

XXI

The Ka'yno Returns (Day 145 on Tashoo)

The next morning, we finished off the meal that Ara had cooked for us the previous night, as is the norm for the Mory people. After the nakyvy, I went to my room and got ready to go to work. When I came out, Rora was dressed for guard duty and standing there waiting for me. I looked at him and said, "What are you doing, Rora?"

"I am ready to help you with the mota today."

"Oh? I thought you would want to be here when Kyta arrives."

"As much as I would like to see her again, it is more important to get the mota finished. We can always go visit them when we finish the mota."

"That should be in about five days, according to my calculations."

"Very well then, we should be leaving to start work. The sooner we finish the mota, the sooner you can receive the accolades you deserve."

"I do not deserve any accolades, Rora. I will just be satisfied that I have helped the people of Talo-Vy. However, let us go."

Even though I had asked for only five hundred achohachy to dig the ditch, each of the Aka' had given me a thousand. Through the Ka' Mu-Naka, I had assigned two hundred to cut the trees, shape the wood and build the akatooeka. It was strange; even though I had been assured that the achohachy wouldn't listen to me, from the very beginning, the achohachy started coming directly to me with any problems or questions. Even with Ka' Mu-Naka standing right next to me, the achohachy all but ignored him when they had the aforementioned problem or question. As a matter of fact, except for a requisite, "Chitekuro" and showing proper respect, the achohachy would say nothing to him. I had always believed that felines were highly intelligent; however, I was amazed at the intelligence and understanding the Mory achohachy had. I would produce a drawing for them; they would study it, and go do the job that I had assigned to them and I could rest assured that, when the job was completed, it would look exactly like the drawing, down the nail.

After we stopped working on the mota for the day, Rora and I returned home. We said good night to Ka' Mu-Naka and he headed in a different direction from Rora and me. Rora got a funny look on his face as he watched Ka' Naka leave us but, I made no comment.

When we arrived home, we were surprised to find Joola and her family there. Ara was cooking dinner. Joola, Kyta, and Tyarza were in the kitchen assisting her. As was typical of a Mory family unit, Kyna did little or no housework. His job being to provide the meat and protection of the village. He was in what could best be called the family room waiting for Rora and me to return home.

Joola had brought a few vegetables and fruits from her market booth with her to add to the meal. After Rora and I entered the house, Ara walked out of the kitchen and told Rora and me to get cleaned up because dinner would soon be ready. After we finished cleaning up, we joined Kyna in the family room and chatted. A few athaloo later, Ara announced that dinner was ready and we entered the dining area.

Ara said she wanted to seat us tonight. She sat Rora at the head of the table as was his right. Then, starting at Rora's right the seating arrangement was Kyta, an empty chair, Joola, Kyna, Tyarza, me, and Ara. I was a bit perplexed about the empty chair. I was also a bit nervous about sitting so close to Tyarza and I could see that Rora had the same feeling sitting so close to Kyta. Tyarza didn't seem to mind sitting so close to me nor did Kyta seem to mind sitting so close to Rora.

Just as we were about to sit down, we heard someone scratching on the front door. We all looked at each other and, with a smile of knowledge, Ara got up to answer the door. However, when she opened the door, she gave a small gasp, gave the customary invitation and backed completely into the room. As Ara backed away, Lo-Nachoo entered along with his entourage. Everybody immediately arose in the proper show of respect for the Ka'yno. He looked directly at me for a few athata, then he slowly looked around the room.

After looking at all of us, he returned his gaze to me as he spoke to Rora. "My-Rora, I have heard that you had some luck hunting yesterday."

Nervously, Rora stole a quick glance at me before he said, "Yes, Great One, we did."

"We?"

"Yes, Great One. My slave and I had some luck hunting."

"You and your slave?"

"Yes, Great One."

"Would you mind explaining what you mean?"

Rora was now getting more and more nervous; his fear, dislike and inherent respect for the Ka'yno was almost overwhelming for him. I could tell he was at a loss as to what he should say. After standing there for a few athata without saying anything, he looked directly at me. I knew he was hoping I would rescue him. I interrupted, "If I may, Great One, I can explain what my master means."

