

The Days Before It All Began...

ALM

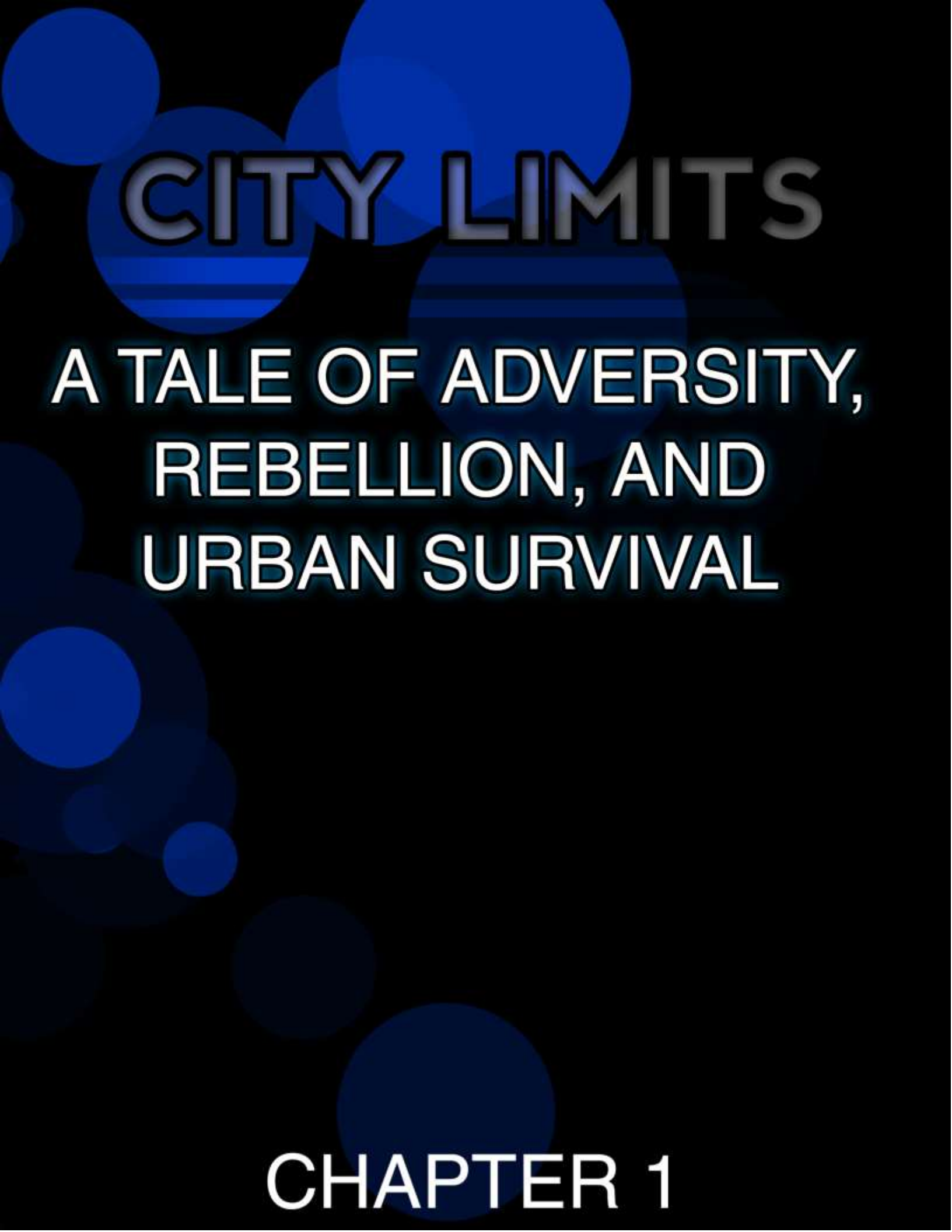
DISCLAIMER:

Content within any of my works is written with a level of controversy, I believe nothing is off the table and in a first-person narrative perspective, the characters portrayed may have some disagreeable opinions/actions. I attempt to integrate these tastefully wherever possible, so please understand and respect the opinions found within these short stories and don't make requests to have them changed, or removed.

