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Hunting with Rora (Day 144 on Tashoo)

Here we go again. I am clawing my way through another one of my nightmares. I need to wake up. I desperately want to wake up. I need figure out what these nightmares are all about and why I have them. They are all similar and about the same thing; yet, they are different at the same time. Why do these nightmares happen and why can't I wake up from them without a fight or assistance from Ara or Rora? Please, God, help me figure out what is going on.

Tonight, I find myself once again relaxing by a slow-moving stream. I am sitting on the edge of the stream with my boots and socks off, my pants legs are rolled up to my knees and my feet are dipped into the stream up to my ankles. I laugh every time a small fish nibbles at my feet and toes. I am wearing a uniform. The shirt is Laurel Green and is a polo type of shirt with two covered button-down pockets. The pants are Ash Grey with a Charcoal Grey stripe down the outside seam. I don't know what uniform it is; I don't even know how I would know what a uniform is, but it looks familiar. It feels as if I have worn this uniform before, but when? Where?

Next to me is Tyarza. I am lost in her blue-blond hair, yellow-in-blue eyes and sweet sexy smile. She is wearing a two-piece leather dress, front and back, that goes from below her arms to halfway down her thighs and is held together by leather strings that crisscross down the sides. She is also dipping her feet into the stream and laughing as the fish nibble at her feet and toes. Beside her are Greek looking sandals. Like her dress, they would be held to her feet by the leather strings that I can see attached to the sandals. We are holding hands and talking like old friends or two people in love.

Suddenly, like all of my previous dreams of Tyarza and me, the sky starts to become darker as fog starts rolling in. The fog becomes thicker and thicker. It slowly envelopes Tyarza and just as slowly she starts to fade away. As she fades, I can see her mouth moving. She looks like she's saying, "When are we going to be together, Mvilu? I want to be with you. I know you want to be with me. I am waiting for you to take me away and be my mate."

As she fades away, Tyarza is replaced by an office that has two humans in it. They're both wearing suits. One sits behind a desk writing. The other is watching a video screen which has a newscast on it. Something about these two causes me to worry. I don't like them. They seem like politicians and, for some reason, I don't like politicians. The phrase "self-serving leeches" comes to mind as I look at them.

One of the men, the name Senator Koshuvala comes to mind, is watching the news when the newscaster tells the story of a remarkable flight. The name of the pilot is William Henry Watson? Me? Despite the lateness of the day, Senator Koshuvala is still in his office writing a preliminary draft of a treaty to cede all rights to the Tonojen Star System to the T.I.F. When the announcer opens the story, he looks up and watches intently. His aide is also watching the story.

When the story ends, Koshuvala says, "Kragor, turn the video screen off."

Kragor does as he is told and returns to his seat. As he is sitting, he says, "Senator, this William Watson sounds like the kind of person that could be useful to us in the future. Do you not agree?"

"It all depends on to what you are referring, Kragor." Koshuvala says as he returns to his writing.

"I mean, his exploits today could earn him a large enough celebrity status to help us politically."

Koshuvala, who is steadily writing, makes a non-committal grunt before saying, "Perhaps he could. But, he is only sixteen years old. The International Aviation Authority will most likely yank his pilot's license and he won't be able to fly anymore. What good would he be to us then?"

"If the IAA pulls his license, how grateful do you believe he would be if an influential I.T.C. Senator had the license reinstated the next day? Do you not think that he would be happy enough to support anything that Senator wanted him to support?"

Koshuvala looks at his aide and smiles a predatory smile.

Now the dream changes. I see the Admiral that I have seen in previous dreams. He is not alone; but he is not in the company of the Khorchans I have seen in the previous dreams nor is he in the bar that I usually see him in. He is in a house and a woman of Japanese ancestry makes an appearance. She also looks familiar but I can't remember where I have seen her.

Admiral Yamashita has just arrived home after an arduous meeting with Senator Koshuvala. Mrs. Yamashita greets him at the door with a kiss and a hug. Seeing his wife always makes Yamashita feel 20 years younger. She is the most important thing in his life and he lets her know regularly. She has dinner prepared and they eat. He feels a bit nostalgic when they eat dinner. For so long this huge house has heard the laughter and conversations of their six children. Now, only three months ago, the last of their children left for college and they are all alone.

