the population. And this rift, this crack in the world's bones, changed everything-from building silhouettes in the fog to whispers in dark alleys where every sound could be the last.

Cities, those concrete jungles steeped in smoke and despair, rebuilt first because they had no choice. Remember how streets were once meant for human steps: narrow doors, low ceilings, seats for two-legged beings, air clean of musk. Now everything changed-like after an earthquake. Building doors widened to admit tigers or lions, their

roars echoing in corridors. Elevators taller so bears wouldn't crumple in agony, their breath steaming in metal boxes. Subways introduced special cars: "predatory" with enhanced ventilation to dispel the thick musk of wolves and lions, and "herbivorous" with soft seats for rabbits and deer, where air smelled of fresh grass, not blood, thick and metallic. Sidewalks gained claw grips-rough strips so paws wouldn't slip on wet asphalt under rain, leaving tracks in puddles reflecting neon. Parks became hybrid spaces: green lawns for family picnics where children laughed, neighboring arenas-fenced sand pits with barriers where predators could "let off steam," fight under doctors' and police supervision so instincts wouldn't erupt at wrong moments, in offices or streets where blood would mix with coffee. In the megacity Nova-City, where neon flickered like stars in hell, reconstruction cost 87 billion dollars-a vast sum, but who counted in this world where money was just paper in a puddle? Without it, cities would collapse under the new reality's weight, streets filling with chaos, shadows lengthening to infinity, swallowing light. Now at night you hear not just engine hum but distant roars, howls, or hisses mingling with rain like a symphony of madness, each chord a threat.

The economy felt the blow next, like a claw to unprotected flesh, tearing tissues. Farms of unreasoning animals-cows with empty, bottomless eyes, pigs in filthy pens, chickens in cramped cages-made up 68 percent of rural GDP, but suddenly became a moral hurricane's center, a whirlwind stirring dust and blood in air thick with death's scent. Predators like wolves and tigers needed meat; their bodies unchanged, only reason adding a layer of guilt like ash on a wound. "It's normal," they growled at rallies, breath steaming in cold air, eyes burning in twilight-"instinct demands protein, blood, it's part of us, part of the shadow within!" But herbivorous Elevated like rabbits and deer saw cannibalism, horror chilling blood in veins like icy wind. "How can you eat those who could be us?" activists cried, waving signs in rain, ears trembling with emotion, eyes full of tears. "It destroys society, sows discord, makes us enemies, tears us apart!" Boycotts, protests, even farm terror-night explosions, smell of charred flesh, cries in fog-led to synthetic meat in 2019. By 2025 it took 34 percent of the market: taste like real, texture melting on the tongue, but no blood, no screams, no guilt, lab-grown under white, cold lights where air was sterile as conscience. It saved many, but not all-underground markets still traded "real" in alley shadows, price high, morality low as a puddle underfoot.

The workforce shuffled like cards in a charlatan's deck, every ace a deception. In police, Elevated held 39 percent of posts-their noses scented lies a mile away, strength broke doors, instincts saved in ambushes where shadows hid knives. In IT-only 22 percent, claws unfriendly to keyboards, but voice control and special "claw-keyboards" changed the game, letting wolves and tigers code in office twilight where screens flickered like neon. In construction-45 percent, bears and tigers hauled beams humans couldn't, roars echoing in building skeletons full of shadows. Salaries unfair: predators got 18 percent more for dangerous work where breakdown risk hung like Damocles' sword, but in offices minus 27 percent due to colleagues' fear: "What if it snaps? Fangs to throat at

lunch break under cold lights?" Company atmosphere thick as fog: whispers behind backs, sidelong glances, tension hanging like rain scent laced with suspicion.

