

# Blinding Furry

## Malcolm vs. Rabbit:

It was quite peaceful as he lay there with his eyes closed. The last few moments of the fight still fresh in his head. Slowly those thoughts gave way to the serene sounds and sensations as he regained consciousness. His body felt as if it was laying on something rather lumpy yet it seemed long enough to hold him from head to toe. His cat like ears filled with the sound of the gentle breeze through a tree outside. The chirping of birds was followed by the sounds of lowing and other various animal sounds.

He gradually began to realize that these weren't the sounds of the city he last remembered fighting for his life in. With a groan he stirred himself awake. Blinking sleepily as the sunlight from outside filled his view first. When his vision cleared enough he started looking around at his surroundings. He appeared to be laying on a couch in a strange house. The house appeared to be rather modern in design. On the wall across from him was what appeared to be a rather large entertainment center, complete with a stereo, and a TV attached to a cable box.

Pushing himself up and off the couch he walked over to a nearby window to find that the reason for all the strange sounds was that he was on a farm. As he leaned out the open window he found that the sounds were coming from the neighboring farms in the distance. Across the yard of this farm he saw what appeared to be a red worn out barn that looked as if it hadn't seen much use in recent times. There didn't appear to be any crops either.

"Probably some kind of country-home retreat." He mused to himself out loud.

"That's a pretty good observation." Came a voice from behind the cat. "It's good to see you're finally awake."

He turned around and was surprised to find that the person he was looking at was a humanoid jackrabbit. His fur was dirt brown from head to toe. He was wearing a short sleeve button up shirt with long pants held up by a black leather belt. On the rabbit's head sat a ten-gallon hat with his long ears poking through holes punched in the brim. The rabbit appeared to be in his mid to late thirties.

"What's your name, son?" the rabbit prompted.

"Malcolm," The cat answered, still in partial disbelief over what he was looking at. "Malcolm Planck."

“The names Jacob Lancaster,” The rabbit smiled while approaching Malcolm. “And I’m the one who pulled your butt out of that mess you were in.”

“Thanks I guess.” Malcolm said extending his hand in greeting.

“You’re quite welcome.” Jacob said taking the offered hand in a firm brief handshake. “But I must say that was a rather sloppy fight and I think I might be able to help.”

“You saw the entire fight?” Malcolm asked somewhat agitated now, only managing to elicit a nod out of the rabbit. “Why didn’t you help me? I mean I’m getting my butt handed to me and you waited until after I lose consciousness before deciding to step in?”

“Wait a moment.” Jacob said holding up a hand. A confused look crossed his face. “You mean to tell me you don’t remember what happened?”

“What do you mean?” An equal look of confusion crossing Malcolm’s face.

The rabbit paused to consider his next words. He didn’t want to risk upsetting Malcolm any more than necessary. “Maybe I should hold off telling you for now. Instead if you have a seat I can tell you a little bit about me and how I came to look like this.”

With a sigh Malcolm flopped back against the couch. Jacob went into the next room where he retrieved a chair and placed it backwards next to the couch, sitting in the chair folding his hands over the top. “As you no doubt guessed I didn’t always look like this. I used to work for a dairy farm.”

“No surprise there.” Malcolm interrupted.

“Do you want my help or not?” Jacob huffed.

Malcolm only nodded in reply.

“Then zip it.” Jacob snapped before resuming his earlier story. “Anyway, the place wasn’t doing all that well. I was barely able to make ends meet. I honestly considering cutting my losses and moving to the city. Then one day these really odd fellows decided to pay me a visit. Said they’d be willing to help me in my time of need. They offered me a rather hefty paycheck if I would come and work for them. Being young and brash I jumped at the chance. It turned out they worked for a woman named Samantha Cartwright. She owned some lab out in the middle of Montana. When I got there I learned that she was the head researcher of a genetics team. That was when I found out the real reason I was there. I was being paid to partake in some lab experiments. At first I tried to back

out, only to find I didn't really have much of a choice. I had already signed a binding contract, 'course being held at gun point didn't exactly help things either.

They injected a strange substance into my body that soon had me doubled over on the floor. It wasn't long before I passed out after that. Then when I came to I found that I wasn't human anymore. She turned me into the form you see now. I had just about given up any hope after that. For days on end they subjected me to all kinds of experiments. They tortured me endlessly until one day I felt that I had enough. In a fit of rage I somehow managed to break free and escape. Seems this form has a lot of added benefits to it. It didn't take me long after that to raze the entire structure to the ground. I thought that I killed her when I burned that place down. Though looking at you I see that I was either seriously mistaken or someone new has picked up her research."

