

XXVIII

Summoned Again (Day 212 on Tashoo)

It has been quiet these last ten days or so. I haven't experienced any kind of nightmare. I have been able to sleep and awaken completely rested. That is, until tonight. Tonight, another damnable nightmare has descended upon me. When will these things end?

Tonight, Tyarza and I are together and on a boat far from shore. I am sitting in a chair with a fishing rod in my hands and Tyarza is sitting next to me. She is wearing a bikini with crimson red panties and lemon glacier yellow bra which offers a nearly perfect contrast to her lion yellow skin and an equally perfect complement to her blue-blond hair and yellow-in-blue eyes. She seems to be fascinated by what I am doing; yet, she doesn't seem interested in having her own fishing rod. As we sit there, I sense a large presence nearby. I turn and I can see two Akootona lying on the deck of the boat, a nearly grown male and a 1/3 grown female. The male is lying behind and partially around the female. They are both asleep. Nearby, in another pair of chairs, I can see Rora and Kyta. They are holding hands and talking like lovers tend to do when they don't want others to hear them. Every now and again, Kyta reaches up and gently rubs her cheek against Rora's and purrs loudly enough that I can hear her from seven meters away. I smile at them as the thought comes to my mind how much in love they are with each other.

As I look at Rora and Kyta, I feel a small hand lightly caressing my left arm. I turn, look at Tyarza and see a smile on her lips and look of happiness on her face. "I thought you were afraid of the water, Tyarza. So, why are you out here with me?"

"Because, I believe that you will not allow anything to cause me harm if you can prevent it."

"That is true. I will protect you as long as there is breath in my body."

"What is it that you are doing?"

"It is called fishing. I am attempting to catch a large fish. If I am successful, then we shall have a good fish meal later. I am certain that Rora, Kyta and the Akootona would love to have fish to eat. Would you not like some fish?"

"If you catch them and prepare them, I am certain I will love them."

I laugh and say, "Well, I do not know about preparing them, but I most assuredly can catch them."

As I look at her, she ducks her head and her smile broadens. "Please do not look at me like that. It makes me a little uncomfortable."

"I cannot help it, Tyarza. You are beautiful and I am helplessly in love with you."

Now, her smile becomes a little flirtatious as she looks up at me again. A slightly serious look crosses her face as she reaches up and lightly presses her lips against mine. As she is kissing me, I can feel the weather change. It gets noticeably cooler. I look and I can't see the horizon any more. The damnable gray fog starts closing in on us. Soon, the only thing I can see is the boat in which we are sitting. Gradually, the Akootona, Rora and Kyta are absorbed by the fog. Finally, Tyarza is slowly fading away as well.

As she starts to disappear, I can hear Tyarza saying, "Take care of yourself, Mvilu. Be careful when you are asked to leave Talo-Vy. Things are not always what they seem."

Then, she is gone.

Now, I can see an office. In the office, I can see several beings in the office. Two are Uany; but there are several species there as well, including two most unusual looking creatures. These two creatures have never been in any of my other nightmares. I also see two of the Khorcha creatures that have been in several of my previous nightmares, but these two are not the ones I've seen before. For some reason, this situation worries me. I find myself breathing fearfully. What is this nightmare and why does it concern me?

A large man, approximately 120 kg in weight, almost two meters in height, about 42 Terran years of age, with small, dark, shifty eyes, a large mouth, and bushy, graying, coal black eyebrows, is sitting behind his overly large Congressional office desk in the Terran capitol on the Crimean Peninsula. The name is Senator Tyrene Koshuvala comes to my mind; he is from Nirtana Selipe. Senator Koshuvala is entertaining several visitors. Among the visitors was Ambassador Zaiku of the Khorchan Galactic Empire, his mate Qatrikt, Ambassador Ch'ka'eh of the Yavkognian Interstellar Empire, his mate Ch'lo'to, Vice Admiral Jeremy Yamashita of the Interstellar Terran Navy, and several representatives of Terra's interstellar trading partners.