“You can explain it? This I would like to hear.”

“Yes, Great One. You see, my master and I went hunting yesterday. We came upon a clearing and on the other side of the clearing we saw a herd of Ataojoo. My master told me he was going to hide next to a major animal trail that we saw. He told me to circle the clearing and chase the Ataojoo toward him. I did as he told me and he managed to kill a taojoo.”

Lo-Nachoo replied, sarcastically, “Really? Then, how do you explain the story that you killed three Ataojoo?”

“It was not easy, Great One. After my master killed the first one, the rest circled the clearing. I was standing on the far side of the clearing. When they saw me, they returned to the same area of the clearing, allowing my master to kill a second one. I guess he was so overcome with blood-lust that he jumped up and killed a third one as well.”

“That is a very convenient explanation, *slave*. You do know that by law you are required to share your kill with the village.”

After he spoke, a voice said, “You are wrong, Great One. There is no law that requires such as that.” Lo-Nachoo, his entourage, Rora and I turned and saw Ka’ Mu-Naka standing in the house’s doorway. Now I understood the empty chair between Kyta and Joola. Naka continued, “As a matter of fact, the law clearly states that kills made by individuals are theirs to do with as they wish.”

When Lo-Nachoo turned and saw Naka, his eyes widened until the whites could be seen. I saw that he was thinking as quickly as he could. Despite my desire to see him embarrassed, I spoke up. “Chitekuro, my Lord, Ka’ Mu-Naka, it is an unexpected pleasure to see you again so soon.”

He turned to me and said, “Chitekuro, Mvilu, thank you. It is a pleasure for me to see you again so soon as well.”

I looked at Naka, but was actually speaking to Lo-Nachoo, “My Lord, to respond to what you said concerning the Ka’yno’s misinterpretation of Mory Law, I think that, perhaps, the Ka’yno may be thinking of another law that requires sharing with the village or perhaps, since I accompanied my master, he considered that we were, technically, a hunting party. I know that with all that he has on his mind as the Ka’yno of Talo-Vy, it is possible that he got the numerous laws of the Mory mixed up, which, of course, is the reason the Mory have a *Keeper of the Law*. Besides, my master has already told several of our neighbors, including TaJoola, that we have extra meat and we are sharing our good fortune with them. Naturally, we chose the families that are in the most desperate situations.” Turning toward Lo-Nachoo, I said, “Is that not what is normally done in these situations?”

Naka realized what I was doing and said to me, “Yes Mvilu. That is what is normally done.” He looked at Lo-Nachoo and said, “Is that what happened, Great One? Did you possibly get laws mixed up due to overwork as the Ka’yno?”

Surprised at the fact that I was seemingly defending his actions, Lo-Nachoo looked at me in shock, but responded to Naka, “Yes, I do believe that is what happened. Also, I did not know that My-Ara had already decided to share her good fortune with her neighbors. Please forgive me, My-Ara.” (1)

Ara was openly shocked. She said, “Yes, of course, Great One. I forgive you your mistake.”

Lo-Nachoo was also shocked. He knew that I knew that he disliked me immensely, especially since he had never made any attempt to hide it. I knew he had to be wondering why I would so quickly come to his defense. However, he was not going to give up on an idea that he had. “I wish for My-Rora's slave to clear something up for me.”

I replied, “Yes, Great One. What do you wish for me to clear up for you?”

“You said that you walked around the clearing. Did you not?”

“Yes, Great One. I said that my master told me to walk around the clearing. Why do you ask?”

“On the day the Ishoo'se Aka’ny voted to grant you unrestricted unescorted walks throughout the village, did I not tell you that you could not leave the village unescorted under penalty of death?”

“Yes, you said just that, Great One.”

“Can you give me a good reason that I should not kill you where you stand?”

“Yes, Great One, I can.”

Lo-Nachoo rolled his eyes as he said, “Why does that not surprise me?”