Politics became a gladiator arena where words were weapons, voices roars in darkness. In 2002, the Species Committee formed: 50 percent humans, 30 predators, 20 herbivores, meetings in high-ceilinged halls where air reeked of tension like cigarette smoke. Laws poured like rain: annual aggression tests for predators-white-walled rooms, electrodes on temples, monitors flickering in twilight measuring pulse at sight of blood or meat, heartbeat betraying secrets. Inhibitor implants-tiny neck devices damping hunger but leaving bitterness like ash of hope. Quotas-25 percent Elevated in government so voices echoed in power halls off walls. Parties split: "Human Priority" with 41 percent support cried "Humans are evolution's pinnacle, we can't risk it!" rallies in bright light full of fear and neon. "Pack and Freedom" with 23 percent demanded "Instincts sacred, return rituals, howl under moon without tests!" gatherings in dark halls, roars echoing. "Green Alliance" with 36 percent dreamed of equality: "All species one family, no tests, no implants," voices soft but insistent like rain.

Families suffered most, bonds tearing like fabric under claws in home twilight. Mixed marriages-human and Elevated-only 7 percent, but children... 50 percent mutation chance, "half-breeds"-human with tail wagging in joy, or wolf with human facial traits, eyes full of conflict. "My son eats meat, your daughter horrified by the smell"-dinner arguments, kitchen twilight cries, divorces, custody courts where judges, human or Elevated, weighed not just love but instincts in cold halls where lamp light cut eyes. Education adapted: schools with separate classes until 12 to avoid fights between wolf pups with fangs gleaming in twilight and rabbit pups with ears trembling in fear. Universities with "safety zones" for herbivores where predators entered only escorted, suspicion thick as cold fog.

Religion fractured: new cults like "Great Mother-Beast" worshipped evolution as divine gift, temples in forests full of howls and songs crackling at night. Traditional churches condemned "devil's children" or saw Elevated as "new prophets," sermons in cathedrals echoing off shadow-filled walls. Society's psychology became a minefield, every step risking explosion. "Snap"-when an Elevated loses control-happened in 0.7 percent of cases yearly, but media inflated each to apocalypse, headlines screaming in neon like night sirens. Therapy: meditation in quiet rooms, inhibitors, arenas for "controlled anger" where roars echoed, blood on sand.

Culture bloomed strange flowers like roses in blood puddles: "wolf blues"-songs weaving guitar with howls full of longing and loneliness, "rabbit drama"-theater of victims, actors with trembling ears, scenes full of shadows, "human noir"-detectives of species betrayal, pages steeped in cigarette smoke and despair.

Technologies became salvation in darkness, cold light in fog. Inhibitors-neck implants-reduced snaps by 87 percent, cold metal under fur like chains. Synthetic meat-taste without guilt.

But tension grew like twilight shadows, thick and inevitable. Predators choked on tests, implants, sidelong glances, roars suppressed, eyes full of bitterness. Herbivores-from constant fear, ears pricked, hearts beating anxiety's rhythm. Underground flourished: illegal arenas with million-dollar fights, blood on sand, crowd cries in twilight like hell's echo. "Berserk"-drug boosting aggression 300 percent, smoke in shadows, sweet death scent. And in 2007 everything exploded like gunpowder in wet night.

The Great Snap: Autumn That Shattered the World

It was autumn 2007 when the world, already cracking at seams from evolutionary chaos, finally plummeted into the abyss, darkness enveloping cities. "The Great Snap"-headlines screamed on front pages in ink like blood, whispered in bars under rain with whiskey and smoke scents, howled by packs under moon full of strength and ancient power. This wasn't random rage explosion. It was the culmination of pent-up tension when Elevated instincts, suppressed by laws, tests, and human prejudices, burst forth like a river breaching a dam, flooding streets with blood and fear, fog and cries.

