

Karmah Foxx – Part 5

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Karmah continued to live, for all practical purposes, the same life she'd been living, thanks to the advocacy of Melody Timson and the creativity of the Emory University lawyers. Karmah, despite the fact that her roommate, Sorrell, had reported as ordered to a Resettlement Facility, lived in denial of the Court's decision. She convinced herself quite easily that years of litigation would suspend any real action and eventually end in a return to normalcy.

Sorrell had tried to convince her to go with her to a Facility, but Karmah obstinately refused. "You're just a spoiled rich girl living in a fantasy world in that college," her exasperated roommate said on her way out the door. "Recombinant Control is going to come and hunt you down, you wait, and who knows where you'll end up after that – maybe Recomax!"

Emory's combined creative legal minds proved powerless before the Recombinant Resettlement Treaty. They could find no loophole sufficient for keeping her employed at the university or even in the same solar system. Consequently, on September 16, 2171, Recombinant Control, under the auspices of the Recombinant Resettlement Authority, was ordered to take Karmah Foxx, duly registered 3rd generation Homo sapiens/Vulpes lagopus genetic hybrid, into custody along with four others in the Atlanta, GA vicinity who had failed to voluntarily report to a Resettlement Facility.

The day she was collared, Karmah loped into her Monday morning first year genetics lecture, took roll, and began teaching.

"Math is tricks," she said, starting up a slide deck of

computational shortcuts.

“You mean like animals teaching classes?”

Karmah looked out across the lecture hall trying to locate the heckler amongst the snickering faces. Her search stopped with Jason Grange’s self-satisfied sneer. “Or like students who don’t study, yet miraculously pass genetics tests,” she retorted. The snickering turned to “Oooo...’s.” Karmah turned her attention back to the first slide.

Before she could speak, however, the floor-level auditorium door burst open. She looked up sharply at the intrusion and felt a knot in her stomach. Recombinant Control officers stormed across the floor. She backed up, cornered against the front wall of the auditorium by a semi-circle of officers in black and yellow uniforms facing her with high-powered rifles.

“Paws up where I can see them!” the officer directly in front of her shouted. Karmah put her paws up.

“What is—” she started.

“Shut up! Turn around and face the wall!” Karmah obeyed, her ears back and her eyes wide with confusion. The officers snapped a steel collar around her neck and shackles on her wrists. Behind her she heard excited murmuring from her students. To the collar’s hasp, a chain was attached, and the officer holding the other end gave it a trial yank and then tugged her toward the door. “Let’s go!” he commanded.

As she was dragged out of the room, she heard her heckler shout after her, “Learn lots of new tricks, doggy!” Laughter rippled through the room. “Not a very clever fox, is she?” another student remarked.

Out in the hall, Melody rushed up to her, but was stopped by an officer walking next to Karmah.

“I’m sorry, ma’am, no one is allowed near the animals. They

might be dangerous.”

Melody’s teary eyes flashed. “Karmah is not an animal! She is my friend!”

“I know, pets can seem like friends, even almost human at times.” The officer’s tone was patronizing. “I have a dog of my own,” he continued, “that I like very much – but they really aren’t people, are they? We have to remember that.”

Melody was stunned. “What are you talking about? Karmah, I’m so sorry!”

The officers moved Karmah down the hall, away from Melody who stood powerless, tears coming again into her eyes. “I’ll keep trying!” Melody shouted desperately after her. They both knew there was nothing she could do, but Karmah could not help remaining optimistically convinced her captivity was all just an honest mistake that would be resolved within a few days at most.

Karmah was taken outside and put in a black Recombinant Control patrol car.

“Where should I take it?” the officer in the driver’s seat asked.

“Just stick it in one of the cages in the pound. We still have four more to round up before we load them on the plane.”

The driver and one other officer took Karmah to a small, unmarked, yellow, metal building on the outskirts of Atlanta. The building had one wide door and no windows. Inside was unlit, but in the sunlight streaming in from behind them through the open door, Karmah made out about a dozen cages, each about eight feet long, three feet wide, and four feet high in neat rows of three across the concrete floor. The officers removed the shackles and shoved her, still collared, into the nearest cage. The cage door clanged shut and one of

the officers padlocked it.

“Can I make a phone call?” Karmah asked from where she sat on the floor, her voice cold.

“Do you have a phone?” the officer asked.

“You know I don’t. You took it back in the classroom.”

“Well, without a phone, you can’t make a phone call.” The two officers chuckled and started toward the door.

Karmah, unable to stand in the confined height of the cage, got to her knees and grabbed the bars. “You can’t hold me here! I haven’t done anything! If you’ve got some charge, you have to tell me!” The officers turned back toward her.

“No, I don’t,” one of them said, “and I can do whatever I want to you as long as you’re not physically injured, and holding you here is not going to hurt you. You have no more rights than the foxes you were made from.”

“But what about the humans I was made from – my grandparents? Surely I have the same rights as they did.”

The officer grinned. “Sure you do: exactly ... oh, um, none. They gave up their rights when they were mutated into monsters.”

Karmah felt about to cry. “What do you have against Recombinants anyway?” she demanded, steeling herself.

He pulled a mirror out of his pocket. “I carry this just for questions like that, to explain things to you brutes in a way your limited brains can understand. Look in this mirror.” He held it before the cage at her eye level. “Now, look at me.” She did, ears back and teeth bared. “See the difference? I look like a human. You look like a fox. You’re an animal. I’m a man. Animals don’t drive. They don’t own houses. They can’t have human jobs. They go to a vet, not a doctor.”

“So just because I look different, you think you can treat me like an animal? I have two Ph.D.’s in genetics and an honorary Ph.D. in history. What animal can do that?”

The officer shrugged. “I guess the one I just caged.” He turned to leave.

“What did we ever do to hurt you?” she shouted. The officer spun and stormed back to the cage and toward over her. Karmah’s ears dropped and she cringed.

“I’ll tell you! When my daughter had a fever of 107 degrees, I took her to the hospital. She couldn’t see a doctor because a Reco had gotten there first. Later the doctor told us she was brain damaged. He said if they’d been able to see her sooner they could have prevented it. That’s what!”

Karmah was particularly sensitive to non-verbal cues, and something in his body language was wrong. She could sense an emotion in him deeper than his anger that read something more like – guilt.

“I’m sorry. Her illness must have been horrible,” she replied, feigning sympathy.

“She was sick for days. She looked terrible, but still they gave preference to animals, just because they got there first. Animals should not get to see a doctor before humans.”

“They must have had a hard time getting the fever down.”

“No, right away, but by then we’d had to wait too long for them to finish with those animals.”

Karmah raised herself as high in the cage as she could and stared brazenly up at the officer. “So, she was sick at home for days with a fever, before you took her?”

“What are you implying, fox?”

Karmah backed up to the rear corner of the cage and sat down.
"Oh, nothing. I'm truly sorry for your daughter."

END OF PART 5