

Professor Malherbe: scientist, businessman, disgraced doctor, evil-doer. His lab in the industrial heart of Honeydew looked just like any other building in the area: three storeys, rectangular, loading doors at one end, the words 'Malherbe Industries' daubed in understated, plain black letters on the wall facing the street. Nobody suspected that anything amiss could be going on behind the building's closed door; nobody, that is, except the city's one hope for salvation.

A dark figure crouched on the flat concrete roof, peeking down into a room containing a single innocuous-looking coyote in a lab coat through a skylight. The canine was doing nothing more interesting than filing paperwork: arranging the folders into stacks, then transferring those stacks into the drawers of an old-fashioned filing cabinet. The figure drew back as the coyote stretched and yawned, then wandered from the room.

This was the moment for which the figure had been waiting. Hurrying over the edge of the building, he leaped fearlessly into the abyss, his feet finding the ledge of a window almost automatically. He dived through, rolling once, then stood up in the very room he had been observing.

Now in the illuminated interior of the building, the figure was revealed to be a tall, broad stripeless tiger, dressed in naught but a pair of bright red cargo pants: the mighty crimefighter Cait Sith. He crept to the door, peered through the crack between it and its frame, then slunk out to the hallway. He knew it would be deserted at this time of night: his nightly observations for the past few weeks had shown him that the coyote he had been watching was always the last person to leave this part of the building. He also knew that Professor Malherbe himself spent hours at a time in a cleaning closet at the far end; it was to this door that the figure stole.

The closet, as one would expect, was packed with an assortment of mops, brooms, a vacuum cleaner, and an assortment of other cleaning products. Not a thing seemed unusual, except...ah ha! The fire extinguisher affixed to the wall was held in place by a clamp with no release mechanism: very suspicious indeed.

One hand took hold of the trigger, squeezed, and twisted. Instantly, the fire extinguisher and the wall to which it was attached swung outwards, revealing a dimly lit metal staircase.

The concealed door closed behind the feline as he began to descend the stairs, his footsteps not making the slightest sound as he travelled down through this hidden portion of the building, right down to the basement. Here the steps ended, becoming a dingy corridor illuminated by the stark blue-white light of fluorescent bulbs.

He paused, his ears perked and listening for sounds of movement from behind any of the doors that lined this hallway: all was quiet, except for faint suggestions of activity on his left.

The windows in the first few doors showed him merely rooms of unattended equipment, but the fourth and last presented to him his quarry.

The door crashed open as the figure kicked it open, the glass of the window shattering as it collided with the wall. The fox in a lab coat identical to that which the coyote had been wearing spun around to face the newcomer.

"Ah, of course. Cait Sith," the fox said, smirking, "I knew if anyone was going to figure out that this place makes more than chemical solvents it would be you."

The stripeless tiger took a step closer. "The game is up, Malherbe. I'm taking you in. Once I show the cops this place, they'll have you cold."

"You think so?" Malherbe said with raised eyebrows, one hand hidden behind his back, "You sound awfully confident, kitty."

Cait frowned, his fists balling up. "Tiger," he growled.

The fox laughed, even as his larger enemy advanced on him. "Whatever you say, pussy cat."

"You're coming with me," Cait said firmly, just a few strides away from the fox now, "and there's nothing you can do about it."

"I think you'll find you're mistaken there, house cat. Take this!"

His hand whipped around to reveal a sci-fi-esque gun, bulbous near where the muzzle would be except that from it erupted a beam of light. It hit Cait in the chest, sending him stumbling backwards.

"Shrink ray, my little friend!" Malherbe crowed, watching the feline gasp, winded by the impact, "Soon you'll be crushed under my heel, but maybe you'd make a nice pet..."

As the fox bragged about his victory, taunting who would have been his final obstacle, Cait was regaining his breath, waiting for the effects of Malherbe's weapon to begin. If he was to shrink to some miniscule size, his crime fighting days would be over, the villains of the Honeydew free to run riot; but if he was starting to get smaller, why were his clothes starting to feel tighter?

"So ends the career of the mighty Cait Sith. You haven't done badly keeping this town clean, even I admit it, but you never could earn your stripes," the fox smirked, amused by his own joke, "Soon, if you're lucky, you'll just be another of my peons. Far more likely, though, you'll...b-be..."

Malherbe's gloating stuttered to a halt as he stared at Cait who, far from dwindling from his sight, was swelling before his eyes.

"W-What?" he yelped, gazing in horror now at his gun: the dial on its side was set, not to 'Shrink', but to 'Grow'.

Meanwhile, Cait was staring down at his own body, watching as his legs pulled the fabric of his pants taut across them, splitting them at the seams. The floor was slowly retreating from his gaze, at the same time as the walls rushed inwards towards him.