Jeremy says, "Mai, do you ever get lonely when I am away?" Mai's parents had been extremely traditional, even though Mai herself has not been, and had named their children more traditional Japanese names.

"Of course, I do, sweetheart. But, I know that, as soon as your business is completed, you will return home to me. You always have and I believe that as long as you live you will."

He smiles at her and says, "I miss you so much when I am away from you. I thank God that I can fly home from Crimea in less than four hours.

"Oh! Speaking of Crimea that damnable Senator Koshuvala is going to get us involved in an interstellar war. I just know it."

"Now dear, the doctor told you to watch your blood pressure. Why don't you go watch the news while I clear the table? That should calm you down a bit." As she enters the kitchen, she says, "Oh, there was an interesting story broadcast today. I think you will be interested in it."

"Thank you." He turns on the video screen just as a teaser is being shown. After the commercial break, the news caster tells the story of my flight. Jeremy Yamashita watches the story intently. After the story ends, he sits in his chair thinking. While he is thinking, Mai comes out of the kitchen and sits in his lap. Unconsciously, he puts his arms around his wife's waist, but he stares as if he doesn't even know she's there.

Finally, Mai touches his nose and says, "Earth to Yamashita, are you there, Jeremy?"

Startled out of his reverie, Admiral Yamashita says, "What are you planning tomorrow?"

"Nothing, why do you ask?"

“Good, we need to take a short vacation.”

She looks at him with knowing eyes and says, “You mean a working vacation, don't you?”

I can feel myself tossing and turning in my bedding. I try to open my eyes, but they won't open. I can hear myself moaning. The fear that I am experiencing is real, even though I am dreaming. Why do I feel this fear? There is nothing fearful about this dream other than my loathing of this Senator Koshuvala. Is this dream real? Did I experience it and am now remembering it? What is going on? *What is going on?* Please somebody help me with this.

As I dream, I faintly hear scratching on wood. Where is that sound coming from? I hear a soft metallic creaking. It sounds like a hinge that needs oiling. Now I hear a voice. It is a masculine voice, but oddly non-human. “Mvilu? Are you all right? Norotha sent me to check on you.”

Slowly, I open my eyes. I feel wet. Was the dream so realistic that I was sweating? It takes a few athata for my eyes to focus. I look at the door to my room and I see Rora's face. I say, “Yes, Rora. I am fine. I was having one of my nightmares.”

“Another one? You have nightmares entirely too often, Mvilu. Norotha is afraid for you. She fears these dreams are going to make lose your sanity.”

“I worry about that myself, Rora. I just wish I knew why I have the dreams. For some reason, I believe they hold the key to my past. I just do not know what that key is.”

“Well, I assure you I do not know and I doubt very seriously that Norotha knows. Norotha also said that the nakyvy is almost ready. So, you need to get up and get ready to eat or she is going to throw your food out the door.”

“Thank you for that information, Rora. Since we have only recently had plenty of meat for us, I do not want to waste it. I will be there in a couple of athalloo.”

After we finished eating the nakyvy, I was in the kitchen helping Ara clean the dishes. Rora, as was expected of a Mory chohachy, was still sitting at the dining table waiting for us to finish. As we washed the dishes, Ara said to me, “Is today not the day that you are resting from digging the mota?”

“Yes, it is, Ara. Why do you ask?”

“I was wondering what you and Rora were planning on doing today.”

“I am not certain. I could ask Rora what he would like to do today. Is there anything in particular you would like for me to do for you today?”

“Yes, actually, there is. I would like the two of you to get out of my fur today and allow me to do some necessary cleaning. Do you think you could do that for me today?”

“I do not know, Ara. That sounds like a tall order. But, I will see if Rora would like to go hunting. Perhaps we could get some meat for us today.”

“Mvilu, I told you not long after you arrived in my home that Rora never seems to have much luck hunting. But, if it will get the two of you out of my fur today, then, by all means, go and try to get us some meat.”

I smiled as I said, “You may be surprised at what happens if you believe it will happen. With your permission then, I will go and see if Rora wants to try his luck today.” (1)

Ara nodded and I left the kitchen. Rora was still sitting at the table, deep in thought. How human he looked with his elbows on the table and his chin resting on his fists. I almost

laughed when I saw him. When he saw me, he got up and said, “What does Norotha need for us to do today?”