The Yavkognians look like beetles, having exoskeletons all over their bodies, except for their head, neck, hands, and feet. The head and neck resemble those of a gorilla with the exception of the multi-faceted eyes which cover about 15% of the head. The head and neck, however, are completely hairless. The hands, four of them, are also hairless, look human in that they have four fingers and an opposable thumb that is reminiscent of a human's thumb. The feet,

normally covered with shoes or boots, are humanoid in shape. The exoskeleton is battleship gray with sunset orange irregularly shaped spots. The female is about 10% larger than the male and her the abdomen of her exoskeleton is more rounded.

While the others sit around the Senator's desk, Admiral Jeremy Yamashita alternately paces near the wall opposite the desk and stands in one of the office's corners facing the gathering. Since Senator Koshuvala is the ranking member of the Senate Military Finance Committee, Admiral Yamashita, the ranking member of the Terran military, is obligated to attend this gathering. However, it's obvious that that the Admiral isn't happy. When he stands still, he glares at the Khorchan and Yavkognian Ambassadors. The looks aren't lost on Senator Koshuvala, the only being in the room facing the Admiral. The Senator gives the Admiral disapproving looks every time the Admiral glares at Zaiku and Ch'ka'eh.

Ambassador Zaiku is speaking in the somewhat breathless manner in which the Khorcha speak Terran. "Senator, please believe me when I say that neither the Khorcha nor the Yavkognians have any designs on the Tonojen star system. Is that not true, Ambassador Ch'ka'eh?"

Ambassador Ch'ka'eh replies in the buzzing language of the Yavkognians. His speech is made understandable by the translator he wears at his throat which gives his voice the almost metallic monotone sound of early Terran computer voices. "Yes, Ambassador Zaiku, it is true. Even though Tonojen is less than a light year from the borders of our respective empires, neither of our species has found any real use for the system. Perhaps the Terran humans can find a use for it. That is why we wish to sign the necessary treaty to revoke any potential claim to the system."

Senator Koshuvala says, "Good. When our space probes discovered Tonojen, our trading allies warned us of the proximity of your empires and, needless to say, there were those in our Congress who feared a potential conflict with the Khorcha and Yavkognians. After all, we are not prepared for such a conflict."

The Admiral's eyes grow large when the Senator makes this statement; however, he doesn't say anything. The Khorchan and Yavkognian Ambassadors, on the other hand, exchange a knowing look. Even the Ambassadors of the Terran trading partners are shocked when the Senator makes this revelation.

Once again, my nightmare is causing me distress in my sleep. But, unlike almost all of my previous nightmares, even though I am fearful, I don't moan and cry out. The second part of the dream confuses me. Senator Koshuvala? Why am I dreaming about someone named Senator Koshuvala? Why do I know of someone by the name of Senator Koshuvala? Why do I know about a treaty ceding Tonojen to the Terran Interstellar Federation and why should this knowledge bother me? What does the treaty have to do with me? It's a rare nightmare in which I dream about something or someone different from what is going on, though.

This nightmare is unusual. Only very rarely have I ever had a nightmare that didn't include me so, why am I doing it tonight? It seems like there is a betrayal of some kind being implied in this nightmare. It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever to me. Is it a warning of some kind? It can't be. For a dream to be a warning, it would have to be a premonition. Premonitions are just coincidences and I don't believe in coincidences. I've heard of out-of-body experiences but are they real? If they are real, is this one of them? I guess only time will tell.

Soon, I can hear someone scratching on my door. Fortunately, I am already awake by the time I hear the door opening. I turn my head toward the door and see Ara's face as she enters my room. I hear her saying, "Mvilu, I heard you moaning again. Did you have another nightmare?"

"Yes, Ara. This was one of the strangest nightmares I have had yet. I dreamed about a leader accepting a promise at face value without verifying the intent behind the promise."

"Really? That is not wise. Why would this leader do this?"

"I cannot say, Ara. It is just a dream, nothing more. So, I would not worry about it. I guess it is time to get up?"

"You do not have to get up anymore, Mvilu. You know that."

"I know, but I want to assist you, if I can."

"Oh, very well. I will be in the kitchen whenever you get ready."

