

XXVII

No Longer a Slave (Day 202 on Tashoo)

The next morning, Chy and I were up and about before Ara; we went into the kitchen so I could prepare his nakyvy. While I was preparing Chy's nakyvy, I went ahead and started preparing the nakyvy for all of us. The nakyvy was little more than leftovers from the night before. I looked in the cooler and found some of the zachynoo, one of the tubers that are high in protein. They were not wriggling like the ones I saw on the day I arrived. I guess the low temperature of the cooler stopped that. I picked a couple up and peeled them. I cubed them into about fifteen-millimeter cubes. I had placed a frying pan on the stove and started it heating. When it got hot enough, I dumped the zachynoo cubes into the frying pan and started browning them.

By the time I started cooking the zachynoo, Ara entered the kitchen. She was wearing a loose-fitting robe, one of the rare times I had ever seen her wear anything other than the poncho style dress that all nohachy wear on Tashoo. I turned and greeted her.

The first thing she said to me was, "Did you hear anything last night, Mvilu?"

"No." I paused for thata before adding, "Should I have heard anything?"

"I am not saying."

I smiled at her saying this. "Well, if there had been anything for me to hear, I would not have heard it. I was as tired as I can remember ever being when I went to bed last night."

Ara just looked at me. I think we both didn't know whether or not to believe the other. Finally, after a short few athata, I smiled and turned back to the stove. I didn't want to ruin the nakyvy, especially the zachynoo.

I finished preparing the nakyvy and took Chy's to our room and fed him. After I took Chy's to our room, I returned to the kitchen and took ours to the table. Rora was already sitting there. He had his chin resting on his fist looking for all the world like a feline version of Rodin's "Thinker" statue. I was smiling as I brought the nakyvy out. Ara brought the drinks, she had tightened her robe, while I brought out the food on dishes.

We talked about what the important ceremony was that required everyone in our household to be present. TaJoola's household being required to be there as well as our household implied to me that the importance of the ceremony might be a life or death type of situation. Even though I knew that Ara knew what the ceremony was about, I also knew that she couldn't say anything because it would give away the fact that Katoo had visited our home several nights earlier.

After we finished eating the nakvyv, Ara and I went into the kitchen and cleaned up the dishes. Because we rarely used many dishes, it didn't take long to clean up the kitchen. After we cleaned the kitchen, we started to get ready for our audience with the Ishoo'se Aka'ny. I decided to put on the best set of clothing I had, one of the sets that Sha'-Naky had given to me. I wanted to make as good of an impression on the Ishoo'se as possible, just in case.

By the time I left my room, everybody else was ready to leave. I hurried up to them and we started walking toward the Suala Ka'ynony. We had to pass TaJoola's home on the way and, just as we arrived there, they were leaving. We all decided to walk together and discuss the possible reasons as to why the Ka'yno wanted all of us at the Suala Ka'ynony at the same time. Actually, I was the one discussing the possible reasons. Everyone else seemed to know what was going to happen when we arrived at the Suala Ka'ynony.

About 10 athaloo later, we arrived at the Suala Ka'ynony and were met at the door by Vamoo. It was a rare day when he wasn't the door guard. I guess that, like Rora, he rarely gets a day off from his duties. He seemed glad to see all of us and invited us to enter. He had us wait in the anteroom while he went to announce us. He returned and said that as soon as the Ka'yna arrived we would be allowed to enter the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny.

As we waited, I started looking at the paintings once again. I noticed that Tyarza had accompanied me, along with Kyta and Rora. I found the paintings of the Aka'yno and asked Vamoo if the paintings of the Aka'yno were in order from first to most recent. He said they were and I finally found the painting of Nachoo. Next to it was a painting of a very distinguished looking Mory chohachy. He looked significantly younger than Nachoo, but he didn't seem to be nearly as pretentious, looking almost modest. His vest, while adorned more than most of the achohachy I had seen, was nowhere nearly as adorned as Nachoo's vest. As I looked, I noticed how much he looked like Ara. Then I noticed a lot of similarities between him and Rora. Now I had even more proof of my suspicions, but nothing definitive.

After a few athaloo, we were summoned into the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny. Upon the dais were the normal ten thrones. The eight Aka' were sitting on their respective thrones, four to either side of the Ka'yno. The extra throne was between Nachoo's and Ka' Naka's, the throne of the Ka'yna.

Soon the Ka'yna appeared accompanied by a couple of Mory doctors. As soon as he saw me, he called my name. "Mvilu. Would you please tell these doctors how to remove these sootlloorusu? They have been debating for the last half hi'nu about how to do it. When I heard you were here, I demanded that you be allowed entrance to tell them how to do it."