The characters created and presented within these stories are from my mind and my mind alone. Any similarities with other OC's are purely coincidental.

Yes, they're furrries. Canines, felines, horses, among other animals are present in substitution of humans. If you're reading this on an uploaded fur site, you should know this. If not, deal with it.

These stories come with an NSFW warning. That means there may be some graphic portions of the story not suitable for children. These moments are usually tactful and only present when necessary; generally this is present as a language advisory. On sites like Fur Affinity, if the story this disclaimer is printed on does not have a flag on it, there is no NSFW content. Otherwise, read at your own discretion.

The background is black with several overlapping circles in shades of blue. Some of these circles have horizontal blue lines near their bottom edges.

CITY LIMITS

A TALE OF ADVERSITY,
REBELLION, AND
URBAN SURVIVAL

CHAPTER 1

New York isn't glorious, but it's a place I call home. I've never been one for crowds, but I guess now that I'm here I'd better get used to it. Things were different when I stepped off the plane; things were simpler, were kinder... They were for all of about five minutes, at least. Namina, Damion and I stepped off the plane and into the city for the first time, and inhaled the not-so-fresh air of the city. The agency that brought us to town had left a message for a chauffeur to pick us up after we got outside of the airport. There was a young, spotted boy standing holding a sign for "Alkin". He couldn't be past his twenties, with tabby spots scattered across his pelt. I started to move to him.

"You, boy, over here!" He called out when he noticed me walking towards him. I walked over, and the man greeted me gently. "You are Alkin?" He questioned me with a thick Bostonian accent.

"I am," I responded. Without hesitation, he grabbed my bags and walked off towards the car. "We best get going, then, shouldn't we? You have a busy first day ahead of you!" He seemed to be paying miniscule attention, leaving me rather confused. "Wait! What about my friends?" I asked. He turned, and a moment of confusion crossed his face before pushing it away. "Ah, yes! They came with you, don't they? Well, I can only carry one set of bags, you two can carry your own weight" He quickly turned off before we could respond. Namina and Damion both glared at me.

"Been here less than five minutes, and you're already not pulling your own weight?" Namina teased. I shrugged, picking up her bags.

"Excuse me, your highness; I should've known you wouldn't want to get your freshly cleaned fur dirty. Come on, let's go." I nudged her jokingly as we moved along. Damion sent a glare so sharp I could feel it through the back of my head, but I paid it no mind and continued on my way. The driver seemed a bit too disorganized, but with this city and the people I saw running around in the airport, it wasn't strange. Trusting him certainly seemed like a good idea at the time. We loaded our bags into the trunk, and piled into the back of the four door town car. For a few minutes, while we thought we were on the way to the Agency, we sat in the back of the car, laughing and talking and reminiscing on the complete stroke of luck that we ended up where we were, but the cab driver remained silent and deadlocked on the road. About twenty minutes after getting in the cab, I get a call on my phone. The agency that contracted us was reaching out.

"Hello? This is Alkin," I answered my phone to shouting on the other line.

"Mr. Tanki? Where the hell are you!?" The agency man sounded frantic. "We're in the back of our cab," I told him. "What cab? Your driver just came back empty-handed and told me you never showed up!" He screamed, "Mr. Tanki! Get that cab to pull over!" I reached up to the driver, but before I could open my mouth, he stopped the car and told us to get out, in a brutally dark tone. We followed the order without hesitation, but once we were outside of the cab and with the doors shut, he drove away.

"Alkin, you moron! He's still got our stuff!" Damion shouted, pointing at the rear-end of the cab now leaving our sights. We tried to chase it as long as we could, but it was paws versus

wheels and needless to say, we couldn't get very far. We heard him shout out of his window as he drove away, "Stay out of East 11th!"

Great. Now we were stuck in the middle of who-knows-where. I still had the agency man on the line, and I could hear his frantic and muffled rambling. I put the phone back up to my ear, "Sir? Uhm... We're out of the cab."

