

Karmah Foxx – Part 1

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PART 1

“Karmah Foxx.”

Karmah casually raised a paw to confirm her presence in Mrs. Stein’s 9th grade Eastside High history class. Gossip whispered behind her to her left followed by a snicker. The teacher swept the class with a glance for quiet, but said nothing. Karmah’s ears slunk and she pretended to be distracted with a bent loop in her notebook’s spiral binding.

On her way out of the room after class, Mrs. Stein stopped her.

“Karmah,” she said, “may I speak with you for a moment?”

“What is it, Mrs. Stein?” Karmah replied respectfully.

Mrs. Stein’s tone was officious. “I’ve found it best if Recombinants confine their desk choices to the back of the room. It’s less distressing and that makes the environment more conducive to learning for everyone.” She smiled pleasantly throughout her well-rehearsed enjoinder. Karmah’s ears perked forward and her tail tensed with teenage indignation, but she kept her voice calm.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Stein, I didn’t know your class had assigned seating.”

“I don’t,” Mrs. Stein said quickly. “It’s just that the other students often get distracted by ... well, you know.”

Karmah’s eyes flashed with the insinuation. “No,” she replied feigning ignorance, “I don’t know. Why don’t you enlighten me.” She subtly bared her fangs and snarled over the “l” in

“enlighten.”

The threat was not lost to Mrs. Stein, who fidgeted anxiously, but recovered her composure quickly. The classroom was her territory, and the school trained all its teachers on proper handling of Recombinants. Mrs. Stein’s training had taught her the importance of making the pack hierarchy clear to canids from the start. She stiffened authoritatively.

“Animals, Karmah,” she said, sneering. “Animals running loose in the class room make the human students nervous. You will need to find a seat on the back row from now on.”

“I am not an animal!” Karmah countered defiantly, her hackles bristling down her spine. “I am a Recombinant, and I have the same rights as everyone else in the class – pure human and not.”

“No, you do not!” Mrs. Stein retorted. “Not in my classroom!”

“We’ll see about that!” Karmah shifted her backpack on her shoulder. “Let’s go see Principal Waller right now!”

Mrs. Stein glanced nervously around the empty room, afraid the situation might slip from her grasp. Her control and position as head of the pack felt tenuous.

Karmah’s parents had already prepped the principal in case of trouble – their daughter was the only Recombinant in 9th grade and one of the only three in the entire school. Karmah could sense Mrs. Stein’s desperation and did not miss her instinctive glance around the room that betrayed her mental search for an escape.

Suddenly Mrs. Stein’s expression changed and softened and her shoulders relaxed. Karmah braced herself for something coming and felt her own fight instinct coursing in her blood.

“There’s no need for that,” the teacher replied. “I’m sure we’ll come to a resolution tomorrow. I don’t want you to be

late for your next class. You're dismissed."

The next day, Mrs. Stein announced her new assigned seating policy to her history class. All the students moved obediently as directed when their names were called. When Mrs. Stein had finished rearranging her classroom for the year, Karmah glared at her from where she sat alone in the back row. Mrs. Stein met her scowl with triumphant smugness.

"Today," she announced to the class, "we are going to discuss Recombinant history in America and the importance of legal bans on human/animal genetic transmutation to the stability of ordered society." Mrs. Stein turned toward the whiteboard. Karmah prepared to take detailed notes of every distasteful word her teacher uttered. If the woman wanted to turn her class into a kind of transgenic fox chase, Karmah was prepared to run her a race she'd never forget. "The game is afoot!" Karmah wrote on the top of the page.

END OF PART 1