The first "snap" occurred September 12 in New York, in thick fog of "Predator Quarter" where air reeked of wet asphalt and musk thick as smoke. A wolf named Gray, police veteran, snapped during patrol. Good cop: strong, loyal, medals glinting in neon like false hope. But aggression test rigged, synth-meat diet unsatisfying, colleagues' human stares burning his back like cigarettes. That day he inhaled "Berserk" from a street dealer-accidentally, in smoke from a burning car in an alley, burnt rubber scent mixing with chemicals. Eyes reddened like night coals, fangs flashed like moonlit blades. He tore three: two human cops, cries echoing in fog, blood on asphalt, and an Elevated deer just passing, antlers broken like hope. "It wasn't me!" Gray rasped as surrounded, patrol shadows lengthening like death's fingers. "Instincts... they're stronger..." Shot on site, bullets echoing in alley, blood mixing with rain. News exploded: "Beast in uniform! Integration failed!" Protests ignited-wolves howling on streets, humans burning tires, fire reflecting in puddles like hellish glow.

In a week-chain reaction like wildfire in dry forest, flames leaping. In London a cat-thief snapped in subway, shadow-filled car, tearing five passengers, cries mixing with train rumble, blood on seats. In Tokyo a tiger in corporate office, neon-lit room, ripped seven colleagues at conference table, blood on glass reflecting city. In Paris a bear in bar snapped after salary dispute-ten corpses, alcohol and death scent, shattered glasses on floor. 47 attacks in a month, 312 deaths worldwide. Cities burned: night flames, sirens wailing, cries echoing. Humans armed: basement shotguns, stun guns, old rifles, metal glint in moonlight. Elevated hid in packs, communities, forests, eyes gleaming in dark, roars full of fear and fury. Mixed police shot at Beasts but sometimes innocents, bullets in fog, blood on asphalt. Species Committee imposed predator curfew after sunset, streets emptied, shadows lengthened, city hushed like before a storm.

In small town Shadow-Grove on megacity outskirts, the snap claimed Emma Harper. She was 10. Went to "Green Fang" park at full moon, told brother Jack: "I want to talk to the moon like wolves." Jack, 14, watched football and didn't go. Morning-call. Mother hysterical. Grass in blood, crimson like fog roses, claw marks deep but too neat, like faked, musk and death scent thick. Police said: "Beast. Wolf, probably. Snapped." Case closed in a day. Emma buried in small white coffin. Jack stood at grave, fists clenched in pain, tears burning eyes: "I'll find him, Emma. I swear."

In "Wild Corner," wolf community on outskirts, Lira Silverfang, 7, lost her father. Thunder, pack leader and cop, went to arrest brother Rex who snapped on "Berserk." Metro tunnel fight, fangs flashing in twilight, shot echoing, bullets in dark. Thunder fell to human detective's bullet. "Self-defense," they said. Lira saw body: scars, blood, empty eyes, death scent embedded in fur. Pack howled all night, voices grief-full, moon witness, shadows dancing around fires crackling.

Snap lasted a month, but echo stretched years. Laws tightened: inhibitors mandatory, tests monthly. Synth-meat development accelerated. Society split deeper: parties gained strength. But light too: integration sped. Elevated in police saved lives. Jack became detective. Lira-to prove. Green-symbol of struggle.

Great Snap-not end, but lesson: instincts and reason at war, but balance possible. Or not? Green's 2025 murder-echo of that chaos. Shadows return, thick as fog.

Jack Harper: Shadows of the Past

I don't like digging in the past. It's like an old suitcase-full of dust, shattered memories, things better left untouched. But sometimes, under rain or office silence, it surfaces on its own like a corpse from a river. Name's Jack Harper, and my life is a chain of shadows, each pulling me deeper into this damned abyss where light is rare, darkness the norm.

Born 1993 in small town Shadow-Grove on megacity outskirts. Time when Elevated just starting integration-first waves, wolves and cats emerging from forests and farms demanding rights, housing, jobs. Father Tom Harper firefighter-sturdy guy with blacksmith-hammer hands, always smelling of smoke and sweat. Saved humans and Elevated indiscriminately, pulling child or wolf pup from fire. Remember his fireside stories: "Jack, fire doesn't distinguish species. It devours all equally, and we must be stronger." Eyes gleamed as he spoke, me breathless imagining myself hero.