“Great One, as a slave am I not required to obey any and all commands and orders given to me by my master?”

Naka answered for Lo-Nachoo, “Yes, Mvilu, you are required to do that.”

Turning to him, I asked, “Even if following said commands and orders might require me to break one of the numerous Mory Laws?”

“There are very few laws that supersede the Master-Slave Law in importance.”

“So, what you are saying, my Lord, is that, if my master ordered me to do anything, I have to do it.”

“Yes, with very few exceptions, that is so.”

“Really? I wish to be absolutely certain of this. So, I wish to pose a hypothetical situation. If a slave is ordered by his master to, for example, kill the Ka’yno, would he have to follow that order?”

Lo-Nachoo roared, “Are you saying your master has ordered you to kill me?”

“No, Great One. It is a hypothetical situation. Even if my master did give me such an order, which he never would, I would refuse to obey it, even if it meant me sacrificing my life.”

Naka interrupted and said, “That is good, Mvilu. Because the Ka’yno Protection Laws state that the Ka’yno must be protected at all costs from unprovoked attacks by anyone, especially slaves. The Laws also require that such an order is to be reported to the Ishoo’s Aka’ny immediately. These laws are also the most important of all Mory Laws. No laws supersede these.”

I asked, “What do you mean by ‘unprovoked attacks’?”

“An unprovoked attack would be one such as you described, where someone would attack the Ka’yno without just cause.”

“And what would be considered ‘just cause’?”

“An example of just cause would be if the Ka’yno were to challenge a slave to a duel to the death, or if it were to be discovered that the Ka’yno had broken any laws himself that require death as a sentence.”

“Such as forced mating with a nohachy or nojasa?”

“Yes, that would be one of the laws requiring a death sentence.”

“I see. So, I must follow any orders that my master gives me, within reason.”

Lo-Nachoo said, “Would you please get to your point?”

“I am doing just that, Great One. Did I not say that my master ordered me to circle to clearing?”

“Yes, you said that; however, I have not heard your master say that he told you to walk around the clearing.”

Turning to Rora, Lo-Nachoo said, “My-Rora, did you tell your slave to walk around the clearing as he claims you did?”

Fearfully, Rora said, “Yes, Great One. What Mvilu said is what occurred.”

Lo-Nachoo said, “Since the Mory are incapable of telling untruths, I have to accept that your story is the truth.”

“Therefore, Great One, if I must follow any and all orders—within reason—that my master gives me and my master ordered me to circle the clearing in violation of your command, then, by Mory Law, I am not in violation of your command nor is my master.”

Lo-Nachoo stood there flummoxed. Once again, I had used Mory Law, and his orders, against him. He glared at me for several athata, before responding. “You obviously respect and honor your master and Mory Law greatly. After all, you could easily have run away and possibly found refuge at Te’ka-Jy, if you could have found it.”

“That is very true, Great One, but, as I have said on numerous occasions, I am not from this part of Tashoo. As you have stated, I do not know where Te’ka-Jy is located. Besides, I have no weapons with which to protect myself, should I be attacked.” (A lie it is true, but the less he knew the better for me.) “Plus, the paperwork that the Ka’yno of Te’ka-Jy sent to me is here and I would most likely need it had I found Te’ka-Jy. Besides, if I decided to run away to Te’ka-Jy, would it not make sense to bring my master along with me to prevent anyone from trying to kill me on sight?” I will admit that I was lying about not having the paperwork from Sha’-Naky but, once again, what the Ka’yno didn’t know wouldn’t hurt me.

Everyone was looking at Lo-Nachoo. Finally, he replied, “You have made a very valid point, slave, but, I did not know that you did not have the paperwork on your person at the time you and your master were hunting until you just said so. I, therefore, withdraw my demand on you for your life.”

I responded, “I thank you, Great One. Now I fully understand the alternate title of Great One, because it takes a great one to be so lenient with a simple uninformed slave such as myself.”

