

Karmah Foxx – Part 6

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An hour after Karmah was caged, two officers brought in a mountain gorilla Recombinant who was placed in the cage next to Karmah's. She greeted him when the officers left and he introduced himself as Ben Savage. They talked briefly about what might become of them and then were quiet. Another hour passed and a raccoon hybrid with an irascible disposition was caged next to Ben, but they managed to learn his name was Paul Pyrson and that he was a CPA. "I don't deal with the public," he told them, and sulked in the back of his cage, staring away from them through the corner into the empty darkness at the rear of the building.

About two and a half hours after Karmah was caged, the last two Recombinants the officers were seeking were brought in – a pair of tiger hybrids. They were separated into different cages deliberately far apart.

"I'm Darius Clawson," one replied when Karmah inquired about them. "and this is my wife, Talia. We were trying to get to Argentina – we heard they're offering sanctuary for Recombinants down there, but we couldn't go by commercial planes or ships, so we were looking for a private service. Nobody would take us. We were stuck."

Paul burst out in a chattering laugh. "They aren't offering sanctuary to Recombinants in Argentina! They call their Resettlement Facility 'the sanctuary'. They aren't offering sanctuary to Recombinants anywhere. I bet some human offered to help you and you paid handsomely for that information, huh?"

Darius's stunned silent stare at Paul answered for him.

"That's what I thought," Paul replied, and went back to sulking at the darkness.

Within another 30 minutes, they were temporarily blinded by the sudden intrusion of light into the gloomy building when the door was opened, and several officers walked in. All five Recombinants tensed, alert and on the defensive. Karmah's ears went forward, Darius and Talia lashed their tails, Ben huffed, and Paul snarled.

"What a zoo!" one of the officers said. "Let's round 'em up!"

One of the officers went to the front corner of the building and climbed up into a forklift. One by one he drove the cages with the Recombinants in them out of the building and loaded them on a flat-bed truck. Once they were all loaded, the cages were tied down under a tarp.

The drive to the airport was brief and miserable. The truck bed shook and jostled them, the wind whipping and snapping at any slack in the tarp, and the roar of the roadway droning at them. They all huddled in their cages as near the center of the bed as they could get and rode in silence.

At the airport, another forklift loaded the cages into the hold of a cargo plane along with pallets of shipping crates, all marked with the Recombinant Control logo.

About two hours later, the plane landed and the cages were removed to the tarmac. A Ryder van pulled up alongside them and Karmah and her companions were shackled and chained together at the collars. They were loaded into the back of the van and driven about 30 minutes in nearly complete darkness that not even Karmah's keen night vision could do much to penetrate.

The truck rumbled to a stop and they were unloaded in front of a warehouse surrounded by a chain-link fence topped with coils of barbed wire. Inside the fence dozens of mammal/human

hybrids, shackled and collared in groups of three, stood or sat in the shade. Many watched the newcomers being unloaded from the truck. Karmah and her companions were led to a gatehouse where they had to give their names, ages, and places of birth and then they were taken into the warehouse.

Inside, the building had been converted into a gigantic barracks, each Recombinant supplied with a mattress on the floor and a blanket. Karmah and the other new arrivals were passed off to a gray-headed Recombinant Control officer with a square jaw and a stiff disposition.

“Welcome to the Cape Canaveral Recombinant Resettlement Facility. Those of you with exceptional aptitude or applicable experience will be provided training in the event a risk scenario materializes during your migration to TER-1. Your stay here will not be long. How long depends on how quickly you can be trained. It’s all up to you.”

He then went on to explain the Facility’s rules and routine. Karmah, despite her confusion, fatigue, and hunger, paid attention to every word. Something that was said would serve her purposes, she was certain. No human who had dared run her a fox chase had taken her, and she wasn’t going to let it happen now.

END OF PART 6