Mother Anna schoolteacher. Taught reading and math-to humans and first Elevated pups allowed in classes under watch. "Knowledge is a bridge, son," she'd say, stroking my head, voice soft as summer wind. Believed in integration, arranged joint lessons where human and Elevated kids played, learned trust. But whispers even then: "They're dangerous, Anna. Their instincts..."

Childhood... normal. As normal as possible in world where neighbor wolf howls at night, school teaches evolution "gift and curse," lesson after lesson explaining why some animals reasoned, others not. Had sister Emma. Four years younger. Lively as spark in dry grass. Loved animals-unreasoning farm ones. "They feel, Jack! Not just food!" she'd yell at cow trucks, tiny fists clenched, eyes tear-full. Teased her "rabbit defender," but deep down envied her innocence, seeing good in shadow-filled world. We ran fields, caught butterflies, built forts from branches and old boards, laughed till collapse. Father taught fighting-"just in case, son, world not always kind," showing dodges, counters. Mother-Agatha Christie detectives. "Logic, Jack. It'll save you from chaos," she'd say, me devouring books imagining Sherlock in this strange world.

But everything changed 2007. I was 14, Emma 10. Year of "Great Snap"-Beast attack series nationwide, Elevated broken by pressure snapping and killing. Humans blamed Elevated, they humans for provocations, tests, discrimination. Town protests: "Elevated-threat!" signs, rocks through pack windows. One night. Full moon. Emma went to "Green Fang" park-"want to talk to moon like wolves in stories." Should've gone with her. Didn't. Watched football, ate chips, laughed at goal. Morning-call. Mother hysterical, voice broken like twig underfoot. "They tore her, Jack... Like a beast... God, she's gone..."

Arrived scene, legs buckling. Grass in blood, crimson like paint. Claw marks deep like plow furrows. Musk and death scent embedded in nose, memory. Police: "Beast. Wolf, probably. Snapped." But I saw: marks too neat, like faked, not chaotic like news snaps. No one listened to kid, shooed me. Case closed fast, "typical snap." Emma buried in small coffin white as her dreams. Stood at grave, fists clenched in pain, tears burning eyes. "I'll find him, Emma. Swear," whispered to wind. Father broke. Drank, garage bottles, empty eyes. Mother-prayed, church daily whispering "Why, Lord?"

Year later-fire. Old warehouse on outskirts storing "Berserk"-drug waking beast in Elevated. Elevated bear inside, wolf pup child. Father went saving, always hero. Explosion. Didn't come out. "Hero" at funeral, medal on coffin. Saw: he courted death to drown Emma guilt, failure to protect. Mother lasted two more years. Cancer. Faded slowly whispering: "Protect yourself, Jack. Don't let world break you like us." Left alone. 18. With guilt burning inside like unquenched fire, cigarette on skin.

Moved to megacity. Police academy. Chose detective-to unravel like mother's books, find Emma answers. Rose fast. Logic my blade. Noticed details: track, scent, eye lies, micro-movements. First case-theft in "Predator Quarter," streets reeking meat and adrenaline. Caught cat-thief, she hissed: "You human know nothing of hunger, living with instincts." Let go with warning. Pity maybe, or Emma memories.

But real baptism-case #17-442. "Metro Snap." Partner Nick. Good guy. Strong, loyal, mane-like hair, laugh like roar. Hunted "Berserk" smuggler gang-predator drug boosting aggression, turning to Beast. Tunnel-ambush, grave darkness. Nick inhaled smoke from torched batch. Snapped. Eyes blood-red. Fangs at me. "Jack... can't... stop... help..." Clawed side, pain like fire. Three scars. Shot. Twice. Heart. Fell rasping: "Sorry..."

instincts... stronger..." Survived. Died inside. Since-body scars, soul scars. Distrust of Elevated. "They're ticking bombs," think staring, recalling Nick's end eyes.