I said, “To quote your norotha, ‘I would like the two of you to get out of my fur today and allow me to do some necessary cleaning.’ I was thinking the two of us might go hunting. What do you think of that idea? Or we could go visit Kyta.” I said the last with a smile on my face.

“Humph. You just want to go see Kyta’s slave girl.”

He caught me a bit off guard with that statement. It wasn’t until then that I realized how long it had been since I had seen Tyarza. I did miss seeing her. After all, it had been several days since Rora and I visited Joola’s home. It was the day after the military hierarchy and retaliatory attacks had been approved by the Ishoo’s Aka’ny and that was seventeen days ago.

I replied, “Maybe you are right, Rora. But, I know that you miss seeing Kyta as much as I miss seeing Tyarza. However, the most important thing right now is to supply this household with meat. Even though Sha’-Naky sent plenty of meat when he sent his brother’s food rations, the meat will not last forever. So, I think we should try our luck. I believe we will be successful, if we work together. I have a plan on how to do it, but I will need to go to my room before we leave. Are you willing to give it a try?”

“I cannot be any less successful than I normally am, Mvilu. So, why not give it a try?”

“Good. Then, we can leave as soon as I get back from my room.”

I fairly raced to my room. I retrieved my hunting equipment. When I returned, Rora gave me a strange look. He had never seen such contraptions as I was now carrying with me. I told him I would explain what they were as we headed off to the hunting grounds we were going to use today.

When we walked outside, I stopped and asked, “Rora, do you know where the hunting party is hunting today?”

He said, “Yes. They went to the northwest of the village. Why?”

“Because you and I are going to go to the southwest of the village. I am thinking that we should walk maybe five kilometers in that direction. Who knows? Perhaps we will find something to kill and bring home to your norotha. But, I want to go to the marketplace first. I want to talk to TaJoola. Perhaps she will sell us something to eat while we wait for a game animal.”

Now it was Rora’s turn to tease me. “I have no doubt she will. But, are you sure that is the only reason you wish to stop and see TaJoola? Perhaps her slave will be there and you can talk to her instead of hunting.”

I just looked at Rora and smiled. I hated to admit it, even to myself, but he was right. I was hoping that Tyarza was there. Of course, there were no guarantees that she would be there because lately she was just as likely to be helping Kyta as she was to be helping Joola. If she was helping Joola, I was hoping she would speak to me for a short while. But, the most important thing for seeing Joola was something to take with us to eat in case we got hungry before we returned.

We arrived at the marketplace and Joola’s booth. We spoke with her and she “sold” us some fruits and pointed us to a neighbor’s booth for some dried meat. I say it this way because Joola offered it to me in exchange for assistance at her home in the future. I insisted on paying for our fruit, but she wouldn’t hear of it. I had no idea that it would be a while down the road before she would ask me to repay her and it would be in a manner I did not expect.

Mory dried meat is reminiscent of jerky, but not quite as spicy. They use salt, which is found in outcroppings near the village, to dehydrate the meat after it has soaked in a brine with several different spices, depending on what flavor they wish the meat to have. It's quite tasty and nutritious at the same time. Rora was a bit hesitant to take it since he would not be taking it home. As a matter of fact, he was going to refuse it until I guaranteed him that, before nightfall, there would be more meat in his household. I also told him that he had to have the protein in the dried meat to make certain he could stand the grueling walk and hunt that lay ahead of us.

Tyarza was at the booth assisting Joola. She looked at me, longingly. I knew she wanted to talk to me, but she saw my strange contraptions and became a bit fearful. I got Joola's attention and beckoned her to come closer. I whispered in her ear, "Rora and I are going hunting today, TaJoola. If we are as lucky as I believe we will be, do not be surprised if you and your family are invited to have dinner with us in the very near future."