A few athalloo later, I, accompanied by Chy, was in the kitchen talking with Ara. She is humming a happy tune so I think that she had a "visitor" last night. Every now and then, she stops what she is doing and just smiles. Even though she knows that I know about her "visitor", I also know she won't talk about it; I've tried. The few times I've tried, she glares at me, not angrily mind you; she just glares and says something like, "A lady never talks about any visitor she entertains in the privacy of her room, especially if the visitor is someone as important as my visitor. Now, I would appreciate it if you would not talk about it anymore." Naturally, I agreed that it would be in everybody's best interest, if I didn't bring it up anymore.

When she finished preparing the nakvyv, I took Chy's nakvyv into our room and returned to the kitchen. Ara and I brought ours out to the table where Rora was already sitting. He waited patiently as Ara and I took our seats. After we sat down, Rora said, "Mvilu, you have been free from slavery for ten days; what are you going to do to be a productive resident of Talo-Vy?"

“Well, since we have completed the mota, I thought I would start training the achohachy of Talo-Vy in sword fighting techniques. I am going to suggest to Ka' Mu-Naka that I start with, perhaps, ten achohachy from each Ka'na to begin with. I have several ideas that I am certain have never been considered by the Mory.”

“You mean, you do not want to go visit Tyarza?”

I smiled knowingly and replied, “Well, I guess I could visit her. What are you going to do, Rora?”

Rora started visibly before saying, “I, uh, thought I would accompany you—to keep you from doing anything dishonorable.”

My smile broadened and I stole a quick glance at Ara as I said, “Really? Well, thank you, Rora. When we get there, I will tell Kyta that you do not have time to talk to her because you have to make certain that Tyarza and I do not do anything dishonorable.”

Ara, who was watching this exchange, was having a hard time holding her laughter in. She knew I was giving Rora a hard time, as usual. However, Rora said, “Well, if Kyta is there, perhaps, uh, she and I could, uh, spend some time talking as well.”

Laughing, I said, “Rora, I do not plan on visiting Tyarza right now. I really had planned on visiting Ka' Mu-Naka and making my suggestion about training ten achohachy from each Ka'na. After that, I wanted us to go to the Atasho Vaorado so I could start training you in the methods of defense that I will start training the achohachy in using.”

By this time, we had finished eating. I assisted Ara in clearing the table and washing the dishes. As we washed the dishes, Ara said, “You really do enjoy picking on Rora, do you not?”

“Aw, Ara, I cannot help it. He just leaves himself open for it. Of course, his extreme innocence makes it easy to do also.”

“I guess he might not be so innocent if . . .”

“If what, Ara?”

She shook her head and said, “Never mind, Mvilu. Do you think that Ka' Mu-Naka will agree with your idea?”

“Nice way to change the subject; but, I believe he will agree. It is in the best interest of Talo-Vy if we follow my idea.”

Ara and I finished the dishes and left the kitchen. As I exited the kitchen, Rora stood up and headed for the door. I looked at him and said, “Rora, you do remember that I said I was not going to visit Tyarza.”

With a slight glare, Rora responded, “I know, Mvilu. I just thought that, if the both of us spoke with the Ka' Mu-Naka, he might be more willing to speak with the other Aka' and convince them to send the achohachy that you want to train.”

“Well, in that case, let me go to my room and retrieve my weapons before we go.”

The route to Mu-Naka's Suala Ka'ny was in a different direction from going to Joola's home, although, normally, the walking time was about the same. However, today as we walked along, several residents of Mu-Naka's Ka'na stopped us and thanked me profusely for saving the life of Lo-Katoo. The older residents and the anohachy with arothoo also thanked Rora and me equally profusely for the meat that we had been providing for them lately, some of the anohachy even gave us Mory “kisses”.

After about fifteen athaloo of walking, and being interrupted, Rora and I arrived at the Suala Ka'ny of Mu-Naka. The door guard, his name was Nan-Choonka, admitted us and went to announce our arrival and our reason for visiting to Mu-Naka.