Malcolm sat quietly for a moment taking in all that Jacob told him before blurting out. "Alexander Wried."

"Beg Pardon?" Jacob asked looking at the cat oddly

Malcolm told him the entire story as his earlier opponent Alexander Wried had told him. Ending his story at the point that he blacked out.

"She probably left you in that alley so she could get some sick laugh out of all the media hype." Jacob scoffed. "Sounds to me like this is someone different. Samantha wasn't this obsessive or careless to leave someone like you out in the middle of an alley."

"You said you could help me?" Malcolm asked while he pulled himself off of the couch."

"I can teach you better control." Jacob said as he stood and placed the chair against the wall. "Teach you how to fight, too, but I warn you I won't go easy on you. If you can't deal with it then you're welcome to try fending for yourself. However if what you say is true and she really does want you back, then I'd suggest you take my offer."

Malcolm took a moment to consider the situation. He knew full well that as it stood he didn't stand a chance against this lady or anything that she sent his way. Looking back up at Jacob he asked. "When do we start?"

Jacob, not saying a word, walked to the door and gestured for Malcolm to follow. Moments later Malcolm found himself standing in-front of what appeared to be the remains of a wooden fence where Jacob was setting up cans.

"First I want to test your current abilities." Jacob explained. "You obviously do have some control. So what I want to know is how far that control goes. Now

take aim at these cans and use that ability of yours to knock them off as fast as you can.”

Malcolm smirked while raising his hand. Just when he was about to charge up Jacob interrupted him. “I want you to back up first.” Malcolm did as instructed and kept backing up as told until Jacob finally told him to stop.

“Now fire.” Jacob yelled at the cat.

Slowly Malcolm raised his hand. He felt that familiar charge of energy running through arm and began to pool into his hand. Then as if in the blink of an eye a physical ball of energy appeared in the palm. Facing his palm out he took aim at the cans. In an instant he fired, yet the cans remained standing. Dumfounded he took aim again and fired several more shots at the cans only to have the same results every time.

“What the hell is this!?” Malcolm exclaimed.

“It’s just as I thought.” Jacob spoke up as he approached the cat. “You lack the needed focus. If you had the focus then your shots would have hit those cans instead of fizzling out like that.” Jacob took aim at the cans. “This is how it should look.” With far more precision Jacob charged an energy wave fired it, splintering the top fence rail, sending all 3 cans flying.

“Me thinks you overdid it.” Malcolm replied sarcastically.

Jacob shot a glare at Malcolm before grabbing the scruff of the cat’s neck. “OK, smartass.”

With Malcolm firmly in his grip, Jacob led the cat through the tall grass on his property where they emerged into a clearing that had a few benches and equipment that was obstructed from outside view through the tall grass. Jacob then released the cat.

“Now that were out of sight of the neighbors, I want you to hit me.” Jacob said looking square at Malcolm with indifference. “Show me what you got.”

“Alright,” Malcolm said with a slight hesitation. “If you say so.”

Malcolm took a moment to close his eyes and clear his mind. Then once that was done he started charging his energy only to get blind sided from a kick to his side, knocking him down on all fours.

“Treat this as if it were a real fight.” Jacob barked. “In the heat of combat you don’t have time to be pussy footing around. You’ve got to be alert and ready for anything.”

Malcolm picked himself up off the ground, keeping his eyes square on his opponent. He took this moment to charge up his energy some. Keeping alert for any more of Jacob's surprises. With seriousness in his eyes he balled up his fists and took this moment to throw a punch only to have Jacob catch it head on. The rabbit twisted Malcolm's arm and wrenched it behind him.

"Stop thinking like a human." Jacob said sharply. "You have claws, now use them." With that he let go of the cat's arm and shoved Malcolm forward.

Turning around to face his opponent Malcolm decided to go with a different approach. Backing away a bit he kept his gaze square on the rabbit. In an instant he leapt into the air and flew straight at Jacob. The rabbit suddenly disappeared from sight only to reappear and connect with a kick to the cat's side. In this instant Malcolm decided to let his instincts take over as he managed to somehow flip, landing on his feet only to have them knocked out from under him again. Landing with an audible thud he looked up at the rabbit now standing over him.

"You're learning." Jacob said after crossing his arms. "You've still got a long way to go, but at least you're catching on."

They continued training like this for hours until it got close to sun down. Jacob was the first to emerge from the tall grass, followed closely by Malcolm. While massaging his aching shoulder, Malcolm plopped down on the wooden porch in-front of the house. Jacob went inside the house, returning a few minutes holding two glasses of water. Handing Malcolm one of the cold glasses, Jacob took a seat next to the cat.