I quickly looked at Nachoo, who was glaring at me. He nodded, then motioned to me to go to the Ka'yna's side. I walked over and looked at the wound. It had healed nicely. The suture threads were still intact which kind of surprised me since the threads weren't as tough as Terran suture thread. There was no indication of infection of any kind. I guess the doctors had

obeyed my “orders” to bathe the wound two to three times a day with alcohol and cover the cut and sutures with Voocha.

I turned to the nearest doctor and said, “Do you have any scissors?”

He looked at me questioningly and asked, “Why do I need scissors?”

“Well, I doubt the Ka’yno would trust a simple Uany slave to remove the sutures using a dagger. So, you will have to do it. I will explain to you how to do it.”

The doctor produced the scissors. I instructed him to start clipping each of the sutures individually and, using a pair of tweezers, pull each suture out. After about fifteen athaloo, the sutures were removed, and a nice 50 cm long barely noticeable scar showed itself on the outside of the Ka’yna’s right leg. I examined the scar, found no drainage and said that everything was all right.

I asked Katoo, “Do you have any trouble walking.”

He replied, “Except for a little soreness in the knee, I have no problems.”

Now, I knew for certain that I had not damaged the muscles of his leg as I sewed up the wound. I told him the soreness in the knee would slowly go away as he used the leg more now that the sutures and splint had been removed; however, I did warn him that he may have a permanent slight limp because of the depth of the injury. Then, I returned to the center of the chamber while Katoo, who winced with every step while climbing, ascended the dais and took his seat.

After Katoo took his seat, Nachoo arose and said, “Zo-Kyna, son of Zo-Joola, approach the Ishoo'se Aka’ny.”

Kyna obeyed reverently. When he reached the bottom of the dais, he knelt on his right knee and bowed his head. I made it a point to watch his every move intently. I didn’t want to make a mistake if I were called up there myself and, since I had been “invited” to attend these ceremonies, I fully expected to be called up.

The Ka’yno descended the dais and approached Kyna. When he reached Kyna, he said, “Zo-Kyna, ten days ago, during a hunt, you and three others were attacked by a Chakootoa. One of the three was the Ka'yna. The Chakootoa caused serious harm to the Ka’yna. With total disregard for your personal safety, you attacked the Chakootoa to draw it away from the Ka’yna and, as a result, protected him from almost certain death, eventually killing the beast by yourself using nothing more than your short sword. The ones in the hunting party have all so stated that this is a true and accurate account of your actions.” I was surprised, momentarily. Even though it was “a true and accurate account” of what had happened, I had never been asked to give an account. I suppose the word of a Uany slave was not considered good enough to use in the official record of the Ishoo'se Aka’ny.

Nachoo continued, "From their description of the situation, it is a wonder that any of you survived the original attack; therefore, your actions are all the more commendable, since the Ka' Mu-Naka could not leave the side of the fallen Ka'yna to assist you and the only other one there was a Uany slave."

I smiled to myself. I thought, "He is implying that I was of no assistance during the attack. Which I guess is true since I was unconscious during the first part of the attack and I was tending to the Ka'yna after I regained consciousness. Oh, well. He'll never give me credit for anything that I accomplish, even the mota."

The Ka'yno was saying, "Because of your actions, the Ishoo'se Aka'ny has granted you the right of permanent residence and mating rights in Talo-Vy for as long as you so desire. Arise and receive the documentation so stating." Kyna arose and Nachoo handed him a piece of paper. Kyna accepted the paper almost as reverently as he had been while approaching the dais. He then performed a near perfect about face and returned to his family.

Nachoo turned to me and said, "Mvilu Uatusun, Uany slave of My-Rora and My-Ara, approach the Ishoo'se Aka'ny."

I was mildly shocked. Nachoo had never referred to me by my name. Perhaps it had something to do with the reason I was here; however, I imitated what I had seen Kyna do as closely as I could. I was a bit nervous as I bowed my head, but I knew I had to do it. After all, this was an extremely special occasion. It had to be since anohachy were normally forbidden from entering the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny.