It took a couple of athaloo before Nan-Choonka returned. During this wait, I took the time to do a little exploring of the anteroom. This was my first visit here and I wanted to see if there were any major differences between a Suala Ka'ny and the Suala Ka'ynony. I walked to the corresponding wall of portraits and found Naka's. He looked almost exactly the way he really looked except he was significantly younger in his portrait. Next to Naka's portrait was the portrait of his predecessor. His predecessor, who looked to be around 25 in his portrait, looked as humble as Naka did in his portrait. As a matter of fact, each of the previous Aka' whose portraits I looked at had pretty much the same look on their face as Naka did on his. On another wall, I noticed paintings of local animals, but before I could study them, Nan-Choonka returned and ushered us into the Choko Ka'ny.

When we entered the Choko Ka'ny, Naka walked up to us and said, “Welcome to my humble home, please enter and grace me with your presence.” To hear Naka say this caught me a bit off-guard.

Rora said, “I wish my home was as luxurious as yours.”

After this exchange, Naka approached and gave Rora and me the Mory sign of great friendship and, standing between us, escorted us to the back of the Suala. I was awestruck at the lack of opulence. Naka escorted us to a room similar to a study. In the room, I saw a relatively small desk, a table with several chairs around it, built in bookshelves filled with books, and a couple of overstuffed chairs. Naka indicated a couple of chairs at the table and we all sat down.

Naka said, “Nan-Choonka said that you had some important information to discuss with me. What do you wish to discuss?”

I said, “My Ka', now that the mota is completed, and I've received my freedom from slavery, I believe it is time to start training the achohachy of Talo-Vy in the finer arts of sword fighting. I thought we would start with five or ten achohachy from each Ka'na.”

“Errr. Eighty achohachy to train. That sounds like a lot of achohachy. Are you certain you could train that many achohachy at the same time?”

“It would not be easy, my Ka', but, it would not be impossible. We must make sure that E'-Anoo and Ja-Kajy are among the first ones that I train.”

“Yes, they should be since you did promise to train them.

“Very well. I will contact each of the Aka' and inform them of your offer. I will also suggest that you be paid for your training. I will suggest ^15 per chohachy per day.” I know I looked shocked because he added, “I believe it is well worth the amount, Mvilu, if you can train our achohachy to be better sword fighters.”

“My Ka', ^15 per chohachy is entirely too much. That is ^1200 per day. While I believe we should do whatever we can to improve our achohachy, I do not believe we should overcharge the Aka'. Therefore, please only ask for no more than ^5.”

“Very well, Mvilu. If you think that ^15 is too much to charge, then I will suggest no more than ^5.”

“Actually, my Ka', I would prefer that the Aka' pay what they believe my training is worth to them. But, I do not want more than ^5 per chohachy per day.”

“All right, Mvilu. When do you wish to start your training?”

“As soon as the Aka' can select which achohachy they want to be trained. By the way, since I am already training Kyna, I would like for him to continue his training. He shows great promise just as Rora does.”

“I will relieve him from his duties as a hunter. How will your training sessions be conducted?”

“I will train three days and allow the trainees a day off. The training will be extremely intense and exhausting. The achohachy will need one day off to rest from the training. Plus, it will give the achohachy time to go hunting for themselves.”

“I shall include that information when I invite the Aka' to send achohachy for training. Is there anything else you wish to discuss, Mvilu?”

“No, my Ka'. I am going to give Rora some preliminary training as soon as we can get to the Atasho Vaorado.”

“I shall stop by after I send my message to the other Aka'. I wish to see this training in action. I will bring Kyna and we will train as well.”

“Thank you, my Ka'. With your permission, Rora and I will leave now. Thank you once again for seeing us on such short notice.”

“Of course, Mvilu. 'May your teeth and claws be sharp and always at the throat of your enemies.”

I replied, “I wish the same to you as well.”

Rora and I left the Suala Ka'ny and headed to the Atasho Vaorado. When we arrived, I had Rora start his balance and falling exercises. He was getting better with both. He was now able to walk halfway down the boards before he fell. As I intimated earlier, he had started getting right back on the boards when he would fall off and complete his walk. He had now gotten to where he could fall, roll and get right back up onto his feet with very few miscues. After five falls, we each picked up a dauanka. I had Rora go through the movements I had already taught him. He was still making minor mistakes. His mistakes weren't the kind that could get him killed outright; but, they could get him injured enough that a dishonorable chohachy could kill him as he lay on the ground. When I caught him making one of these mistakes, I stopped him immediately and corrected it. Sometimes, I was gentle about it; sometimes, I was not. Rora never took any anger I expressed personally because he knew that I was concerned with his potentially getting hurt or killed during a battle and how his mother would react should either of these occur.

