

Karmah Foxx – Part 3

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Karmah Foxx, Ph.D.'s in Human and Animal Genetics, honorary Ph.D. in History, finished reading the last of her Genetics 102 freshman term papers, sighed, leaned back in her chair, and cradled her cup of tea. She was waiting for it to cool a bit more so drinking it would not be so difficult. Melody Timson knocked on her open office door and poked her head in.

“Busy?” she asked.

“No, come in, please! It’ll give me a welcome break from the pain of assigning bad grades to papers.”

“That awful?” Melody replied, walking into the cramped office and taking a seat in front of Karmah’s desk. The early afternoon sun filtered through the narrow window behind Karmah and set the dust dancing in lazy sparkles above a blotter calendar and the haphazard stack of student papers.

“Not bad, just not good.”

Melody smiled sympathetically. “Have you watched the news?” she asked. Karmah glanced at her watch.

“Surely they’re not done yet.”

“No, but the live reports from outside the Supreme Court are fascinating.”

Karmah risked a sip of tea. Melody watched with interest.

“What?” Karmah asked.

“I’m sorry ... I still think it’s fascinating how you do that.”

Karmah put her cup down and smiled. It would be rude for most genetically unalloyed humans Karmah was acquainted with to ask that, but the depth of her friendship with Melody allowed for a familiarity between them that transcended social taboos. "Practice," she answered, and then added, "Do you think an unfavorable decision will affect this evening?"

"No, definitely not!" Melody sounded genuinely surprised by the question. "The award has already been announced, and you earned it for your merits as a respected faculty at this university. That has nothing to do with a court decision about whether or not you can decide which crooked politician should scandalize a government office."

"It's more than that, and you know it. The right to vote – that's fundamental to being a citizen. The only way to take that away is to say 'all men are created equal' doesn't apply to Recombinants." Karmah paused and her ears drooped, her eyes full of anxiety. "I'm really worried. My parents have to live in a camp as it is. I'm only in an apartment because of exceptions for professors. If you hadn't gotten me this post–"

"Stop it!" Melody interrupted. "All I did was make sure the committee gave you the same treatment as everyone else."

"Maybe, but you are the Dean. That counts for something."

"Your credentials got you this job, Karmah, not strings. Don't you think otherwise." Melody gave her a wry smile. "But, just in case, I already got the university lawyers working on something to be sure we don't lose you."

Karmah looked a little relieved. "Thank you so much. You really are the best of friends."

Melody stood up. "I'm just the Dean doing her job."

Karmah went around her desk and hugged her friend, an expression of gratitude she would attempt with no other non-

hybrid. Melody returned her embrace without hesitation.

“You stop worrying,” Melody said. “It’ll all be OK. Door open?” she asked as she left.

“Yes, please,” Karmah replied.

END OF PART 3