

Karmah Foxx – Part 5

Karmah Foxx

PART 5

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

Karmah Foxx – Part 4

Karmah Foxx

PART 4

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, tazered, 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 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

Karmah Foxx – Part 3

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PART 3

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