About half a hi'nu later, Mu-Naka and Kyna arrived. They stood to one side for several athata watching my fine tuning of Rora's techniques. Finally, I stopped training Rora and turned to Naka and Kyna. “Welcome, my Ka' and Kyna. It has been a while since Rora and I have had the opportunity to train; so, I was making certain he hadn't forgotten anything. Are you ready to learn a new fighting technique?”

They looked at me curiously, but Naka said, “I am ready to learn anything that you are willing to teach me, Mvilu.” Kyna nodded in agreement.

“Good. Now, I know that Mory honor does not allow for the necessity of learning what I will show you today, but it does not hurt to know how to defend yourself in this manner. However, first, I need to make certain that you have not forgotten anything that you learned before we started working on the mota in earnest. So, please pick up a dauanka and assume defensive positions. Rora, I want you to join them.” They did so. “Now, s...l...o...w...l...y move in your defensive moves. You should finish your moves at almost the same time without looking at one another.” Once again, they did so. “Good. You have not forgotten. Now, here is what I want to teach you today.”

I called Rora to me and had him stand with his back to mine. Naka and Kyna looked at us curiously and Rora had a look of curiosity on his face as well. As I stood with my back to

Rora's back, I said, "This is what I was referring to earlier. You may think that you will never need to use this technique, but it is always a good idea to know it. If you will notice, I am not standing so close to Rora as to interfere with his ability to swing his dauanka. This allows each of us to use our adauanka freely without interfering with each other's movements." I turned to Rora and said, "Rora, swing your dauanka to show what I mean." He did so as did I.

Naka and Kyna were very impressed with this. I said, "My Ka', you and TeKyna stand in the same position and swing your adauanka and I will critique your actions. You may swing your adauanka slowly to verify that what I showed you is everything I said it was."

Naka and Kyna stood back to back about 30 cm apart and started swinging their adauanka. I could see the looks on their faces as they realized that my idea worked in the manner that I claimed it would. Kyna said, "Mvilu, when would we need to do this in a battle?"

"As I said TeKyna, you may never need to use this technique, but, if you run into a group of achohachy that are not as honorable as the Mory are known for being, it would be good to know how to defend your friend's back and for him to be able to defend your back at the same time. Now, to further show the effectiveness of this technique, my Ka', first, I want you and TeKyna to attack Rora."

Naka nodded and had Kyna attack Rora from the front while he attacked from the back. Rora, trying to keep both of them in front of him, kept turning around and around. With each turn, I could see Rora's defense was weakening even though neither Ka' Naka nor Kyna had even tried to attack him. Finally, after several athata, Kyna attacked Rora from the front and Rora, despite being tired, did a magnificent job of defending against Kyna's attack. However, despite his concerns about the honor in such actions, Naka attacked Rora's undefended back and made a killing stroke.

"Very good. Now, try again with me standing at Rora's back."

I stood with my back to Rora and had Naka and Kyna attack us. Kyna faced Rora and Naka faced me. As they circled us, Rora and I turned slowly to follow their movements. Now, as they realized that it was impossible to mount a guaranteed successful attack on either of us, Naka and Kyna understood what I had been saying. Also, since they were moving in bigger circles than Rora and I were turning, they realized how quickly they were tiring compared to when it was two to one and Rora had to turn while they stood still.

After a few athaloo of this, I stopped the exercise and said, "Ka' Mu-Naka, as you can see, this technique prevents anyone from attacking you from the rear unexpectedly. Also, it is perhaps the easiest technique to learn and implement. This is one of the techniques that I was talking about when Rora and I visited you earlier. Now, why do you and Kyna not stand back to back and defend against Rora and me?"

