

The Fox and the Grimoire's Pilot

By *DraVulMep*

Joe Garden couldn't believe what he'd just seen.

He'd just finished watching the 15-minute "prologue" for the upcoming anime *Gundam Build Divers*. Being a massive fan of the *Mobile Suit Gundam* metaseries, he'd done so pretty much automatically.

It wasn't so much that the prologue was *terribly* good. He wasn't sure if *Gundam Build Divers* could be properly judged on those fifteen minutes. He was glad to see Masami Obari's work in the animation, but that wasn't it either.

It was a character named Rommel that had piqued his interest.

On the face of it, Rommel had seemed like some generic "rival" character – that archetype practically a staple of the *Gundam* franchise – voiced by veteran Japanese voice actor Show Hayami. He "piloted" a neat-looking mobile suit – a Grimoire from *Gundam Reconquista in G* customized to resemble the Armored Troopers from an older anime called *Armored Trooper VOTOMS* – but that wasn't it either.

It was the blindingly obvious fact that Rommel was not human.

He was this anthropomorphic white, furry animal character. If it weren't for Show Hayami's deep voice, he'd have thought Rommel would have had a higher-pitched voice, like the annoying "familiar" characters he'd sometimes seen on magical girl shows. Instead, Rommel came off as a veteran commander, respected by his subordinates – not unlike Ramba Ral from the original *Mobile Suit Gundam* anime.

There was an explanation for Rommel's species – it turned out that much of *Gundam Build Divers'* action would take place in what was essentially a giant virtual reality MMORPG centered around *Gundam*, so Rommel had to be a human in a VR simulator – but Joe was still flustered at the whole thing.

It meant that *Gundam* had now acknowledged the Furry community.

Joe wasn't a Furry himself. He only heard about the fandom once in a blue moon. But he very quickly ran to Reddit to see what people were saying about this. He felt like he had to see what others were saying. Some people were voicing their disapproval as to having a Furry character in there. Some were engaging in a lively debate as to what species Rommel was. Joe had thought Rommel was some kind of dog, but others said he was a fox – a reference to his namesake, Erwin "The Desert Fox" Rommel. Eventually, someone said he had to be some kind of weasel or ferret. This was pretty much confirmed by some official art that was soon released that showed that Rommel had a long torso, a short tail, and short limbs (this had gone past Joe's notice in the prologue because most of Rommel's shots were from the waist up). Someone suggested he was specifically an ermine – a member of the weasel family. A quick Ecosia search confirmed that Rommel *did* have the coloration of an ermine. It made sense when Joe thought about it. Erwin Rommel vs. "Ermine Rommel."

Joe realized that he was mainly consulting fellow *Gundam* fans for their opinions. Now he wondered how the Furry community was reacting. He went to FurAffinity – the first Furry site he could think of and typed “Rommel” in the search bar, being careful to make sure that the most recent items came first.

No good. The only relevant art Joe found was of Rommel apparently fattened up. He tried punching “Gundam” in instead. The fat Rommel picture came up again, but alongside it was other art pertaining to other *Gundam* series. The overlap between the Furry fandom and the *Gundam* fandom was bigger than Joe thought

Joe then went back to Reddit, this time going to that site’s furry community. Once again, there were debates about the species that were hushed up by the official art. Not much in the way of actual debate. Things were downright sedate there.

One post he noticed was from some guy called “DaBigF” asking for some extra details about the *Gundam* metaseries.

Furry or not, Joe liked getting newbies hooked on the franchise. After all, a friend’s older brother had gotten *him* hooked. So, he posted a quick explanation. This led to a nice, friendly discussion between the two. DaBigF seemed very curious, which only made Joe more enthusiastic.

DaBigF

You seem very knowledgeable! Where would you advise I start watching?

This was a common enough question for newcomers. Joe was tempted to just refer him to one of the many Reddit threads started by other would-be newcomers with that question, but that felt like a copout for Joe. He figured he might as well personalize this.

