

XXX

**The Ka'yno Threatens Me . . . Again
(Day 234 on Tashoo)**

Another restful night. Another wonderful dream. In this one, I'm in the middle of a quiet meadow sitting on an orange and yellow checkered cloth. Besides me, on the cloth is a picnic basket full of food, a bottle of wine and Tyarza who is sitting next to me. I look into her yellow-in-blue eyes and, as usual, I am completely captivated. I stroke her blue-blond hair and caress her lion yellow arms. She's wearing her usual one-piece leather dress that fits her from below her arms to mid-thigh. The leather strings seem to be pulled a bit tighter than normal for her. Is she subtly making me an offer? She's smiling a little seductively at me through her brown lips, exposing beautiful straight white teeth. I hope it's just my imagination. She knows I respect the warrior she's promised to too much to even remotely think of being anything but respectful to her.

The sky is beautiful and clear. The sun is warm on my face. I close my eyes and turn my face toward the sun. Unexpectedly, I feel the soft touch of lips on mine. As I open my eyes, I see Tyarza kissing me. It's a feeling that I enjoy ecstatically. I want the kiss to go on forever. I feel myself slowly lying back. I feel Tyarza's weight on my chest as she follows me down. I love this feeling and I find myself praying that I can experience it every day for the rest of my life. I find myself hoping that the chohachy she is promised to will accept and understand that she would rather be with me. Tyarza pulls her lips from mine and lays her head on my chest. As she lies there, I gently stroke her long, silky soft hair.

As we lay there, I see the sky starting to become cloudy. The cloudiness appears suddenly. It's the same cloudiness that I've seen in almost every one of my dreams of Tyarza. Now, it's getting cooler and, once again, a fog starts to envelope Tyarza and me. I see her starting to fade away. She's slowly being replaced by grayness. Now the grayness is being replaced by blackness. The blackness is pierced by pinpoints of blindingly white light.

As Tyarza fades, she's replaced by something else and I'm somewhere else. It looks like the room that I've been in in so many of my nightmares. I see the two dinosaurian creatures and the human from those nightmares appear, Admiral Jeremy Yamashita, the human, and Dreydos and Rokshesan, the dinosaurians, called, uh, Khorcha. I don't know why they show up in my nightmares but, they do. I fear, hate and distrust the dinosaurian creatures. Since I woke up outside of Talo-Vy, I've never been afraid of anything, but I fear these creatures. Is this fear something genetic? They do look like killing machines from the top of their crested heads to the tip of the sickle shaped claw on their on the interior toe of each of their three-toed feet.

The Admiral, the Khorcha and I are talking. But, I'm not in any mood to be friendly with the Khorcha. In fact, I seem to be baiting them to reveal their real reason for being on Terra and meeting with me. They seem to be impervious to my attempts. In fact, they seem to be enjoying my attempts. They aren't laughing, though, and their faces seem to be impervious to smiling.

Maybe it's because they are incapable of laughing. Maybe it's because they know what I'm trying to do. I just see that they're not laughing. This is what is scaring and upsetting me.

Ambassador Dreydos is saying, "We have nothing to gain by telling you a lie about the situation that Rokshesan described, Commander."

Sarcastically, I reply, "Don't you?"

It seems that Ambassador Dreydos chose to ignore my sarcasm and continues, "As a matter of fact, as you said, we have plenty to lose. If you or the Admiral got word out about how easily your people defeat us in battle, it would cause the morale of your military to increase to the point that we would have to sue for peace and end our association with the war effort against the Terrans."

I jump in with both feet, "But, isn't that why you are here?"

The Khorcha just stare at me for a few seconds before Ambassador Dreydos says, in a slow, deliberate manner, "This is true Commander, but we would rather do so with as little loss of Khorchan life as possible."

I am not overly impressed with his statement. I guess my face shows this, because Admiral Yamashita says, "Commander, before your arrival, Ambassador Dreydos told me that the Zahr-Khohr is concerned about the possible annihilation of the Khorchan race by the Terran Alliance, if they do not withdraw from the war. He also said that the Yavkognians are not so concerned about that possibility due to their high reproduction rate."