"No! No no no no no!" the fox was shouting, fumbling with the settings on the gun, "I-I-I'll shrink you back to normal!" The weapon slipped from his grasp as his hands shook, hitting the floor with an ominous crack. He stared up at the rapidly swelling feline, letting out a piteous, pleading moan, "Don't hurt meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

A deafening roar echoed around the room, drowning Malherbe's scream, as the tiger flexed every muscle in his expanding body, the remnants of what little clothing he wore exploding off him. Cait now towered above the vulpine villain, but he wasn't growing *up*: he was also growing *out*. Already powerfully built when he had arrived, the feline now sported biceps only the most gifted and driven bodybuilders could ever achieve; his pectorals were like a pair of small barrels ready to burst their hoops; his abdominals were cut as cleanly as any, each the size of a large stone and equally solid; his legs rippled with power that could rival the strongest of carthorses.

He covered the distance to the fox in one stride, a stride that shook the room around them. One hand reached down and seized Malherbe by the front of his lab coat, lifting him easily into the air.

The villain cowered as he dangled from Cait's grip, waiting in utter terror for the undoubtedly feral beast to unleash its savage fury upon him.

His teeth bared, Cait leaned his head in close to the trembling figure in his clutches. He drew in a deep breath, practically able to smell the fear in the air, and then...

"Hello, Professor." The tiger's voice was so deep it almost made Malherbe's bones rattle.

The fox gaped at the gigantic, but seemingly completely lucid tiger; it seemed that his predictions of feralism had been inaccurate.

"Thank you for this 'little' gift," Cait continued, grinning triumphantly, "It will make it much easier to take you into custody. Now, shall we go?"

But there was nowhere for him to go. The door through which he had come no longer even reached his waist and his musculature made him far too broad to fit through it. What was more, he now found his massive, hulking shoulders hunched beneath the high concrete ceiling: he was still growing!

Bigger and bigger he swelled, each passing second now adding literal feet to his already towering body while his muscles continued to balloon outwards as if they were being inflated. Within a minute he was knelt upon the floor, his back pressed against the ceiling; would he be condemned to be stuck within this room forever, crushed its impervious casing?

But then the cracking began. Lines spread rapidly through the dull grey concrete from where his shoulders were forcing themselves up against it. Dust rained down upon the herculean tiger and his prisoner still clutch in an ever-growing hand. A rumbling was coming from above them, becoming louder and louder as Cait's body ploughed its way relentlessly through the building's foundations. Muffled crashes, the shattering of glass, and the screams of the few occupants left in the lab filtered down to their ears: the whole place was collapsing!

Cait burst from beneath the ground, sending tons of broken concrete in all directions, crashing into neighbouring, thankfully empty, industrial lots. Raising one monumental footpaw, he set it upon the half-buried street and stood up, feeling the relieving mercy of open air that allowed him to stretch the limbs that had so recently seemed doomed to be curled up and entombed forever.

Honeydew had always appeared a vast metropolis to the tiger, stretching from horizon to horizon and beyond. Now, though, it was barely more than a large and elaborate model village. He grinned as he looked out across the cityscape, the lights of skyscrapers gleaming at the same level as his eyes.

Then he looked down at his body and the feeling of delight intensified. His pectorals filled his vision now, curving far outwards from his body, further than any anthro could ever have dreamed. He raised an arm and flexed, watching his bicep, already the size of a boulder, explode in size to that of a meteor. Lowering his free hand, he ran it over his abdominals, now divided by trenches several feet deep, each individual muscle swelling beneath his touch with each breath he took.

Then he remembered what was still clutched in his other hand. He lifted the now seemingly minute fox up to eye level and smiled. "Time to get you to the cops, I think."

Before Malherbe could say a word, he was swallowed up in the tiger's fist.

Cait then set out for the police headquarters in the middle of the city. He kept his eyes downcast, making quite sure that his feet never strayed from the wide avenue that bisected Honeydew down

the middle. Each step he took was accompanied by a booming crash that shook every building in the entire metropolis, leaving behind it a vast dent in the asphalt in the distinctive shape of a tiger paw.

Though intent on minimising the damage he caused, the mighty hero couldn't help but enjoy his new, incredible musculature. He tensed his quads as he walked, thrilled by how they popped out against his pale orange fur, rippling with enough power to crush mountains. He raised both arms this time, flexing his biceps again for the whole city to see.

In less than a minute he had reached police headquarters; he could see the chief, his arms crossed over his chest in a highly disapproving posture standing on the sidewalk in front of it. Unperturbed, Cait bent low and deposited a very dissheveled fox in a lab coat beside the frowning bear.

"One evil mastermind for you, Chief," he said, beaming down at the tiny uniformed ursine.

The chief sighed, shaking his head but nevertheless looking grateful. "Excellent work, Cait. Just try not to destroy the city next time."

As Malherbe was cuffed and led away, the tiger grinned, winked, then strode away into the night. At the city's edge, he leaped into a pose that sent every muscle in his body to maximum bulge.

The citizens of Honeydew could sleep easy in their beds once more.