ZetaPlusA122

Different people say different things. I THINK this Build Divers is a sequel to Gundam Build Fighters and Build Fighters Try, but I’m not sure those shows too are good for newcomers. It’s not that they’re BAD (Build Fighters is fantastic IMO), I just think all the mythology gags in those shows would go right over a newcomer’s head. I personally started with Gundam 00. That’s the show that 00 Diver Gundam (that model the kid protagon was holding at the end) originally came from. Plus, Gundam 00’s turning ten years old this year, so it may help to know what all the anniversary fuss is about. Still, there’s something to be said about First Gundam (that’s the nickname for the original Mobile Suit Gundam anime). If you can put up with animation and writing from 1979, go right ahead.

DaBigF

Ooooh... Might try a bit of both. Any pointers?

ZetaPlusA122

Well, there are three compilation movies of First Gundam. You can watch those if you’re pressed for time, but if you have the time, I’d watch the series. As for 00, I’d just take a break btw seasons 1 and 2, and consider 00 Awakening of the Trailblazer optional.

DaBigF

Tell you what. I'll do it like this:

Mobile Suit Gundam movie 1

Gundam 00 season 1

First Gundam movie 2

Gundam 00 season 2

First Gundam movie 3.

Then I'll get to Awakening of the Trailblazer if I have time. Sound good?

Joe chuckled at DaBigF's organization skills – and the fact that he went to the trouble of italicizing show titles.

ZetaPlusA122

Whatever floats your boat, pal! Let me know when you get to Zeta Gundam. That's my personal favorite! There's a reason my first Gunpla was the Mk. II!

DaBigF

I will! Any pointers for that show?

ZetaPlusA122

Just watch the series first. The A New Translation movies add some cool new animation, but they cut out some of the good parts.

Joe was careful to italicize this time.

DaBigF

Gotcha!

Joe chuckled. He'd just minted a new *Gundam* fan! Then he remembered why he was on Reddit's Furry pages in the first place.

ZetaPlusA122

Just out of curiosity, what's your take on Rommel?

DaBigF

I don't know. He seems quite skilled. I'm not sure if I've seen enough to like him as a character.

ZetaPlusA122

No, I meant, what do you think about putting a Furry character in a previously non-Furry series?

DaBigF

Hmmmm... You know, I don't really have a strong opinion one way or another. I mean, from what I've seen about MMORPGs, if you give people the ability to use animals to represent themselves, someone will take it, so it's not that surprising that people do this in this Gundam MMORPG.

ZetaPlusA122

Well, as a non-Furry, what would you say is the appeal?

DaBigF

It depends on who you ask. Some people enjoyed Robin Hood or Zootopia. Some people have an affinity with a specific animal. Some people just find humans too hard to draw.

Joe chuckled at that last remark.

ZetaPlusA122

Well, what about you? How'd you get into it?

DaBigF

Well, I've always been very "close" to the animal kingdom. Once upon a time, I had a friend that introduced me to the idea of transformation into an animal form. Since then, I've always had an affinity for that sort of biological fluidity; learning what it's like to view things from a different perspective. Eventually, I stumbled upon the furry community, which has more than its fair share of transformation enthusiasts.

ZetaPlusA122

So you're into shapeshifting?

DaBigF

Assuming you mean voluntary shapeshifting, yes. But not just that. I also like to see people nudged out of their comfort zone and forced to adapt to new circumstances. I mean, let's say you were sitting at your desk, and some deity just decided to turn you into a stoat akin to that Rommel character. Imagine just suddenly feeling that itchy sensation as thick, luxurious white fur begins to grow under your clothes...

Joe was curious now. Something about the way he phrased that made him feel like there actually was fur growing under his shirt. But why did DaBigF leave things off with an ellipsis?

ZetaPlusA122

Go on. I'm interested...

DaBigF

Just imagine that tingling sense as your nails extend into claws, your hands and feet becoming stoat paws. That feeling of your limbs beginning to shorten, your torso lengthening to make up for it...