Naka and Kyna stood back to back as Rora and I assumed the attack position. "Okay, Ka' Mu-Naka, Kyna, notice how easy it is to keep an eye on both Rora and me. You see how with someone standing at your back, you do not have to worry about one of us attacking your

back while you watch the other one of us.” They nodded. “Now, just because you can keep up with two achohachy does not mean that your defense is perfect. Why? Because there is no such thing as a perfect defense. Here. I will show you.”

I called Rora to me and whispered to him, “Rora, you confront Ka' Naka and I'll use Kyna to demonstrate what I told Ka' Mu-Naka.”

“Yes, Mvilu.”

Rora walked over and stood in front of Naka and I stood in front of Kyna. We raised our adauanka and started our attack and defense. As we sparred, I feinted to Kyna's right, spun around and slapped his left side. Sufficiently surprised, Kyna and Naka looked at me shock written all over their faces.

Naka said, “Mvilu, you said that as long as we stood back to back it would be difficult to defeat us. How were you able to defeat Kyna so easily?”

“As I said, my Ka', no defense is perfect. If you know what the defense is, you have a better than 50-50 chance of defeating it. Since I told you how to perform this defense, it would stand to reason that I knew how to defeat it. What I did was prove it. When our achohachy learn this technique, they will be better able to defend themselves as well as Talo-Vy.”

“Yes. I agree wholeheartedly, Mvilu.”

The next day, sixty achohachy showed up at the Atasho Vaorado behind Ara's house, including each of the Aka'. Each Ka' sent five achohachy, except for Mu-Naka, who sent ten achohachy and Ky-Kikoo, who sent twenty. The first thing I showed them was eight positions of defense. At first there was mild grumbling because they were told that they would be learning how to improve their sword fighting skills. However, after I explained that defense was as much a part of good sword fighting skills as offense is, they accepted what I said, albeit with a little skepticism.

As the trainees executed each position, I walked through and corrected any improper stances. Even though several of the trainees still questioned as to why I was training them in defense, none of them refused to do what I told them to do, especially when they saw the Aka' listening to and doing what I was saying.

These sixty achohachy were so intent on learning what I was teaching that, after the first three days, I chose to start intensifying their training after the first day off. “Everyone, I am going to teach you a fighting method that you may never need to use. But, it is always wise to know as many different fighting methods as possible, especially those that you may think you will never use.”

Everyone looked at each other in confusion. But, when I spoke again, I had their undivided attention. “What I need you to do is pair off. Then, when you have paired off, stand at each other's back about 30 cm apart.”

The achohachy did as I said. “Now, I realize that Mory honor will not allow this to happen, but, can anyone attack you from behind?”

Everyone looked around before giving me a unanimous, “KY!”

“As I said, Mory honor will not allow you to be attacked from the rear when you are fighting another chohachy. However, there is always the possibility that you will run into that one group of Mory that are dishonorable. If you are not alone when you meet any of these Mory, you should immediately turn your backs to each other. If there are three of you, then you should form a triangle. Actually, if you have enough achohachy, you can form a circle making it all but impossible for an enemy to mount a successful attack. If you are alone, the best thing you can do is to find a large tree and stand with your back to it. This will do the same thing as having a partner there with you, except that the tree can't fight with you.” There was a ripple of laughter after I said this.

I continued. “Now, to show you what I am talking about, Ka' Mu-Naka, TeKyna, I would like you to mount an attack on Ka' Ky-Kikoo.”

Ka' Kikoo stepped away from his partner and in front of the group. Naka immediately moved to the front of Kikoo and Kyna moved behind him. Having two attackers, being something that he had never had to deal with before, Kikoo immediately started slowly spinning trying to keep his eye on each of his “attackers”. After several rotations of Kikoo's spinning, Kyna moved to attack. When Kikoo turned to meet his attack, Naka immediately moved in behind Kikoo and made a killing move on his back.

I said, “Now, Ka' Kikoo, I want you and Mon-Shasta to stand back to back while Ka' Mu-Naka and TeKyna attack.”

They stood back to back and, as happened yesterday, Naka and Kyna couldn't safely attack. All of the trainees were amazed at the ease with which Kikoo and Shasta were able to protect themselves from Naka and Kyna. They exerted virtually no energy and only had to keep an eye on one of the “attackers”.