But life loves irony. Now memories echoing in head like distant howl, she appears-Lira Silverfang, new partner. Her story like mine woven from loss and struggle, past shadows pulling to present, binding us in strange dance of trust and suspicion. Her path-my mirror from barricade's other side, instincts battling reason, pack calling back to wild dark.

Lira Silverfang: Roar in Chains

Lira Silverfang-name echoing in pack like moonlit howl full of ancient strength and longing, tearing night silence. But in this city under neon lights and relentless rain, it sounds like sentence, reminder of divided world where reason fights instincts like prisoner with chains. She's Elevated. Wolfess. 25. Fur gray as thick forest fog, thick and gleaming under rain, amber eyes like campfire flames at night, piercing through, full of inner storm. Claws sharp as razors glinting in twilight, but she wears gloves-control symbol, not to scare humans, not let instincts escape like beast from cage. Instincts-her gift and curse. Whisper in blood: "Run forest. Hunt shadows. Dominate weak," ancestors' voices ancient as wind in branches, hunger-full. But she learned to cage them with neck inhibitor implant and iron will burning in soul like night fire. Most times at least-but nights they break free in dreams full of blood and freedom, roar echoing.

Born 2000 in "Wild Corner"-wolf community on megacity outskirts where forest met concrete, air thick with wet earth, pine, pack scent like fog. Not city with neon, not wild forest-middle ground, wooden cabins in circle, night fires crackling casting shadows, moon rituals gathering pack in howl and dance full of ancient magic. Her pack Silverfangs old, proud, stories centuries deep, ancestors hunted snows, survived storms, roars wind-echoing. When reason came like lightning flash, they adapted but kept spirit, blood roar full of strength. "We're alphas, Lira," mother Era said, fur silvery, eyes strict as winter night, pure predator teaching daughter wind-scent, ground tracks, heartbeat lies, voice tremors. "Instincts your strength, Lira. But reason the chain holding them, not letting snap to madness."

Father Thunder pack leader, strong as bear but wolf cunning, roar earth-shaking in forest. Police work-one of first Elevated in uniform proving predators can serve society, badge gleaming in firelight. "We must prove not beasts, Lira," growled at farm-meat dinner, eyes determination-burning, paws table-clenching. But city broke him: cold-room aggression tests, human stares, back whispers: "Predator in uniform? Snap eventually, bite." Held on, saved lives, sniffed danger from rubble. But 2015... Snap. Not his. Uncle Rex. Succumbed "Berserk," drug waking inner beast, boosting aggression. Killed three in metro tunnel chaos. Father arrested him, duty calls, pack honor. Twilight fight, fangs flash, shot echoes. Father fell to human detective bullet, blood on concrete. "Self-defense," said, but Lira saw body: furrow scars, blood, empty eyes, death scent

fur-embedded. She 15. Pack howled all night, grief voices, moon witness, shadows fire-dancing.

After-chaos like forest storm, branches break, earth shakes. Mother broke, eyes dimmed like rain coals, retreated to rituals, "old blood." "Instincts pure, Lira. City poison, taints us," whispered broken voice like twig. Joined underground arenas-predators fight for money, sand blood, twilight crowd cries. Lira saw her: wild eyes, blood claws, fury roar. "This freedom," mother whispered, but Lira knew: fall, Beast path, abyss reason drowns. Pack split like lightning-struck tree. Some city-seeking society place, some arenas chaos. Lira chose city. To prove. Not become uncle, not break under instincts weight.

Police academy 2018. First wolfess in class, all eyes on her, back whispers like leaf rustle. "She'll scent criminal, but who scents her if snaps?" Passed tests-98% control, temple electrodes, monitors cold-light flickering. Wore implant damping hunger, quieting instincts like whisper. But nights... dreams. Forest hunt, blood tongue taste, pack howl ears. Fought, teeth clenched pain. Studied forensics, logic, laws. Graduated honors, diploma in paws, triumph bitter taste. Specialization: forensics. "Your nose weapon, Lira," human instructor said, but eyes fear, distrust like shadow.