ZetaPlusA122

So now I'm a human with fur, ermine/stoat paws, short limbs and a long torso. Now what?

DaBigF

Now you feel that tingling sensation extend to the bottom of your spine, and you suddenly feel liberated as your pants vanish, making room for your spine to grow into a furry, black-tipped tail...

Joe could practically feel that tail rubbing against the back of his chair. He was going to ask DaBigF to continue, but a response popped up on his screen anyway.

DaBigF

Your neck grows longer to compliment your longer body. Now it's your head that's beginning to change. You just feel your face push outward. Your nose and mouth come together to form a nice, pointed, ermine muzzle, tipped with a small, black dot of a nose, with long whiskers poking their way out of it. This is a special nose, designed to help you find your way, and tell you more about your surroundings. Your pupils become slits as they adjust to see better in the dark. You also notice your hearing is getting better as your ears expand and move to the top of your head.

The changes conclude by making you smaller. You just keep shrinking until you hit that Goldilocks ratio of big and small. Now you are just big enough to do many human tasks, yet small enough that you can properly enjoy this new, ermine body of yours.

Joe was stunned. This entire description had just felt so evocative. It had rung in his head as clearly as that famous introductory narration at the beginning of the first *Mobile Suit Gundam* episode had. His tail wagged with excitement.

DaBigF

...So yeah! That's what a transformation is like!

ZetaPlusA122

Wow... You ever thought about taking up writing?

As he typed that, Joe realized something was wrong. He suddenly fell out of his chair. His laptop still on the bed above. He reached around and felt his sore buttocks as he stood up.

That was when he realized what had happened.

When he looked down past his shirt, he saw that his pants had been replaced with the soft, white fur of an ermine. The fur on his underside was ever-so-slightly more yellowish than the rest of him. The fur extended to his feet, which could only be described as paws now. They were dainty, clawed feet that looked like they could they could support him both if he laid them on their arches, or if he stood on tiptoe. His hands now matched his feet, but they were more humanlike, with opposable thumbs.

Joe turned his head around (which was easier to do now that his neck was longer) and noticed the black-tipped tail dragging on the floor behind him, about a third as long as the rest of his body.

He then made a four-legged mad dash to his bathroom. He found that his head only extended just past the bathroom counter. He had to stand on the closed toilet lid to get a look in his mirror. There was what looked like a white, cartoon weasel wearing his black t-shirt and black baseball cap, except there were no animation lines, no CGI, nothing to suggest this was unreal. Joe's smaller hands flew up to his face to feel it, causing him to nearly fall off the toilet as his fingers met his sensitive whiskers. His larger ears folded down in horror as his jaw opened to reveal a maw full of sharp teeth. He looked like he could cosplay as that Rommel character; if he weren't mistaken for a little kid, given how small he was.

Joe quickly jumped off the toilet, dashed (on two legs, this time) back to the bedroom, and checked the computer. DaBigF had only responded to his last comment about taking up writing.

DaBigF

Can't say I have. More importantly, how are you feeling?

Joe bared his teeth in anger before typing.

ZetaPlusA122

WTF DID YOU DO TO ME?!?!?!?

DaBigF

Allow me to explain...

Suddenly, a pair of hands seemed to manifest out of his laptop screen, grabbing the ermine by the shoulders and yanking him into his own computer.

Joe felt dizzy for a good while. He then opened his eyes and saw a giant, orange fox looming over him. He squeaked, and crawled away in a panic before realizing that he wasn't in Kansas anymore.

He was in this gigantic, windowless, doorless room, with black walls that filled with constantly shifting ones and zeroes.

"I'm... in the computer?!" he squeaked.

"In the internet to be exact!" said the giant fox, "Just as I've turned you into an anthropomorphic stoat – or ermine, or short-tailed weasel, or whatever you want to call it – I've turned you into an assembly of ones and zeroes. I felt like this was a better place to have a panic attack than in your room."