"Can't say I didn't ask for it." Malcolm said exhausted.

"You did alright." Jacob replied looking out at his overgrown yard. "Tomorrow I want you to be ready. We've got a lot to do." With that said he proceeded back inside the house.

"Sure thing." Malcolm said, following Jacob inside.

The next morning Jacob was up early pulling two paintbrushes, a paint roller, and several buckets of paint from a closet. After placing them next to the front door the rabbit ambled over to the couch and shook the sleeping cat awake.

"C'mon, time to get up." Jacob said pulling the cat's legs off of the couch.

"What time is it?" Malcolm yawned while rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

"It's seven AM." Jacob said clapping his hands together. "The suns up and I want to get started on that barn as soon as possible."

“What.” Malcolm said still a little sleepy.

“If you’re going to be living here then I expect you to earn your keep.” Jacob said handing Malcolm a brush and a bucket of paint. “Meet me outside, I’m going to get the ladder.”

Reluctantly Malcolm took the items and dragged himself outside towards the barn. Jacob was not far behind with a long metal ladder braced over his shoulder. After setting up they began coating the barn with the cherry red paint.

“What’s the deal.” Malcolm asked looking up at Jacob who was painting higher up on the ladder.

“I already dun told you.” Jacob said not looking down at the youth.

“I don’t mean that.” Malcolm said dipping his brush in the paint bucket. “Why after all this time did you decide to restore this place?”

Jacob paused looking down at the curious cat a moment before resuming his earlier brush strokes. “Because after I escaped from that woman, I had nothing left. Just the money from that one paycheck I was given. So I bought this farm. Figured I’d start over. However not many people want to help some mutant jack rabbit repair his farm.”

“Oh.” Was all Malcolm could think of in response.

For the next few weeks they continued working on getting the farm back into some form of working order. They even managed to get an old tractor parked in the now restored barn to work, and plant a wheat field. In the afternoons Jacob taught Malcolm more on how to control his abilities as well as a few tricks Malcolm could do with them. After months of training, Jacob finally decided that Malcolm was ready to know just what happened that day. He asked Malcolm to come inside and sit on the couch, where he brought out a chair and sat next to it.

“I think it’s time that I finally told you what happened that day.” Jacob explained, “The reason why I didn’t help you.”

Malcolm just listened to the rabbit intently.

“What I saw that day was incredible.” Jacob began. “I know you remember how that fight began. For a moment there I thought you were finally starting to get the upper hand when you hit him with that blast, but you got cocky. You rushed at him head on and lost. And just when I was about to step in and help you something happened. You had changed. You started growling as he held you by the throat. Your size also increased slightly in mass. It was as if you were transforming into something that wasn’t even sentient. Next thing I knew, you had

somehow managed to grapple him and toss him down the street. Then you roared, it sounded like a feral beast. Your opponent, this Alexander fellow, tried to stop you by throwing a few energy waves. However it only made you angrier. And the madder you got, the faster you went. You were like a blur as you closed the distance. He couldn't even hit you. When he tried to escape you cut him off. You'd have killed him if I hadn't have stepped in. It wasn't easy bringing you down but using that same trick you used on that giant mutation I finally knocked you out cold. I couldn't leave you there so I brought you here. The rest you know."

Malcolm was quiet for a few moments. At first he didn't want to believe yet given the circumstances. He puzzled long over these thoughts before something else crossed his mind.

"Do you think there are others?" Malcolm asked looking at Jacob with curious eyes.

"I knew eventually you'd ask me that." The rabbit smiled. "Tomorrow, I'll take you to a little town east of here. Some of them have a story or two to tell. Others are similar in situation to you. However none of them have shown any signs of what you did that day I rescued you so to speak."

"Why didn't you tell me there were more?" the anger rising a little in his voice as he turned his head away. "How long has this been going on?"

"A lot longer than even I was aware of." Jacob said regarding the cat. "Most of them know of Samantha. They wont be pleased to hear that someone else has possibly picked up her research."

"What about the others," Malcolm asked looking up at the rabbit once more "The ones who don't know Samantha?"

"Them?" Jacob sighed. "They were the unfortunate result of a failed government super soldier program. Those six wolves were the first to found that town. Since then they have been taking in those who managed to escape from Samantha. They came to me that day I destroyed her lab. They showed me the town and accepted me. We thought this was all over." With a sigh Jacob stood up, placing the chair back in the kitchen where he had gotten it. "You'd best get some rest, we leave early in the morning."