Through half-closed eyelids Lo-Nachoo looked at me and said, “I doubt very seriously you are simple or uninformed.”

After saying this, he turned and headed for the door. At the door, he turned and motioned me over. When I hesitated, he said, “Have no fear, slave. Even though I want you dead, I would never do that in the home of My-Ara without just cause. I merely wish to speak to you in a more private manner. Besides, to kill a slave, without provocation, is as serious an offense among the Mory as killing the Ka’yno without provocation.”

I walked over and stood just out of arm's reach. Quietly, he said to me, "You manage to keep dodging my sword cuts. But, sooner or later, you will dodge into my sword and, believe me, I will be ready to remove your head. Do you understand?"

"Most assuredly, Great One. I just hope that, should that day ever come, I will at least be allowed to defend myself."

"If it comes to that point, do not fear, because I will arm you myself. Now, go back to your master and mistress."

I nodded imperceptibly and backed away from him, not out of respect, but because I still did not trust him to not kill me without provocation. This allowed me to watch him as he left with his entourage. As they left, I noticed Vamoo among the members; he was the last to leave. As he started to exit, he turned toward me, smiled slightly and nodded. He turned toward everyone in the room and nodded to them as well. Finally, he turned and left. I found myself thinking, "I need to speak to him when the Ka'yno is not around. I want to know how he feels about the Ka'yno."

After Lo-Nachoo and his entourage left, we returned to dinner. As I sat down, I felt a hand on my arm. I turned and saw Tyarza looking at me. She had an unusual look in her eyes. She looked sad, but happy at the same time. It almost looked as if she wanted to say something to me, but was afraid to. I was grateful for this look, because, along with the softness, there was a look that made my heart leap with joy. Because of this look, I was a little afraid to do it, but I reached up and placed my hand softly on hers. This simple action brought a small smile to her face. She didn't remove her hand from my arm for a few athata. Finally, she slowly removed her hand and started to serve herself.

I was sitting directly across from Naka. I looked over at him and saw him looking at me, smiling slightly. I wasn't certain as to what he was smiling about, but I wasn't going to ask him directly, not tonight anyway.

Naka didn't wait. He said, "Mvilu, you seem to be an honest Uany most of the time, but you do not seem to have a problem telling a lie. Why is this?"

"Lie, my Ka'? What do you mean?" Even though the Mory are as blunt with their speech as I've ever encountered, the bluntness of his statement caused me a bit of worry.

"I had talked to Rora at the mota today when you were further down solving a minor problem. He told me that you killed two of the Ataojoo." I looked at him in shock. "He said he saw you throw a large dauanka at one Taojoo and, using a dauanka that had a string attached to each end, throw a small dauanka at another one. You told the Ka'yno that Rora killed all three. Now, tell me. Who is lying, you or Rora?"

I now found myself on the proverbial hot seat. I started squirming a little. I didn't want to tell him the truth, but I didn't want him to think that Rora had broken the ancient Mory tradition of honesty. Everyone was looking at me expectantly. I was afraid of how Tyarza would react when I answered Naka, but I didn't want Rora to fall in the esteem of his loved ones. Well, as the saying goes, "The truth shall set you free." However, I also thought about another old saying, "The best defense is a good offense."

I asked him, "Would it make a difference who is being untruthful?"

"In the grand scheme of things, no, but, I have known Rora his whole life. He has always been as truthful as any Mory chohachy I have ever known. Therefore, if he has strayed from the Mory way of complete honesty, he has learned it from you. As a result, either way, you are at fault. So, please answer my question. On my word as a Mory chohachy and the Ka' of this Ka'na, because your answer could not be considered subversive, your answer will go no further than this room."

Now, I was most definitely on the horns of a dilemma. I had to save Rora's honor, even if it meant that I would no longer have the honor that I had previously enjoyed here in Talo-Vy. "Rora spoke truthfully, my Ka'. I did kill two of the Ataojoo and I did it just as he told you."