"Reproduction rate or not, Admiral, the Ambassador seemed surprised that I reminded him of his reason for being here on Terra."

The Ambassadors both give me a look that would melt titanium steel. But, it's Ambassador Dreydos that speaks and he spoke with all the smoothness of an accomplished politician. "I understand why you feel the way you do, Commander. After all, it was the result of a bit of treachery that the Khorchan Empire and the Terran Federation are at war with each other. When you reminded me as to why Rokshesan and I are here, it was a bit unexpected. I didn't think that it was necessary to restate the reason. I wasn't trying to deceive you and the Admiral with my statement about ending the war effort. I just worded it incorrectly. The Zahr-Khohr would rather our withdrawal from the war to be mutually beneficial to both of our species. I hope that you didn't misunderstand my statement."

"No, of course not. Why would I misunderstand what you said? Please forgive me." I am being overtly sarcastic. Too bad it's lost on the Ambassadors. The Khorcha are not known for having a sense of humor. Of course, I'm not trying to be humorous.

"No apologies are necessary, Commander, but yours are accepted."

After thrashing about on my bed for several athaloo, I felt a heavy weight on my chest. I also felt a soft patting on my face. Slowly, I opened my eyes and saw a large feline face looking at me. I heard a soft whining emitting from the throat of this feline. It's Chy. He's been in Ara's home for two Tashoonian months and now weighs in excess of twenty kg. His eyes turned out to be absolutely golden-yellow in color, as bright as amber but not so dark. He's a little less than one-sixth grown, but still underweight. By all accounts when I found him, he should have weighed close to the twenty kg he now weighs. Even though adult males of his species normally weigh in excess of two hundred twenty-five kg, Chy might make it to one hundred fifty kg, but perhaps with the regular feeding he is now receiving, he might make it to one hundred seventy-five to two hundred kg.

During the last two months, I had been training Chy to accept me as his mother. It all started on the day I found him. After the night that Joola fed him, I wouldn't let anybody else feed him and I fed him several times a day. As Joola had said I should, I bathed him regularly, normally about every three or four days. At first, he hated getting the baths, but after a couple of weeks, he started looking forward to getting a bath so much that, when I arrived home from training or hunting, he would race me to the bathroom. I also made certain that I was the most common figure he saw. Because of the feeding, bathing and continually seeing me, he came to think of me as his mother. I guess it was this thought process that caused his concern for me. I also guess that when a Kootona mother had a nightmare, the cub would likely do the same as Chy was currently doing.

After lying there for a few moments to gather my wits, I reached up and scratched Chy on the top of his head. I said, "It is all right, Chy. I am fine. I just had a bad dream."

After I spoke to him, Chy lay down beside me and commenced purring, loudly. I lay there thinking about the dream. The dream was just as vivid as any of the others I had had since my first night in Ara's home; it was also just as strange. I couldn't understand why I would be associating with creatures that resembled dinosaurs. I couldn't understand why I would even know what a dinosaur is. I also couldn't understand why I'd know the man that was sitting with us. He was wearing a uniform and I addressed him as Admiral and the dinosaurs as ambassadors.

After contemplating these things for several moments, I decided to get out of bed. I knew that Chy would not like it very much, but it was morning and I was getting hungry. I listened for movement in the kitchen and was rewarded by hearing the sounds of someone, obviously Ara, in the kitchen preparing the nakvyv for us. She was humming a happy tune, so I guess her "visitor" had stopped by last night after everyone else had gone to bed.

I reached over, stroked Chy's cheek and moved to get out of bed. He surprised me by rolling over onto his back and pinning me to the bed. He looked at me, opened his mouth slightly and gave an unusual sound. It sounded like a combination of a small growl and a purr. Since I had no idea what the sound actually was, I decided to call the sound churring. This sound, I learned later, could be used to denote different emotions, among them love, curiosity

and most notably anger. It was the angry churr that got the most attention from people not expecting to hear it.

I laughed and pushed Chy slightly and said, “Move, Chy. I have to get up.” All he did was roll further over on top of me. “Move, you big oaf.” I said, laughing.