I stopped the exercise, turned to the trainees and said, “Now, as you can clearly see, defense is significantly easier if you have someone protecting your back. This is a very important thing for you to learn. I want to spend the next few days teaching you the proper techniques on how to perform this defense.”

For the next three days, we worked on the back to back defense. I made certain that everyone changed partners regularly because I didn't want them to be dependent on one particular chohachy to be their defense partner. I also made certain that they worked with achohachy from different Aka'na. I did this because, since we had implemented the “army” of Talo-Vy, they needed to understand that every chohachy wearing a vest of Talo-Vy was a friend and ally during a battle.

As I promised, the exercises that we employed during training really took a toll on the achohachy because, besides the back to back training, I also made them run around the Atasho Vaorado, exercise, fight one on one, and go through the eight positions of self-defense. Being a bit out of practice, I also got a bit winded every day. So, I needed the rest as much as everyone else. I also showed them how to walk the boards and made them walk them also.

During the nakvyvy after our day off from training, we heard someone scratching on the door. Since I was no longer a slave, I could answer the door without permission. When I opened the door, I saw Vamoo standing there.

“TeVamoo, welcome to our humble home. Please enter and grace us with your presence.”

“I wish my home was as luxurious as yours.”

Ara stood and said, “TeVamoo, to what do we owe the pleasure of your presence in our home today?”

“I have a message for Mvilu.” Turning to me, he said, “Mvilu, the Ka'yno has ordered you and Rora to the Suala Ka'ynony immediately. You are to speak with the Ishoo'se Aka'ny.”

“Immediately? This is most unusual. It is not even the second hi'nu. We have not even finished eating the nakvyvy.”

“I am sorry, Mvilu; but, the Ka'yno's orders said, 'Immediately'.”

“Very well, TeVamoo. Please allow me time to change into a better set of clothing.”

“Once again, I am sorry, Mvilu. The Ka'yno said he did not care if you were naked. You are to come as soon as I deliver the message, at sword point if necessary.”

I looked at Ara, who had a worried look on her face. “Do not worry, Ara.” I said. “If the Ishoo'se Aka'ny will be in attendance, I should be safe from any attempt on my life by the Ka'yno.”

I turned back to Vamoo and said, “I am ready, TeVamoo.”

I turned to Rora and said, “Rora?”

“I am ready, Mvilu.” He said as he walked toward the door.

Even though it was the Mory way, it wasn't mine. Therefore, I turned to Ara and said, “I am guessing that I will see you shortly, Ara.” I turned and, following Vamoo, left.

After fifteen athaloo, we arrived at the Suala Ka'ynony. Vamoo left us to announce our arrival. A few athata later, he returned and held the door open and allowed us to enter the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny. Rora and I walked to the center of the room and stopped about five meters from base of the dais. When I stopped, I stood at attention with my eyes on the Aka' and, amazingly, Rora mimicked me. I could see small nods of approval from the Aka', the Ka'yno, however. . .

The Ka'yno began speaking. “Mvilu Uatusun,” (Not Uany? This not only caught my attention, but caused me a bit of concern.) “due to the fact that your hunting trip with Ka' Mu-Naka was cut short because of the life threatening injuries my chorothy sustained, injuries that you were able to treat, thereby saving his life, you were unable to show the Ka' Mu-Naka how you and your—friend, My-Rora, are able to obtain the amount of meat that you obtain on a regular basis. When I brought this up to the Ishoo'se Aka'ny yesterday, it was decided by a vote of 5 – 3, that you and My-Rora will accompany Ka' Ky-Kikoo's hunting party tomorrow when they go on their regular hunting trip. You will show them the secret of your success hunting. This is not a request.”

“I understand, Great One.”

“Good. You may return to what you were doing before we sent for you.”

As he finished speaking, Lo-Nachoo cut his eyes toward Katoo. As if on cue, Katoo said, “Chorothy, since I was unable to witness the hunting prowess of Mvilu the last time, I would like to accompany Kikoo's hunting party.” Nachoo's action and Katoo's request were so perfectly timed it almost looked rehearsed, either that or Nachoo expected Katoo's request.