Naka just sat there and looked at me. Once again, I felt as if he were looking directly into my soul. Even though I didn't feel as if I was in any kind of danger, I did feel a bit uncomfortable. Finally, he spoke, "I understand why you did not wish the Ka'yno to know it was you that killed two of the Ataojoo. I believe that somehow you have manufactured weapons of some kind. Since Rora called them adauanka, technically, according to Mory Law, they are not weapons, since the Mory define weapons as claws, teeth, swords, and daggers."

"You chose to use these weapons to obtain meat for Ara and Rora, and the needy of our Ka'na. Fortunately for you, and Rora, the Ka'yno does not know what I know and he never will, not from me, anyway. I do hope that you have no intention of using these adauanka to cause an insurrection."

"No, my Ka'. I only intend to use them to obtain the meat that we need."

"Good. But, enough of this conversation. Let us enjoy this meal that the two great hunters of this household have provided."

I turned to look at Tyarza. Even though she showed a bit of disappointment in her eyes, she didn't say anything. After everybody had served themselves, quiet conversation pervaded the dining table. Tyarza leaned over to me and said, "I am a little disappointed in you."

I had been thinking about what Naka had said earlier. So, when she spoke to me, it shocked me out of my reverie. "I am sorry, Tyarza. I was thinking of something else. What did you say?"

“I said, ‘I am a little disappointed in you.’ I had always been impressed by your honesty. The chohachy to whom I am to be mated is anything but honest. I really do not think he knows how to tell the truth.”

“I do not blame you in being disappointed in me, Tyarza, but, as strange as it may sound, there are times when a little untruth is necessary, especially if being untruthful may help someone you care about.”

“Have you ever been untruthful to me?”

“I can honestly say, I have never knowingly lied to you, Tyarza. I have never had a need to lie to you. Plus, I would not want you to be disappointed in me.”

From across the table, I heard Kyta say to Rora, in a small almost flirty voice, “So, you killed three Ataojoo all by yourself, Rora. That shows you would be a good provider, if you were to find a female that you wanted for a mate.” I found it hard to understand why she would say this since she had heard me tell Naka that I had actually killed two of the Ataojoo myself. However, Rora almost choked when she said this, causing a small chuckle to ripple around the table, even Tyarza laughed.

Rora replied, “You know that a chohachy’s ability to be a good provider has little to do with whether or not a nohachy will mate with him. Besides, I would not be able to mate with any nohachy in Talo-Vy. You know that, Kyta. There is also the fact that Mvilu admitted to killing two of the Ataojoo.”

Once again, everybody chuckled at Rora. Rora looked around the table perplexed. I could tell that he could not understand why everybody was laughing at him for making, to him, so obvious of a statement. Finally, his eyes settled on me. Laughing, I said, “Rora, just go along with her.”

I looked at Tyarza and saw her looking at me in a manner I had never seen from her before. When she saw me looking, she turned her head quickly away. I thought I noticed a slight darkening on her face. I could not understand why she would be embarrassed by my catching her looking at me. Unless it had something to do with what Kyta had said to Rora.

With her head still looking away from me, Tyarza softly asked, “Are you mated to someone, Mvilu?”

I was caught completely off guard by that question. I thought to myself, “Why is she concerned about that? She is promised to someone.” However, I answered her, “To my knowledge, Tyarza, I am not mated to anyone.”

“Why not? You seem to be a good provider, a great chohachy, and very protective of those you care deeply about.”

“I really do not have an answer, Tyarza. I guess I have never found someone that wanted to be my mate.”

“I would.” She said this so quietly I almost didn’t hear.

I was afraid she would get embarrassed if I said anything, so I just looked at her as if I didn’t hear. I did say, “I am sorry, Tyarza. You spoke so quietly I could not understand what you just said.” I was a bit mad at myself for lying after telling her I had never lied to her before. But, I hoped she would forgive me since I lied to her to protect her.

As her face darkened even more, she said, “Never mind. I was just thinking out loud.”

I had to smile to myself as I thought of how she was disappointed in me for being dishonest with the Ka'yno. But, at the same time, I knew she hadn't actually lied to me because it did sound like she was thinking out loud.