Joola whispered back, "Then, I will ask the Great Being to be with the two of you as you hunt today. Nothing would make me happier than to see good things happen for Rora and Ara. She is like a norothoo to me." (2)

After speaking with Joola, Rora and I headed off to the southwest. I knew that a five-kilometer walk would take us about forty-five athaloo and I didn't want to risk getting to where we were going to hunt too late in the day. As we walked, Rora and I chatted quietly. He was telling me how he didn't believe that we were really going to have much luck. He wasn't complaining, mind you, just making an observation about his luck when he goes hunting. I tried to assure him that things were going to be different this time. I told him that some of the things that Kyna had told us five months ago had inspired me to come up with a plan for us to get some meat now that the Ishoo'se Aka'ny had given me more freedom.

After about thirty-five athaloo, which was sooner than I expected, we came to the edge of a clearing. I stopped Rora and had him crouch while I scouted the clearing. The clearing covered about forty and a half hectares. Around the edge of the clearing, I saw scrub trees that were only about one hundred seventy-five centimeters tall, a little shorter than I am. The scrub trees were growing so closely together that it was difficult to find a way through. Moving away from the clearing, the trees got progressively larger, until they were almost as large as the trees that the Mory made into their homes.

As I studied the clearing, I noticed several game trails crisscrossing the clearing. I followed these trails and saw the openings in the scrub trees. I saw an especially large trail that penetrated the scrub trees about five meters from where we stood. At the far end of this trail, I saw a small herd of Ataojoo. (3) The Ataojoo were oblivious to our presence. When Rora saw them, he gave an involuntary gasp. This told me that he had never seen even one Taojoo, or any other large game animal, when he would go hunting. I had to hold Rora's shoulder to keep him from charging across the clearing.

As he looked at me with blood-lust in his eyes, he said, "Mvilu, why do you stop me? There is the meat that we are here to get."

"Rora, keep your voice down; they will hear you. The Ataojoo do not know we are here. Look at the way they are acting. They are utterly oblivious to our presence. So, we have to plan this. Look at the ground in the clearing." He did so. "Do you see the trails?" He nodded. "Notice that there is one large trail. It comes through the scrub about five meters from us and notice the tracks on the ground. They are pointing toward that exit. That means that the Ataojoo enter the clearing on the far side from us and exit over there." I said, pointing to the game trail near us. "They stop here to eat and then go on to the river to drink. Now, here is what you need

to do. Go to the trail and crouch behind the brush along that trail. Keep looking toward the Ataojoo. I will work my way around the clearing to the upwind side of them. I will walk nonchalantly. Hopefully, if I do not look like I am hunting them, they will slowly follow the large trail toward you. When I see they are about twenty meters from you, I will turn down the trail toward them. You keep watching them and, when you can spring on them, do so. The wind is blowing our scent away from them, so they probably will not even suspect you are there until it is too late.”

Rora thought for a thata, and then he said, “It is a good plan, Mvilu. I will do as you suggest. Go and try to drive the Ataojoo toward me. If we are successful, we will have enough meat to last our family for at least twenty days.” (4)

“Good, go get set and I will do my part. Remember to crouch on hands and feet all the way to the ground beside the trail. That will keep them from seeing you and it will make it harder for your scent to be blown toward them if the wind should change.

“This is a relatively large clearing. Because of that, it is going to take me a few athaloo to get into position, so do not lose your concentration.”

As Rora went to get set up, I started around the clearing. I crouched a little to make it more difficult for the Ataojoo to see me. When I got about one-quarter of the way around the clearing, I stood up. I got the reaction I expected. The Ataojoo noticed me and kept a wary eye on me. As I went further, they started moving to the opposite side of the clearing, but stopped about halfway there. When I found the game trail, I turned to the clearing and entered it. The Ataojoo moved more quickly toward the opposite side. When I got about a quarter of the way across the clearing, I picked up my pace and the Ataojoo, in a somewhat panicked attitude, moved quickly toward the opening in the scrub trees where Rora was hiding.