Nachoo turned back to me and asked, “Are you willing to make the same guarantee of safety that you made previously, Mvilu Uatusun?” Nachoo's calling me by my name really worried me.

However, I replied, “Of course, Great One. If Ka' Kikoo will write it down, I will sign it.”

Nachoo raised his hand and said, “I do not believe that will be necessary. Do you, Mvilu Uatusun? Are we not friends and comrades? Besides, you proved your willingness to protect my chorothy's life the last time.”

Highly suspicious, I replied, “Yes, Great One. That is true and I will protect his life with my own once again.”

“Then, you and My-Rora may leave and return to what you had planned to do today. Just remember that you must be at Ka' Ky-Kikoo's hunting lodge by nightfall. If you fail to appear, I will send achohachy to insure that you arrive.”

“Have no fear, Great One. The Aka' will be with me all day as we train to improve our swordsmanship.” I turned to Katoo and said, “Ka'yna, unless you have something more important to do, why do you not join us in our training. I believe that you would benefit.”

“I appreciate the offer, Mvilu but, I am busy all day.”

“Well, Ka'yna, in that case, I will see you this evening.” He nodded.

Ka' Chakoo said, “Great One, since the Ishoo'se Aka'ny have no further business to conduct today and, since, as Mvilu said, we are all training to improve our swordsmanship, we shall all take our leave of you and accompany Mvilu to the Atasho Vaorado.”

Nachoo said, “Of course, Ka' Ry-Chakoo.”

He turned and, accompanied by Katoo, exited the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny through the door behind the dais signifying that the audience was over. Since the Ka'yno had left before us, we weren't required to back out.

I was deep in thought as we left the Suala Ka'ynony. Something was wrong. Except during important ceremonies where it was required, Lo-Nachoo had never ever used my name. I had a ticklish feeling that he was planning something; at the same time, he hadn't argued when Katoo asked to accompany Kikoo's hunting party. Was that an attempt to cause me to lower my guard? And why did he want Rora to accompany Kikoo's hunting party as well? Something was definitely wrong about this situation.

Finally, after thinking for several athata, I turned to Ka' Thaty and said, “My Ka', the Ka'yno said the vote was 5 – 3. May I ask, who were the ones who voted against it?”

Thaty said, “It was Ka' Mu-Naka, Ka' Re-Sheshoo and Ka' Ky-Kikoo.”

I stopped and asked them, “Why did you not want TeRora and me to accompany Ka' Kikoo's hunting party?”

They looked at one another before Sheshoo said, “We believe that the Ka'yno wishes to do you harm, Mvilu.”

I looked at the other Aka' and asked, “What about you?”

“We are curious as to how you and Rora are so successful hunting,” Chakoo said. “Although, I am curious as to why the Ka'yno was so nice to you.”

Ludy said, “You are correct, Chakoo. It is not in the Ka'ynony nature to be nice to any Uany but most especially Mvilu. When he suggested that you and Rora accompany Kikoo's hunting party, he used your name instead of his normal Uany to speak about you.”

I said, “Ka' Kikoo, is not your entire hunting party training?”

“Yes. Why?”

“I am going to set them apart and train them extra hard. I hope we are jumping at shadows but I want them to be prepared just in case.”

After several athata of thought, Kikoo said, “I agree, Mvilu.”

After we arrived at the Atasho Vaorado, I did as I said. I trained Kikoo's trainees extra hard. When we broke for the nakyvo, I told everyone that today was a special day of training and I expected everyone to return after the nakyvo, especially Ka' Kikoo's hunting party.

When Rora and I arrived at Ara's home for the nakyvo, I told her what the meeting with the Ka'yno was about. She was a bit put out at the fact that both Rora and I were going to be gone for several days. Because she had gotten so used to cooking for the three of us, she wasn't certain that she could cook for just herself. Also, she was worried that the Ka'yno wanted Rora to accompany Kikoo's hunting party. Rora said that it had been the Ka'yno's request that we both accompany Kikoo's hunting party. When I promised that I wouldn't allow anything to happen to Rora if I could prevent it, she didn't worry as much; but, she was still concerned because of the Ka'yno's attitude toward her.