First case minor. Theft in "Predator Quarter," streets meat, adrenaline, rain scent full. Scented cat-suspect lie, heartbeat drum-betraying. "You're lying," growled low strength voice. Broke, confessed under gaze. But human partner sidelong stare, breath fear-scented. "Don't snap, wolfess, keep in paws." Didn't. Climbed career ladder. Became detective. Ambitions: captain. First wolfess-captain history. Prove not threat, predators society part, guard standing. But inside-war like blood storm. Instincts saved: alley ambush scent, saved partner from shadow knife. But scared: crime-scene blood scent-hunger wakes, throat roar, eyes darken, chains strain.

Captain Richter: Heart in Darkness

Captain Richter stood at his office window, heart pounding in rain rhythm lashing glass like trying to break in, wash away accumulated weariness and soul-burning pain like cigarette on skin. His antlers polished to mirror sheen by years' habit reflected city neon flickers-red glints like fresh asphalt blood, blue shadows like fate-blow bruises, green flashes like fading hope deep in eyes. Herbivore, Elevated deer, born 1985 in quiet "Green Zone" where herbivores built communities far from predatory quarters, air thick with musk and danger. Father Species Committee diplomat, even antlers, firm voice always repeating: "Peace balance, son, fragile as dry twig under hoof, but we hold it." Mother botanist, paws always earth, planting unreasoning grasses for farms, eyes soft care-full whispering evenings: "Life growth, even in shadow."

But shadow fell 2007, Great Snap. Richter's brother, young deer spark-eyed, torn in park family-moon strolling rare calm moment. "Beast," cops said, but Richter remembered soul-echo cries, nightmare-haunting blood scent, mother's empty eyes learning, rain-like tears down muzzle. Not just snap-politics, surface-boiling hate sowing discord. Heart tore rage and helplessness, sleepless nights, pain-clenched fists, eye-burning tears. "Why us? Why always us victims, herbivores who don't bite, only run?" thought nights antler-clenching not to break. Joined police to control, no more lost brothers, sons, friends, protect weak from strong. Rose to captain through hard years, bureaucracy each report battle, order compromise, decision heart-knife.

Now-"North Claw" precinct megacity heart, air coffee, cigarette smoke, tension thick. Saw Harper: cynical human scars screaming pain, loner inner-burning guilt, eyes lost-in-fog. And Lira: young wolfess ambitious, mile-lie scent nose, but eyes instinct storm ready burst. "Committee pressures," thought folder-clenching till hooves trembled, heart brother-memory aching, eyes tear-well. "Integration. Show together, human and wolf shoulder to shoulder." Knew risk breaking hearts, careers, spilling blood. Harper distrusts-metro snap scars inner-bleeding like open wound. Lira proves but pack pulls back to dark instincts rule. And case... Green murder, rabbit activist. Torn. Claws. Media howls like full-moon pack, panic sowing. Unsolved-riot, blood, 2007-like lost lives. Richter deep sighed, tear down muzzle-not rain, pain, soul-burning memories like dry-grass fire. "Let them try. Or break each other. But gods, let it work. For all us, for those lost that autumn."

Clarence Green: Last Light

Clarence Green-last who should die in this shadow city, life like darkness torch, hope symbol extinguished in rain-blood puddle. Councilor, Elevated rabbit, 42, fur white as fresh morning-fog snow, brown eyes fire-full unquenchable faith, ears always justice-voice pricked emotion-trembling. Born 1983 quiet "Grass Ring" herbivore community megacity outskirts, air green-fresh, high walls predatory-glance protecting. Father farmer, hooves earth, growing unreasoning rabbits for farms, voice work-rough wisdom-full: "Life cycle, son, but we make fair, painless." Mother teacher, taught pups "life right, not commodity," eyes better-belief glowing, paws head-gentle stroking.