Suddenly, Rora let out a blood-curdling roar that temporarily froze the Ataojoo in their tracks. He launched himself upon the closest Taojoo and brought it down. The rest of the herd broke up, some going left, some right and the rest rushing headlong through the opening in the scrub. I stole a quick glance at Rora and saw him sink his claws into the side of the Taojoo and his teeth into its jugular and clamp down hard enough for me to hear the bones crack from twenty meters away. I turned quickly, nocked an arrow, aimed and let the arrow fly. The Ataojoo must have thought they were safe, because they stopped running about fifteen meters away. The arrow found the lungs of one of the closer Taojoo and he bolted back toward the side of the clearing where I had entered it. I glanced quickly after him and saw him go down. I quickly grabbed my atlatl and spear. I took a thata to pick out a large Taojoo. I had not had a lot of time to teach myself how to throw a spear, but, by luck or good fortune for me, I was able to send the spear into the side of the Taojoo I had picked out. He went down immediately. I turned my attention to the first one that I had shot with the arrow and saw that he wasn't moving. Now I looked toward Rora and saw him standing over his kill, blood staining his jaws, claws and vest. He drew his arms back, turned his face toward the sun and let out a bloodcurdling roar of victory.

I walked over to him and saw that his Taojoo was dead as well. I said to him, “Well, Rora. Do you still think we will not have any luck hunting?”

“Mvilu, I must admit that ever since you arrived here, my luck has changed immensely. Perhaps you are a good luck charm for me and my norotha. I believed the day I found you that you were *'The One Who Will Unify'*. Now, you have shown me new weapons that we Mory have never even considered manufacturing. This is another prophecy of *'The One'* that you have fulfilled.”

"I would not say that I am everything you called me, Rora, but I would say that my presence has helped you because now you have plenty of time to learn how to hunt and I will teach you everything I can about hunting. Now we have three Ataojoo, how are we going to get them home?"

Rora thought for a thata, and then he walked over to his kill and picked it up with one arm. He looked at me expectantly and laughed when I looked at him like he was crazy.

I said, "Rora, maybe you can pick one of these animals up, but don't even remotely think that I can. Come here and give me a hand."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to make a litter."

Now it was his turn to look at me like I was crazy and said, "A what?" I guess he was thinking about a litter of cubs.

"A litter. It is something that will make carrying these animals home a lot easier. We will need to cut four sticks that are about five centimeters in diameter. We will also need to get numerous smaller sticks to interweave to make a latticework. After we put this together, we can pull the Ataojoo home with little trouble, except for the possibility of scavengers trying to steal them from us."

After about twenty athaloo we had the litter assembled and loaded with the Ataojoo. Using Rora's swords, we cut an opening in the scrub trees that was large enough to pull the litter through. We made the opening away from the major game trail to prevent the game animals from changing their habits and possibly not entering this clearing any more.

Fortunately for me, having worked as hard as I had during my time on Tashoo my strength had increased immensely, so I was able to pretty much hold my own with Rora as we drug the three Ataojoo, although 400 kg is a lot of weight to drag. Admittedly, we had to stop about every fifteen athaloo to rest, but, in a little over three ahi'nu, and long before the hunting party, we were home.

Ara was surprised, shocked, happy and a bit dismayed all at the same time. She said, "What are we going to do with all this meat? It will take us at least three months for us to eat all of it."

I thought for a thata, and then I said, "Why not share our good fortune with our neighbors? I am sure they would appreciate it and we may make our neighbors happy."

Rora said, "That is a good idea, Mvilu. It is better to share food than to allow it to go to waste. Norotha, should I go to our neighbors and tell them of our good fortune?"

Waving her hand in front of her mouth with the palm facing her (5), Ara said, "Yes, Rora. Be sure and let TaJoola know as well. She has always been a good friend of ours."

"Yes, Norotha. I will go to her first."

"Oh, and tell them the meat will be ready tomorrow morning."

"I will."

Ara looked at me and asked, "How were you able to get three Ataojoo in one hunt, Mvilu? Rora has never been able to get anything larger than a large Shako before today."

"Do you remember when Kyna was here not long after I arrived?" She waved her hand in front of her mouth again. "I used some of the information that he gave me to help Rora and me to get the meat."

"Explain the round holes in two of them, Mvilu."

"I do not think you will believe me, Ara. But, I will try. I threw a stick at each of them."

“You threw a stick at them? I do not believe you.”

“I said you would not believe me.”

“If you do not want to tell me, I will not force you. Come, let us prepare the meat. We have a lot to prepare.”

