

Karmah Foxx – Part 4

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Karmah wrapped up a bit more work and then headed home early to get ready for the awards banquet. She rehearsed her acceptance speech as she drove. Home in her apartment she showered and brushed her thick, white fur. Why her grandparents had chosen arctic fox for their transmutation she couldn't fathom. White fur was impossible to keep clean. She did have to admit her luxuriously fluffy tail was gorgeous. Her roommate was out of town, and alone in her apartment she did not restrain her instinctive happy panting, admiring her tail as she combed it out.

She flipped on the TV to watch CNN as she painted her foot claws. Nobody would see them in her shoes, but she felt better about herself knowing she was primped down to every detail. CNN was reporting live outside the Supreme Court building as Melody had said. Behind the reporter, a crowd of Recombinants had gathered on the steps in the permitted Protest Zone. The reporter, John Lowe, stood in the Plaza droning on about Court procedure and the generalizations of the case that Karmah already understood better than he did, so she tuned him out.

She finished her claws and put together a sardine and saltine snack to stave off her hunger until the banquet was served. She sat on the couch and watched the protestors while she ate. Recombinants of every class were present, standing about peacefully, talking amongst themselves and occasionally shouting slogans and waving signs. Afternoon was waning and the Court building was transforming into a massive shadow looming over them as the sun set behind it.

Some unalloyed humans had gathered on the sidewalk and the camera operator moved back to get them in the frame.

Curiously, the people in their little group all refused an interview. One of them shouted up at the demonstrators, though.

“Go back to the zoo, beasts!” Karmah couldn’t be sure, but she thought it was a young man in a dirty t-shirt and blue jeans.

One of the protestors leaped from the line and turned toward the agitated group of demonstrators, clearly admonishing them to stay calm. The dirty t-shirt man threw something and hit the protestor in the back of the head, the projectile splattering into chunks on impact. The protestor fell, cracking his head on the steps. The other protestors, led by a tiger hybrid, broke the Protest Zone and charged the group of humans, who scattered like mice. The camera jostled as the operator ran until he (or she) got clear of the developing ruckus and then stabilized, taking in the whole scene. A Recombinant Control car was already there, the officers attempting unsuccessfully to round up the hybrids. More patrol cars and a van raced around the corner and officers in full riot gear darted out and into the fray. Recombinants were gassed, tazerred, and beaten. A few officers went down. In the end, the Recombinants were collared together on a chain and herded into vans. Only unalloyed humans were left as the Recombinant Control vehicles drove away. Things were getting worse and worse for her kind, and Karmah could not figure out why. For a long time there had been a kind of social truce. She didn’t understand why everyone on both sides couldn’t just leave it as it was and live together. She couldn’t finish her snack thinking about it. She looked at the clock on the wall. 5:05 PM. It didn’t look like the Court would announce a decision today after all, so she turned off the set.

Two hours later she was putting the finishing touches to her her ensemble for the evening. As she put cobalt blue earrings in that complimented her ice-blue eyes, there was a knock at the door. It was Melody and she was clearly distressed about something.

"Melody, what's wrong?" Karmah asked, concerned for her friend's harried appearance. "Come in." Melody walked in quickly.

"Karmah," she said nervously, "I'm sorry. The committee has decided to postpone the ceremony." Karmah glanced at her dark television screen, the implication of Melody's announcement clear. She backed up, tail tucked, and sat on the couch, fear in her eyes and her ears back defensively.

"The Court announced a ruling?" she asked. Her voice growled thickly despite her determination to control it. It clearly unsettled Melody for a moment, but her friend shook it off.

"Yes," Melody replied, "about an hour ago. Didn't you watch?"

"I turned it off about 5. I thought they were done for the day."

"So, you don't know ... they said ... they said Recombinants aren't human and therefore cannot be 'persons' under law. Karmah, I'm so sorry! I'll do everything I can to help you." She sat down and held Karmah's half fox paw in her human hand. "Remember, the lawyers are already working on something."

"I think I need a drink," was all Karmah could manage to say.

END OF PART 4