The agency man seemed to relax a little bit. "Do you know where you are?" I looked around, "We're by some bridge." After some dull questions about locations, and bearings, and the length of time we drove for, which I really can't recall, he eventually determined we were at the Linxus bridge. The man directed us to a little place two blocks east, called Bernard's Bar. "Wait, there are a couple of other things. They have our bags--" The man cut me off, "Yes, we'll value your belongings and reimburse you when you get here along with your first month's rent." I stumbled to continue, "But what about my--" The man refused to let me finish a sentence. "Yes, we'll explain the situation of why that happened when you get back to the studio. Please just go to Bernard's bar and we can pick you up in about a half an hour. I really am sorry about this, Mr. Tank, but there really is no other way. We'll do everything we can." The man was trying to rush me off the phone. Leave it to me to hope these people would actually care about the canines and Damion they flew out to help make them money. "Fine," I said in frustration and hung up my phone. I turned to the others, "Well, guys, looks like we're going to be sitting for a while. They're sending us to a place called Bernard's Bar to wait for a little while."

They all seemed to go along, it's not like we had much room to object. We walked for a few minutes in silence, before Damion, in a stroke of genius and cunning, decided to break it.

"I can't believe you didn't get his plate number," He snapped. I stopped in my tracks.

"Excuse me? Why didn't you? This wasn't my fault!" I could feel my face getting hot, dammit, why now? Damion lashed back quickly. "Because *I* was the last one out of the car," he said, claws unsheathing. What a stupid reason!

"Control your anger, Damion." I heard Namina mumble under her breath. "You know, I have pretty damn good hearing, Namina, and I suggest you keep your mouth shut." He was lashing at her now, and despite him yelling to yell, that just made me snap, "Hey! You leave her out of this," He lashed back readily with another response, "She wouldn't be *in* this if you never got it started! It was your name on the sign, the cab was for you--" It could've gone back and forth for a lot longer, and eventually someone would've gotten clawed, if Namina didn't step in. "It was for BOTH of us. Now **YOU** calm down, Damion. We've been in New York for less than an hour and killing each other isn't going to help anything! Look around us, we're here for opportunity--" I grumbled under my breath, "He's not." Namina shot me a sharp glare before continuing, "We're here for opportunity and all you want to do is complain and yell and argue! Yes, I know this sucks, yes, I know we're stranded and don't know where the hell we are, but please for my sake as well as yours, keep your fucking mouth shut. We'll figure all of this out at the talent agency. There's an explanation, I'm sure." That was Namina, voice of reason when the two of us were too hotheaded to think rationally. Got us out of many situations, she did. After some huffing, Damion calmed down, but his claws didn't react for quite some time. We were all

a little on edge, but that was to be expected. The only thing important now is getting to Bernard's.

It was another few minutes before we could see the bright neon sign advertising the 20th-century dive. The street was as rundown as the building itself, with bricks overgrown in moss, windows dirty and covered in grime. The pavement of the street was cracked and the sidewalk was decimated. Certainly seemed like quite a haven to me. Either way, if we wanted to figure out what was going on, we needed to get to the bar and back to the Agency. We walked inside, and much to our surprise, there wasn't much drinking going on. The patrons of the bar were just sitting there... Talking, laughing. A thundering Mastiff walked over,

"New friends! Welcome to Bernard's. My name is Aukri, but you can call me Sir Bernard III, since this after all IS my kingdom." The man said in a booming voice of thunder, gesturing to the building around him.

"Bernard? But you're a Mastiff." I said, gawking at the mass of the man standing in front of me.

"Eh, that's a long running joke, I guess. My great grandparents must've hated my grandfather, named him Bernard, poor fella never lived it down." Aukri chuckled, "So, how long have you been around?" I shrug, trying not to make eye contact. "We've been..." I choke out, "for about a half an hour."