We started working on the Ataojoo. As we worked, I was amazed at how much meat was on each one of the Ataojoo and how little fat. But, just as importantly, I was amazed at how much of the meat that Ara was able to remove from them. She even saved some of the internal organs, such as the heart, liver, kidneys and a couple of organs I had no idea what they were. Since my arrival, I had never seen anything that even remotely reminded me of a freezer, but, as we cleaned the Ataojoo, I saw Ara take pieces of meat, wrap them in something that looked like freezer paper, write on the paper what was in the paper, and put them into a chest that I knew about but had never opened. Now, as Ara placed the wrapped meat into the chest, I knew it had to be a freezer because every time Ara would open it, a cold mist would come out.

Just before we finished preparing the meat, Rora returned and told us that he had told all the neighbors. He also said that Joola was shocked and said something about my promising that Rora and I would have plenty of meat by this evening. He said she also protested a bit, but accepted the offer of extra meat, after he told her of our inordinately good luck. Joola had said she was going to bring her whole household over to see how well we had done hunting. My heart leaped at the thought of seeing Tyarza. I was worried, however, that she might be the kind of female that would think I was a braggart if I told her about the success of our hunt. Therefore, I decided that I was going to be working on the mota when they arrived.

Ara kept out about two kilograms of the meat to make a good dinner for us. She chose the tenderloin of one of the Ataojoo, since that is the tenderest piece of meat. Ara sliced the tenderloin into one-centimeter thick pieces, and then quartered about half of it. The half she quartered she used in the dinner stew. The other half she grilled as a supplement to the stew. Since she didn't need as many vegetables in the stew, she steamed some. The steaming altered the taste of the vegetables slightly in that they had less of a meaty taste to them and more of a vegetable taste. As much as I enjoyed the meal, I decided that I wouldn't eat a lot.

After dinner, I helped Ara clean up, took a shower and went to my room. I wanted to get a good night's sleep since I was going to be working hard the next day. I also wanted to get up early enough that we might get enough work done on the mota to finish it within the next five days. I also needed to check on the progress of the akatooeka. I was amazed at how hard the Mory achohachy worked on the mota and the akatooeka when I told them that we were doing this to protect the anohachy and village from attack and dangerous animals.

1-I smiled because I had a secret that nobody, not even Rora, knew. I had been working on my bow, arrows, quiver, atlatl, and spear. I had to perform a lot of trial and error to get the right wood for them as well as smoking the wood the right length of time to give it enough tensile strength and flexibility. Thanks to information on my chronoputer, I had been able to figure out how to heat the wood to a temperature that would allow me to bend it, but not burn it. It also helped me figure out how to carve an atlatl that was light enough to carry, but strong enough to launch a one-hundred-fifty-centimeter spear with enough force to penetrate the hide of one of Tashoo's animals deep enough to kill it. The hardest thing for me to make for my bow was the string. I knew it had to be strong and tough, but pliable at the same time. I thank the fates that

had stopped my kidnappers from removing my chronoputer. It held enough information, written and holographic video, to show me how to do these things. After completing my bow, arrows, spear and atlatl, I spent as many ahi'nu as I possibly could honing my archery and javelin skills. It took me about two months, but I taught myself how to shoot a bow instinctively and throw my spear hard enough to penetrate the tough hide of most of the animals of Tashoo.

2-At the time, I didn't realize she was being literal when she told me this, although I did learn about their situation which I will relay at the appropriate time.

3-The Taojoo is a small, for Tashoo, deer-like animal. The average size of a Taojoo is one hundred fifty centimeters at the shoulder. It is covered with blue-black hair that has yellow-orange spots set in rows from halfway down the sides to the middle of the back. The Taojoo have three hoofs on their feet reminiscent of the Mesohippus of 24 to 32 million years ago, although the Taojoo could never be confused with a horse. This is because they have dark gray antlers similar to fallow deer. The pelt is black with irregularly placed yellow-orange spots of various sizes all over the back and sides. The eyes are yellow-orange with goat like pupils. They weigh about one hundred thirty-five kilograms on the hoof. You would think that being black they would stand out against the typical foliage of Tashoo, but I had to stare at them for several seconds before I actually saw them. They blended that well into the shadows of the trees where they normally lived and the yellow-orange spots looked like sunlight streaming through the foliage.

4-By making this statement, Rora inadvertently saved my life.

5-This is the Mory equivalent of humans nodding their head.