I finally extricated myself from Chy’s heavy weight and got out of bed. I took his head in both of my hands and shook it. “You big old kitten. What am I going to do with you?” I said, laughing even harder. Chy purred loudly. It sounded almost as loud as a Great Plains tornado. I got dressed and headed into the kitchen.

Ara saw me and said, “Chitekuro, Mvilu. Do you wish to feed Chy?”

“Yes, Ara. Do you have anything ready that I can feed him now?”

She pointed to the cooler and said, “There should be about half a kilogram of meat and some vegetables you can feed him. You aren’t mashing them together any more are you?”

“No. I guess I had forgotten to tell you. Thank you for saving it for him.” I went to the cooler, got the food and prepared Chy’s nakyvy. I cut the meat up into cubes about one centimeter in size. I also cut the vegetables into pieces the same size. I mixed the two together and put the mixture into a pot with a little water and heated it until it started to steam slightly. Then, I put the meal into a large bowl and took it to Chy. I also brought him a bowl of water. When I called him and showed him the bowls, he jumped off the bed and walked over to his corner. I call it his corner because that is where I fed him and he knew it.

I returned to the kitchen and saw Rora standing there next to his mother talking with her. Since I wasn’t privy to the conversation, I respectfully kept my distance. Rora looked a little nervous, as did Ara. They were talking quietly, so I couldn’t hear what was being said. After a moment or two, Ara happened to notice me and motioned me over.

I walked over and Ara said to me, “Rora has been ordered to start guard duty again. He is not absolutely certain where he will be on guard duty, but he is thinking he will be patrolling the area between the edge of the garden and the mota to the west of the village. He will not know for certain until he arrives there today. He will be leaving right after we eat the nakyvy.”

I thought out loud, “I wonder if the Ka’yno has decided to start making life difficult for Rora again. I believe the assassination attempt was just another attempt at doing just that.”

Rora said, “I do not know, Mvilu. I got word from him late yesterday. I decided to not let Norotha know until this morning. If I do get to patrol between the garden and the mota, I will have a relatively easy job. Now that the dangerous animals have been all but eliminated from Talo-Vy, I should not have much to fear. If I am to be on guard duty at one of the akatooeka, it may be something to worry about.”

I said, "Do not worry, Rora. The only one that would force you to be a katooeke guard would be the Ka'yno and I do not think he can be bothered by making such a trivial decision. More than likely, he will leave that decision up to Ka' Naka."

Ara said, "I hope you are right, Mvilu. Ka' Mu-Naka most likely would give Rora the easier job of garden guard. He loves me like a norothoo and has similar feelings toward Rora."

Rora added, "Now that Mvilu has insured that I am being paid properly, I am not picky about what job I do."

After the nakvyv, Rora donned his swords and dagger and headed to guard duty. He had not been on guard duty in well over one hundred fifty days. For the first time since we started digging the mota, I found myself with absolutely nothing to do. I was no longer a slave, but, although I had been doing it, I didn't have a mandate from the Ka'yno to train achohachy in the finer arts of swordsmanship. So, because today was the normal day off from training, I had nothing to do to be of service to Talo-Vy today. I had accepted a mandate from the Ka' Naka to train the achohachy of our Ka'na, but it was not as fulfilling as I thought it would be. To give me something to do this morning, I decided to assist Ara in the kitchen cleaning the dishes from the nakvyv.

While we were cleaning up, Ara asked me, "What are you going to do today, Mvilu?"

"I have not decided, Ara. I told Ka' Naka I wanted to take a day off from training our achohachy and he accepted my need for a day off, so I do not have anything I absolutely need to do. Why do you ask? Is there something you want me to do for you?"

"Mvilu, you are no longer a slave. I cannot make you do anything for me."

"Ara, even when I was a slave, you never made me do anything. Then, as now, I did things for you because I wanted to do them. So, is there something I can do for you today?"

"Well, Joola told me yesterday that Kyna is with the hunting party today and she would like some help at her home today. She did not look well when she stopped by. Would you please go over to her home and assist her?"

"Of course, Ara. I would be happy to be of assistance to her. She has always been friendly and helpful to you since I have been here. It would be an honor to repay her help."