Aukri howls with laughter, "You've been in town a *half* an hour? I think that's a new record!" He then promptly calls to the entire bar, "Hey, everybody! Welcome Alkin and his friends to the town! They just lost all their stuff in the first hour!"

Someone in the back of the bar sits up, "That's the third one this week!"

Aukri chuckles some more before returning his focus to me, "You've just been introduced to the turf war, man. Very few make it out of the airport with all of their belongings unless they're a cat, though I'm surprised they took your feline friend's as well. But, I guess muggers don't take time to discriminate."

And then there was that same guy from the back, "Yeah! But they DO check to make sure you're not a cat, so they've got SOME brains to them." Following complete silence at probably the worst attempt of a joke to ever be said in the bar, the man in the back slumped back down in his chair. He would not speak out again. Aukri continued, "Yeah, well, this town kinda bites ass. We fellas need to stick together!" He grabs me on the shoulder and gestures to the group of misfits surrounding us. "Welcome, my friend, to the bar with no drinks. We do get in our share of trouble, though." A quiet cheer erupted briefly in the bar, before Aukri silenced them. "You got a place to stay, friend?" He asked me. "I'm pretty alright, actually. I think the Agency's going to hook us all up," I said with a shrug. Aukri just smacked me on the back toyingly. "Son, let me tell you something, from one starving actor to another." He walked over to the window, "So many more of you come through every week. Most of you are gone in a couple of months, so the agency only covers your rent for six." He looked back to me, "Friend, after those six months, I'll be surprised if you have enough to cover your own rent. When that happens, I'll have a room for you, here." I walked towards the counter of the bar, "We'll have to

see when time goes by,” I said as I sat down. Aukri took the seat next to me, “Well, just remember, friend. My door’s always open.” He gestured towards a sign hanging on the front door, “Animals welcome, any shape, any size.” He read, aloud.

The Agency man walked in, huffing and puffing.

“Alkin Tanki?” He called out. Namina, Damion stood up and started out the door. The man looked to Aukri, “I hope you weren’t telling them any stories about the town. I don’t need you scaring off any more of our clients,” the man grumbled. Aukri stood up and towered over the man, “Well, start warning your people about the city then. It’s not fair for them to be thrown in blindly like they are.” Aukri growled down at him, and the Agency man retreated to us. “Come on, you three. Let’s go.” As we were heading out the door, I heard Aukri call one last thing behind us. “Don’t trust them! In the end, you’re on your own in this city!” The door to the bar slammed shut behind us. The man gestured us into his car, and we set off for the agency.

When we were a short ways down the road, he spoke to us again.

“I’m really sorry you’re in this position now,” he apologized. “This never should’ve happened to you.” Through his sincere apologetic tone, Damion responds in his usual and annoying way,

“Yeah, well, this wouldn’t have happened if the people who brought us down here actually warned us about the--”

“Damion, quiet!” Namina silenced him. I looked over to Damion and said what I could,

“Damion, you tagged along as our guest. They didn’t bring you here, you’re just here because you’re fucking crazy.” Damion took a breath to object, but with the glares of both Namina and me, he just exhaled in protest. After a few seconds of silence to tell me Damion wouldn’t speak up again, I looked back to the Agency man. “It’s okay, don’t worry about it. But this whole situation would be made a lot better if we knew who we were addressing.” The man sat up, “Surprised. Normally people don’t care about the footsoldier sent to retrieve them. Well, my name’s Chris, but you probably won’t see or hear from *me* again. Your coordinator goes by the name of Hania Moreau.” I said, “Hania, huh? Well, thank you, Chris, for letting us know a little of what to expect while we’re in town.”

And now we were here. Less than an hour in New York had led us on a not-so-grand adventure. Here we were, with no clothes, no food, no essentials, going to see a talent agent to determine our future in the city. Though, some things had me wondering. In Bernard’s, it seemed like these robberies were a common occurrence, that misfortune was dealt more than any other narcotic on the streets of this city. Why was ‘Animals welcome, any shape, any size’ such a battle cry? More so, what was this turf war that we’ve supposedly been dragged into?

What don’t I know about this city?