"PANIC?!" squeaked Joe, "I *should* panic! I look like a frikkin' Don Bluth character! I'm fuzzy... and smelly... and I'm-I'm not even wearing any pants! *How am I supposed to go out like this?!*"

"Ah, pants are overrated!" said the fox, waving a paw dismissively. "And if it's going out you're worried about, you needn't worry. I've done a thorough astral data edit. Your immediate reality will be warped for the next three days to accommodate your new form. your friends, family and whatnot won't see anything wrong with the fact that you are what you are."

"W-what happens after three days?" if Joe's fur weren't already white as a sheet, he'd have faded to that color.

"Then you return back to human form, having experienced a whole new perspective for yourself!" said the fox.

Joe collected himself, scratching the fur under his baseball cap. "I take it you're DaBigF?"

"Yep! Though you can call me Fox! Or Big F!" said the fox, his four tails waving behind him.

“...and you’re a *kitsune*,” said Joe, having watched more than enough anime to know what the significance of multi-tailed foxes was.

“Mostly.” said Fox, looking proud as a peacock.

“...and you’re wearing a Celestial Being uniform.”

Joe had noticed that despite being four-legged, the fox was wearing the jacket and undershirt of a Gundam Meister from season 2 of *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* with a dark, grayish-green coloration, though like Joe, Fox wasn’t wearing anything below the waist in the ensemble.

Fox’s tails wagged behind him. “Do you like it? I digitally fabricated it after seeing some promo art for *Gundam 00* after you suggested it to me and I thought it looked neat. Oh dear! I hope I haven’t been spoiled! Are these uniforms a spoiler? Oh, hang on!”

Fox then shifted to a more ‘cartoon animal’-type look, with two legs, now at a size that was about as big compared to Joe as a regular fox would be compared to an ermine, and still wearing the pantsless *Gundam 00* uniform.

“Hmmm... Maybe if I...”

Suddenly, Joe noticed a bulge forming in the chest area of Fox’s uniform as his features softened, and soon enough, he was looking at a literal vixen in a pantsless Celestial Being uniform.

“D’you think I wear it better as a girl?” he, or rather, *she* asked.

Joe’s hand-paws flew to his head. “Just-just *stop* for a minute! How are you doing this?! *Why* are you doing this?!”

“I’m just not sure which of my forms looks best in this-” said the kitsune vixen, doing poses in her outfit, “Oh, you meant *your* transformation! I’m ‘doing this’ with – depending on how you look at it – technologically enhanced magic, or magically enhanced technology. Don’t ask me where one ends and the other begins because I honestly haven’t got a clue!”

“Uh...”

“For your second question, I guess you could say... I just felt like it?” she shrugged, giving an awkward, toothy grin.

“*What?!*”

“Well, that’s not *entirely* true.” said Fox, twiddling her thumbs. “You also seemed interested in the idea of transformation, so I figured, why not give you a live demonstration! Plus, maybe you’d see in it what that Rommel guy saw in it!”

“Well, being what, three feet tall is supposed to do me a favor?!” Joe grumbled, tapping a foot-paw.

“Ah, Zeta, Zeta, Zeta!” said ‘Vixen’ (Joe wasn’t sure if it was alright to still call her Fox), “You haven’t given this form a try yet!”

She put a finger to her muzzle. "Come to think of it... it's winter now. Is it snowy where you live?"

"Uh, yeah..." Joe wasn't sure if he should be telling her this, but given that he/she had reached through cyberspace to pull him into his own computer, it was safe to say that his online privacy had already been violated with extreme prejudice.

"Very snowy?"

"Pretty snowy, I'd guess..."

"Really cold, too!"

"Well, we *do* tend to get extra cold weather this time of year..."

"Then you've got things covered!" said Fox/Vixen, patting Joe on the back. "Who needs pants when you've got a built-in winter coat! Plus, if there's one thing mustelids like to do, it's have some *fun*!"

"Okay..." said Joe, "Why can't I wear pants again?"

"Like I said, they're overrated! Excuse me!"

Fox/Vixen suddenly pushed Joe back, and next thing he knew, they were both back in Joe's apartment. The kitsune suddenly jumped up towards the window.