While Tyarza and I talked, I was watching Kyta, Naka, Joola, and Kyna. As I watched them, I noticed that Kyta, Naka and Kyna had a lot of the same mannerisms. I also noticed that Kyna and Kyta also shared a lot of the same physical features with Naka, although each had different features in common with Naka. Suddenly it hit me; Naka has to be their father. When this realization hit me, I almost choked on what I was eating. Everybody around the table looked at me as I coughed. I raised my hand to let them know I was all right.

When I finally stopped coughing, Tyarza leaned over and, whispering, asked me, “What is wrong? I noticed you gasped slightly before you started coughing. That means you had a sudden thought that bothered you.”

Whispering back, I said, “If you promise to keep it a secret, I will tell you what I suddenly realized.”

She replied, “I promise.”

I said, “Look at Kyta, Kyna and Ka' Mu-Naka. Tell me what you see.”

She studied them for a few athata, then she gave a small gasp. She looked at me and said, “Do you mean how much the three of them look and act alike?”

“Yes.”

“Are you saying that Ka' Mu-Naka is . . .”

“Yes, I am. But, you cannot let them know. The Chorotha-Rothoo Law would mean the death of one of them. Now, I understand why Ka' Mu-Naka is seated between Joola and Kyta.”

“What do you mean?”

“Look around the table. It seems that everyone is seated next to someone of the opposite sex that is at least a little important to them.”

“I see what you mean.” She thought for a thata, then continued. “I would hate to see anything happen to any of them. Thanks to you, I have come to care very deeply for all four of them. So, I will keep the secret you discovered to myself until we can tell the truth.”

Ara noticed that Tyarza and I were whispering. She leaned over and whispered to me, “What are you two whispering about?”

I replied, “We were whispering about something I noticed.”

“What is that?”

“I suddenly realized why you set the seating arrangements the way you did.”

She got a panicked look and said, “If you figured that out, you need to keep it to yourself. Right now, as far as I know, you, Joola and I are the only ones who know the truth.”

“Well, you need to include Tyarza in that list. But, she has promised to keep it a secret as well. She has grown to care about Joola and her family.”

“I hope you are right, Mvilu.”

After we ate, the males all retired to the family room and continued our conversations; the females cleared the table, washed the dishes and continued their conversation. I felt like I was at a cocktail party back on Terra. The only thing missing was alcoholic beverages. Imagine my surprise when Naka pulled a small bottle, about five hundred milliliters, from his Etyma Jivekoo. When I asked him what it was, he told me to give it a try. From the burning sensation in my throat, I knew it was alcohol, strong alcohol, probably between 50 and 100 proof. Even though it burned a bit, it was very smooth. I could not describe the taste. I had never tasted anything quite like it. The best way to describe it would be, mixing Tennessee whiskey with sake. I could taste both, plus a couple of others that I didn't recognize. But, it was mildly sweet, like there was something else in the alcohol that I couldn't quite describe. I thought the fact that there was a sweet taste to the alcohol was rather funny since on Terra cats can't taste sweetness.

While we were enjoying the taste of, as I call it, Mory whiskey, Kyna walked over to me and gently edged me away from the rest of the visitors. He never said anything, but I knew he wanted to say something to me in private, so I moved along with him.

When we got far enough away to insure privacy, Kyna turned to me and, after looking over his shoulder to verify our privacy, said, “I saw you looking at the Ka’ Mu-Naka, Kyna and me while we ate. Is there a problem?”

“Well, nothing I can talk about.”

He looked at me intently for a thata. Then, he smiled and said, “Did you realize that Ka' Mu-Naka is my chorotha?”

Whoa! That hit me like Tonojen. Kyna knows who his father is? What about the Chorotha-Rothoo Law? The only thing I could think of to say was, “Who told you that?”