Nachoo said, "Mvilu Uatusun, ten days ago, during a hunt, you and three others were attacked by a Chakootoa. The Chakootoa caused serious harm to the Ka'yna of Talo-Vy. While I will openly state I wish it had been you that had been seriously harmed, preferably killed, I will admit that what you did afterward is worthy of commendation. You found the Ka'yna as he lay in the high grass and determined that his injury, while life threatening, could be corrected. You took over and cared for the Ka'yna. You ascertained that there was no serious damage to the muscles and, using methods never seen before by the Mory, sewed up his cut, thereby saving his life. As much as I hate to admit it, I am indebted to you for your total disregard for the obvious consequences of your possible failure and for the success of your attempt. After the members of the hunting party, all twenty-two of them, came forward and told their version of the story, the Ishoo'se Aka'ny has invoked the Slave Freedom Law to grant you your freedom from slavery. Arise, Mvilu Uatusun, and receive the documentation so stating."

I arose and Nachoo handed me a piece of paper. I accepted the paper as reverently as Kyna had accepted his, perhaps even more so.

Nachoo continued, "Mvilu Uatusun," the shock of this still surprised me since he had always referred to me as Uany or slave and in a sarcastic tone of voice then, "As a free Uany, you now have the option of continuing to live in Talo-Vy or you may leave and none will challenge your decision. Personally, I would prefer that you choose the option to leave Talo-Vy. I would even be willing to give you the directions to Te'ka-Jy. What is your decision?"

I thought for a few athata before replying. “Great One, because of promises I have made to TaAra and TeRora as well as to certain members of TaJoola's family, I would ask the Ishoo'se Aka'ny to accept this as my decision, I would like to continue living in Talo-Vy with my family for a while until I decide if I wish to leave.”

Nachoo looked at TaJoola's family before he returned his gaze to me. “Is it possible that your promise is to the slave of Zo-Kyna?”

No sense in denying the truth. “Yes, it is, Great One.”

Turning to look at Naka, Nachoo said, “Ka' Mu-Naka, correct me if I am wrong, but, as Ka'yno, I am allowed to give any slave their freedom at any time for any reason. Am I not?”

“You are so allowed, Great One.”

“Zo-Kyna, I know that it would not be right to arbitrarily free your slave without fair compensation. Therefore, I ask you what you would accept as fair compensation for your slave.”

Kyna looked at me and then the Ka'yno. “Great One, with all due respect, Kerga Tyarza has become an important part of our family. She assists my norotha and norothy is so many ways at our home. It would be difficult to place a monetary value on her services.”

“Come, come, Zo-Kyna. Everything has a price. What would you accept in exchange for allowing me to give your slave her freedom?”

I wanted to tell him to be careful, but I knew that Nachoo would realize what I was saying, so all I could do was look at Kyna in a way that implied that I needed to stay in Talo-Vy.

After several athata, Kyna said, “Great One, Kerga Tyarza is worth over ^5000 to my family.”

Nachoo nearly had a stroke when he heard the amount. “FIVE THOUSAND SHURTAN!! Have you lost your mind!? No slave is worth that amount!!”

“Nevertheless, Great One. That is the amount it will take to compensate my family for the loss of our slave.”

Nachoo turned and glared at me. “You are behind this somehow!” He growled.

Turning back to Kyna, he said, “Very well, Zo-Kyna. You may keep your slave and Mvilu Uatusun may remain in Talo-Vy until such time as he desires to leave.”

With suppressed rage, Lo-Nachoo continued, “However, Mvilu Uatusun, if you are going to stay in Talo-Vy, you are to fulfill any and all requirements of a chohachy resident of Talo-Vy, up to and including defending the village against any and all attacks. This includes any attacks

by Uany or Te'ka-Jy and showing the village hunters the secret that allows you and My-Rora to be so successful when you go hunting. Do you understand?"

"I understand, Great One."

I bowed to the Ishoo'se Aka'ny, then to Nachoo and returned to my family.

Nachoo continued, "Now, since the presence of all of you is no longer required here, you may all leave." Even in an important ceremony such as this, the Mory were as abrupt as ever. Of course, the fact I had angered Nachoo once again may have had something to do with his abruptness.

We left in the appropriate manner. When we left the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny, Vamoo was waiting; he obviously had the speaker turned on. He said to me, "Mvilu, I know how you feel about any attempt to compare you to The One, but you fulfill parts of the prophecy almost every day. Today was another fulfillment."

"What? What part did I fulfill today?" I asked.

"The part where The One will gain his freedom from slavery by saving the life of a very important Mory chohachy. I would most definitely call the Ka'yna a very important Mory chohachy. Would you not agree?"

Tiredly, I replied, "Yes, I guess I would but, I still have my doubts about my being this savior of Tashoo that everyone in Talo-Vy wants me to be. After all, I do not think that the Ka'yno would become so easily angered by The One. Do you?" Vamoo just smiled.