"Yyyyyep!" she mused, as her own coat faded to a white color. Joe realized that she was now turning into an *arctic* fox kitsune semi-anthropomorphic woman dressed as a pantsless Gundam Meister.

The absurdity was too much for Joe. He hadn't known him/her/them/whatever for ten minutes and he/she/they/whatever had turned into a different kind of fox three times! Transformation enthusiast indeed!

"A nice, thick furry white coat will definitely come in handy in *that* weather!" the newly adapted fox said, looking back toward Joe. "I'm assuming that's your Gunpla collection, Zeta?"

Joe had mentioned his collection when the two of them were still chatting on Reddit.

"Y-yeah..."

"Wow! These things are *insanely* detailed!" she said, admiring his Real Grade Gundam Exia, "Must remember to try building one of these things myself!"

"Hang on. Why do you keep calling me Zeta?"

"Oh, well, your username is ZetaPlusA122, so I thought I'd just call you Zeta."

"Well, it's kinda weird being called that. You're already in my house, so I guess you can just call me Joe."

"Okay, Joe!" said Fox/Vixen, her tails wagging again.

"Why didn't you just ask me before, when we were on Reddit?"

"Oh, er... I thought it'd be rude to ask directly for your real name while we were chatting on a public forum."

"Wait, it's not rude to turn me into a talking weasel and yank me into cyberspace, but it *is* to ask me for my name?!" Joe squeaked in exasperation.

The vixen's ears drooped as she twiddled her fingers. "I'm still getting used to this 'online' thing..."

Joe sighed. "Is there anything else I need to know about being an weasel guy?"

"Oh, I'd recommend using that thing..." she gestured toward Joe's computer, "to look up information on ermines, maybe get some books, too, but for the most part, you should be able to live like a regular human being."

Suddenly, her eyebrows shot up, as if she had just remembered something, and she suddenly shifted back into a male fox, though still arctic in color.

"Sorry, Joe!" he said, "Just got a thoughtmail! *Geez*, those two have been on my case about making it home for dinner on time! I'll post my thoughts on those Gundam shows soon! Can't give that cat an excuse to eat my rightful pizza slice! *Gotta go!*"

Before Joe could say anything, Fox had dove back into the computer screen as if it were a pool. Joe tried to go after him, but his claws just clicked against the screen.

Joe sat there for a while. He went back to his bathroom, looking at his new form. Maybe he *could* cosplay as "Ermine" Rommel. *That* would be a constructive use for his new body.

He lay at his computer for a while. He looked over the Wikipedia page for ermines (apparently they were called stoats in Europe and ermines in the US) to see if there was anything he needed to know about.

Then, on a whim, he took a selfie and changed his Twitter profile picture so that it featured the new photo of his furry self. None of his followers said anything out of the ordinary afterwards, except for one follower remarking that "Just about anything looks good with black and white, so of COURSE you look good in that cap!"

Joe just sighed. He looked back to his RG Exia, then put on his coat.

"Mustelids know how to have fun, huh?" he mused. He'd realized that his smaller form would make it easy for him to feel like a kid again in this weather. He'd dug out an old crazy carpet from his closet. He'd had it since he was a kid, but hadn't used it in years. Might as well get some use out of it now!

After trading his baseball cap for a knit cap, he paused before the apartment door.

"I'm about to go into freezing weather without pants as a walking, talking arctic weasel..." he said to no one in particular.

He gave a toothy grin as he reached up to the knob.

"Joe Garden, Grimoire Red Beret, *launching!*"

EPILOGUE

notsolucky4413

So YOU'RE the one responsible for my gundam misery!

ZetaPlusA122

>Gundam misery

What are you talking about?!

notsolucky4413

Thanks to you that stupid fox made me sit through SO MANY FUZZING HOURS of gundam shows AND ive got MY WISHES OVER THEIR AIRSPACE stuck in my head cause he wont stop singing it in the shower! If i were human id sue you!