“Norotha did. She told me about two years ago right after my next older siblings left home. She also swore me to secrecy. She feared losing me or him. I have kept the fact that I know this secret, even from him. Before you ask, I do not know if he knows or not. Maybe he does, maybe he does not, but, I am not going to worry about it until I have to worry about it.”

That attitude seems to be common among the Mory. It's too bad humans seem to worry about things that they have no control over, or about things that may never happen. I'm just as bad as the next person. Thanks to my time with the Mory, it isn't as bad with me as it once was.

I asked, “Does Kyta know?”

“Yes, she does. Norotha told us both at the same time. Needless to say, we both were more than a little shocked. Norotha also told us that she has never mated with any other chohachy. My older anorothy told me that they also knew that Ka' Mu-Naka is their chorotha. I guess that, along with slavery, Norotha has a lot of differences with many of the Mory laws that we are forced to live under.”

“Thanks for the information, Kyna. I believe I would love to speak to you more intimately about these things.”

I looked back toward the group and saw Tyarza looking at me. I told Kyna, “I think we are being missed. Perhaps we should return and join the party.” He laughed and headed back into the living area and I followed.

After we returned, Tyarza walked over and asked, “What were you two talking about?”

I thought and said, “I do not know if I should tell. Suffice it to say that Kyna knows something that shocked me when he told me. He did not give me permission to tell anybody that he knows, so, please understand, I do not think I should tell anybody.”

“I understand and I will not pressure you to tell me.”

“Thank you, Tyarza.”

With Tyarza by my side, I observed how everyone acted during the party. I noticed that Rora and Kyta rarely left each other's side. Naka always was within arm's length distance from

Joola. The only ones that seemed to be “unattached” were Kyna and Ara. But, Ara, Joola and Naka were almost always in a group. Likewise, Rora, Kyta and Kyna were almost always in a group. I knew that Ara wanted to be with Rora’s father and I was certain that Kyna also had a female he was interested in being with, although I had never heard him mention one.

Despite the fact that the mota had been dug as far as the south end of the south garden, meaning we were less than five kilometers from being finished, and the incidence of dangerous animals had dropped significantly as a result, old habits die hard. About a hi’nu before sunset, all the visitors decided it was time to leave. With two Mory achohachy guarding only three anohachy, it was a fair bet that any dangerous animals they may encounter would not stand a very good chance of obtaining an easy meal tonight.

After everybody left, Ara, Rora and I relaxed for a few athaloo. I had not drunk enough of the alcohol that Naka had brought with him to become intoxicated. But, I had drunk enough to become very relaxed. Rora and I went outside and sat on the chairs kept there. We were enjoying the cool breezes from the river that filtered through the trees between Talo-Vy and the Kachunoo Katoorovodo when my friend, Katoo, walked up. He engaged Rora in conversation. As he did so, I noticed, once again, how much they looked alike. I also noticed that their mannerisms were similar as well. I didn’t know if Katoo knew, or even suspected, that Rora was his son. But, I had promised Ara to keep this a secret and keep it I would until, as Ara had so succinctly told me, the right time.

After talking to Rora for a few athata, Katoo apologized to me for ignoring me. He went on to explain that it was very important business directly from the Ka’yno himself. He also regretted not having the time to talk with me, but he had to be getting home as soon as he finished speaking with Rora.

“Do not worry about it, my Lord.” I said. “I really need to get inside and help my mistress clean the kitchen. We had company this afternoon. I do hope you will excuse me.” I said this even though I knew that Ara, along with TaJoola’s family, had cleaned the kitchen earlier in the day. I figured that Katoo wished to speak with his son alone.

“Yes, of course, Mvilu. I know that Ka’ Mu-Naka and the family of TaJoola were here. I understand that you had a nice gathering and meal, thanks to you and My-Rora. But, I will see you at another time. Please give my regards to TaAra.”

“I will be happy to do so, my Lord.” I was a bit shocked at his revelation concerning our dinner. Word gets around quickly in this “village.”