Afterward, Vamoo congratulated Kyna and me profusely and we all headed home. As we walked along, I noticed that Kyta was walking very closely to Rora. She seemed happy for him, although he had not been granted the freedom that her brother had been granted but, in my experience, females look for any reason to be close to the one they want to be with. I caught myself smiling at this thought when I felt a presence next to me. I turned and there was Tyarza walking alongside of me, smiling up at me.

I smiled and asked, "What are you smiling at?"

I noticed in her smile a tinge of sadness. "I am happy for you." She said. "Now you can leave Talo-Vy anytime you want and not return but that thought also makes me sad."

"Why would I want to do that?"

"Has that not been your desire, your dream?"

"No, Tyarza, it has not. My desire and dream is to find out why I cannot remember much of my life before I arrived in Talo-Vy. I believe I was kidnapped from my home and brought here after having my memories removed somehow. If I am right, my desire and dream is to find

those that kidnapped me and extract my revenge upon them. Plus, I have other reasons for staying here.”

“What other reasons could you possibly have?”

“The promise I mentioned in the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny.”

“What promise?”

“The promise to protect and defend you at all costs. I also promised to find a way to take you home. Plus, I need to train Rora to be a better swordsman so he can defend his loved ones in case I am not around to do it.”

As I said this, we were passing a relatively large tree. Tyarza grabbed my hand, pulled me behind the tree and kissed me, passionately. I was a bit shocked, to say the least, but not unpleasantly so. After she pulled her lips away from mine, I asked her, “Tyarza, what about the chohachy that you are promised to? Will he not be upset about what just happened?”

“I care not how he feels.”

“Why not?”

“I will tell you later. Hurry, we have to catch up to the rest.”

We parted ways at TaJoola's home. As we walked along, I was thinking about what Tyarza had said. She is promised to another chohachy, but she kisses me and doesn't care whether or not he would be upset. The unsettling thing is, I'm starting to not really care if he's upset either. I've never felt this way about a woman before in my life. I now realize I want Tyarza to be a part of my life and not just temporarily; I now understand my feelings; for the first time in my life, I am hopelessly, helplessly in love and I will do anything she asks of me, just to prove it.

When we returned home, I had Rora retrieve the weaponry that Sha'-Naky had given to me when he adopted me as his brother. Since I was no longer a slave and also required to protect Talo-Vy, I felt that I should carry weapons. After Rora brought them to me, I examined the swords closely. The long sword, reminded me of the Scottish Claymore sword in shape, but was significantly larger. The short sword looked like the Roman Gladius sword in shape and design, only not as robust. The dagger brought to mind the old-fashioned Arkansas Toothpick except it was about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length. However, since the longsword only resembled the Claymore and the short sword was a poor imitation of the Gladius, I was determined to design and manufacture my own swords, especially the short sword.

Having been trained in the use of the English Hand and a Half and the Japanese Katana swords, I knew that I could handle them proficiently. Therefore, I wanted to have swords manufactured that more closely matched the Hand and a Half and Katana Swords. I turned on my chronoputer and, despite the fact that everything was written in a writing form I had never seen my whole time on Tashoo, read how to manufacture these swords. I asked Ara to give me some paper and pen and, translating into Tashoonian, wrote down these instructions. I knew that Talo-Vy had bladesmiths and I was determined to have one of them manufacture my own personal weaponry using the instructions that I was now translating. The manufacture of the Katana sword would take the longest due to the intricacy of its manufacture. But, I was willing to wait.

I continued to translate and write for several ahi'nu. I stopped long enough to eat dinner and feed Chy, but I returned immediately afterward to continue my translation. Other than dinner, the reason it took so long was the fact that I continually found myself fantasizing about Tyarza and the kiss she had given me earlier in the day. I found myself fantasizing that the kiss was a precursor to us becoming even closer, perhaps permanently closer. Of course, the fact that Chy almost continually demanded my attention didn't help either.

When I finally finished writing, I lay the sheets of paper on the floor next to the bed and lay there thinking. As I told Tyarza on the day we met, no one wants to be a slave and now I was no longer a slave. I could leave Talo-Vy if I wanted, but I didn't want to leave. I had unfinished business here and I was determined to finish it.

Chy jumped up on the bed and I held the furs up so he could crawl under. As soon as he did so, he curled up next to where I normally slept and, very shortly, was sound asleep. As I felt the warmth of his body heat and the softness of his fur, I felt sleep starting to call to me. I continued to fantasize about me and Tyarza until Morpheus finally claimed me.