Clarence grew seeing cage trucks, hearing unreasoned cries, eyes empty silent-torment full, fear air scent. "Our brothers though silent," whispered fence-gazing farms, heart injustice-clenching like anger fist. At 15 saw predator-wolf buy meat-his kind, rabbit-in neon store, blood rain-mixing scent. Heart clenched, eye-burning tears, rage boiled: "Wrong, barbarism, tears us apart!" Turning point, soul-fire spark.

Entered politics small park rallies rain umbrella-drumming, herbivore crowd breathless listening. "We not livestock! Society all equal, unreasoned not food but life-chain part!" cried passion-trembling voice, ears upright. Speeches ignited crowds: herbivores applauded, humans respectful nods, some predators admitted: "Maybe right, time

change." But threats night shadows: fear-scent soaked mailbox letters "Shut up rabbit or meat"; night calls tube-growling voices: "You're next." Feared not, home-warm wife embracing, pride-glowing eye children kissing-two small rabbits: "Papa hero, fights all." "If die, for cause," told her firm voice love-warm eyes shadow-dispelling.

Last evening: "Dark Paw" park leaves rain-rustling, fog path-blurring world dream-like. Walked alone, cloak soaked, committee speech thoughts head-echoing: "Together live if system change, unreasoned brothers see." Bush rustle death-breath quiet threatening. Shadows ghost-stirred. Claws night-lightning flash, knife-sharp pain body-tearing. Last fading darkness-thought like rain coals: "For them... all unreasoned, bloodless world..." Body fell, blood rain-water mixing earth-flowing, hope extinguished but words echo lingering darkness light not quenching, fog-flickering.

Meeting: Steps in Fog

I stand at my 23rd-floor "North Claw" precinct office window, rain glass-tapping like coffin fingers rhythmic insistent darkness-calling. Below-neon street river, humans and Elevated hurrying rain-bowed heads, silhouettes memory-blurred. Light cigarette, smoke ghost-coiling gray ephemeral enveloping. Head spins old record, mother's voice: "You could've saved her, Jack," soul-void echoing burn like finger cigarette. Desk file: Jack Harper. 32. 180 cm. 85 kg. Chestnut hair, face-shadow stubble. Side scars-three parallel furrows, #17-442 souvenirs. Status: alone. Like cold-room sentence.

Door creaks open like old noir film hero always shadowed. Captain Richter enters, antlers mirror-polished, weary shadow-full eyes. Paws thick sin-book folder red "Urgent" stamp.

- Harper, voice leaf-wind rustle quiet weight-full. - New case. "Dark Paw" park murder. Victim Clarence Green, rabbit activist. Torn shreds. Claws. All points Beast. Media already pack-howling panic sowing.

- And? ask exhaling ceiling smoke coiling river-fog like.

- And partner assigned. Lira Silverfang. Wolfess. Top order, integration program. Committee show we work together, human predator.

Crush cigarette windowsill, ash hell-snow falling. Heart clenches-wolfess? After Rex? Grab rain-heavy cloak, holster gun cold metal calming. Down stairs empty-corridor ghost-step echoing.

Interrogation room-cold lamp light, wolf-fur gray walls, coffee tension air thick. She table-sits, form figure-perfect tailored, paw gloves, badge gleaming. Gray fog fur, amber blade eyes.

- Detective Harper, says low slight-growl controlled chain-beast voice. - Lira Silverfang.

- Know, reply doorway standing floor-shadow falling. - You're my new tail, partner.

Turns slow graceful predator-ambush like, gaze air-cutting blade.

-And you my new prejudice, human, scars distrust eyes.

Smirk first day, bitter whiskey-empty glass like. Maybe start something. Or end.
Atmosphere fog-thick, air-hanging tension.

- Let's go. Corpse. City answers waits, rain under, shadows in.

Exit downpour, steps death-dance sync, cloaks soaking, city swallows us, shadows
lengthen, fog envelops.