As I entered the doorway, I looked back and saw Katoo sit in a chair next to his son. I thought how natural it looked for them to be sitting next to each other. I also found myself wishing the Ka’yno would repeal the Chorotha-Rothoo Law and the Mating Law so that they could do this every day without fear of possible reprisal from the Ka’yno.

When I mentioned to Ara that Katoo was outside talking to Rora and had sent her his regards, she got more than a little nervous. I guess she was worried about the possibility that

Katoo might inadvertently let the cat out of the bag, so to speak, or she was worried that someone might see them talking and put two and two together. Whatever the reason, she rushed out of the kitchen and raced to the window by the door. I heard a quiet sigh of relief as Rora entered the door alone, but, I noticed a wistful look in her eyes as she watched Katoo walking away.

When he saw me, Rora said, “Mvilu, just before he left, TeKatoo told me that the Ka'yno sent him to tell me that he wishes you to appear before the Ishoo'se Aka'ny soon.”

Shocked, I said, “Why?”

“He did not say. He only told me that it is because of something that was said to the Ka'yno this afternoon.”

“Errr. I wonder why he would want me to appear before the Ishoo'se Aka'ny.”

“I do not know, Mvilu. I guess we will find out when you are called to the Suala Ka'ynony.”

Ara asked me to accompany her to the kitchen. After we entered, she looked outside the door to verify that Rora was not coming into the kitchen. She turned to me and said, “I noticed that you and Kyna walked off together and were engaged in conversation. What did you two talk about?”

Once again, I was not expecting this question. As a slave, I am required to answer all questions my master or mistress might ask me. I wanted to refuse, but, I had to answer, not just because of laws, but because of how I felt about Ara. “He told me that he had noticed that I was looking at him, Kyta and Ka' Mu-Naka. He also told me that he knew that Ka' Mu-Naka is his chorotha.”

“What was your reaction to that revelation?”

“I was shocked to say the least. I thought the Chorotha-Rothoo Law was very specific as to what was required of them if either of them found out.” Even though Kyna had already told me, I decided to test Ara. “Do you know how he found out?”

“Both Kyna and Kyta know that Naka is their chorotha, just as he is the chorotha of all of Joola's arothoo. She has mated with no other chohachy and she has told me that she never will.”

I thought for a thata. I wanted to be open and delicate at the same time. “Just as when you told the Ka'yno that you would only mate with one chohachy, the chorotha Rorany.”

“Exactly. Many anojasa and anohachy in this village are opposed to the Chorotha-Rothoo Law and the Mating Law. So much so, in fact, that most anohachy will only mate with one chohachy and one chohachy only. These anohachy may not be allowed to live in an exclusive relationship with the chohachy they prefer but they can, and will, only mate with that

one. There are a few who still mate indiscriminately, but they are becoming more and more rare. Now, it is time for us to get to bed. Have a good sleep, Mvilu. I pray to the Great Being that you do not have any nightmares tonight.”

“Ara, I have one more question then I will head to my room. Does Ka' Mu-Naka know he is the chorotha of arothoo TaJoolany?”

“I do not know. I guess it would be a safe assumption since he spends so much time at her home; but, I just do not know. Now, have a good sleep.”

“Thank you, Ara. I hope you have a good sleep as well.”

I went to my room and lay on my bed. I thought about all the things that had occurred this afternoon, especially what Tyarza had said to me. I could never tell when she was teasing me. But, as I thought about it, I found myself hoping that she wasn't teasing this time. I also thought about the revelation that Kyna and Kyta knew that Naka was their father. I guess it would be a safe bet that TaJoola was one of the females in Talo-Vy that opposed the Chorotha-Rothoo Law and the Mating Law. I also wondered about Rora and Katoo. However, this time I wondered if Rora would ever find out and, if so, who would tell him, and when. I would think that it would be the duty of his mother, but, since I know, I guess I could tell him as well.

As I thought, I felt my eyelids getting heavier and heavier. I don't know how the lighting knows when I am about to fall asleep, but it does. By the time I am completely asleep, the room is totally dark.

1-Because of Mory tradition, the Ka'yno would not speak directly to me because I was a slave.