Ara looked at me knowingly and said, "Tyarza will be there. I am certain she will be happy to see you. I mean, for your help." She smiled when she said that.

"You should not tease me like that, Ara." I said smiling. "I could always move out and find my own home."

“Yes, you could, but, I believe you would come here every day for home cooked meals. Besides, how would you transport Chy? He is way too big for you to hide in your Etyma Jivekoo.” She had a point there, on both counts, and I said so. She laughed and said, “Go on. Joola is waiting for you.”

“Yes, ma’am!” I said, giving her a small salute, and just barely dodged the swat from her.

She said, almost to herself, “Will you never change?”

“If I did, you would miss the old me.” I said laughing as I headed out the door.

As I was closing the door, I could hear her saying, half to herself, “You are right. I would.”

I happily made the short three thaloo walk to Joola’s house. In the Ka’na of Ka’ Naka, I had become well known and well liked, almost as much as Rora was. I had made it a point to curry favor with our neighbors. You never knew when you might need friends like these. I arrived at Joola’s house and knocked on the door. Very shortly the door opened and a tall female Mory face appeared. Zo-Kyta stepped back into the house as she opened the door.

“Chitekuro, Mvilu. Welcome to our humble home.” She said pleasantly. “Please enter and grace us with your presence.”

I replied, “Chitekuro, TaKyta, I wish my home was as luxurious as yours.”

Turning at her waist, Kyta said, “Tyarza! Mvilu is here.” Turning back to me, she said, “Norotha asked me to have you go straight to her room when you arrived. She is expecting you.”

I had entered the house when Tyarza came out of her room. She was smiling as happily as I had ever seen her smile. I can’t remember ever feeling so happy to see a woman smiling at me. Of course, my clear memory was only 234 days old. My heart fluttered as if I had butterfly wings for a heart. I said to her, “I have to speak to TaJoola for a moment. I will be right back.” She nodded and smiled.

I was curious as to why Joola was still in her room this late in the day. I thought that perhaps it was her birthday and thought no more about it. I knocked on Joola’s door and entered when she invited me. She was sitting up in her bed and smiled at me as I entered. I noticed a piece of paper on the bed beside her. I didn’t have any idea what it was and decided to not worry about it. “You wanted to speak with me, TaJoola?”

Semi-weakly, she replied, “Yes, Mvilu. Thank you for accepting my request for assistance.”

“Think nothing of it, TaJoola. After all that you have done for TaAra, I could do no less for you. What do you need for me to do?”

“I am not feeling well today. So, I would like for you to go to my booth at the market and run it for me today. Would you do that?”

“Most assuredly, TaJoola. I would be honored to do that for you. Do you trust me to run it properly?”

“If I did not trust you, do you think I would have asked you to do this for me?”

I laughed and said, “I guess you would not. I do not really know how payment is made for things purchased at the market.”

“Do not worry. I will have Tyarza accompany you. I would send her by herself, but, as a slave, she is not allowed to do that.”

“I understand, TaJoola. Do you want me to get Tyarza and send her in here?”

“No. She already knows. She was very happy when I told her you were coming over this morning. Go ahead and get to the market. It is already late and I am usually one of the first merchants there.”

“Yes, TaJoola. We will go right away.”

“Oh, wait!” She said, “Take this with you.” She handed me the piece of paper. “You may find this paper very helpful.”

I read the paper and said, “Are you certain you want to give this to me?”

“Yes. I trust you, Mvilu. I do not trust the Ka’yno.”

“All right, TaJoola. I will do as you ask.”

I left Joola’s room and went into the living area. Tyarza was seated, but ready to go by the time I got there. When I entered, she stood and headed for the door. I said my good-byes to Kyta and walked out the door along with Tyarza. As we walked along, Tyarza acted as giddy as an unpopular school girl being walked home by the football star. She was walking like she had springs on her feet. Tyarza never had been a chatterbox, but today was a bit different. She was talking more than normal. She asked me all kinds of questions about my life before I arrived in Talo-Vy, some of which I answered easily, most I could not, but, I did my best to satisfy her curiosity about me. Although I am a typical male and, therefore, not very talkative, most of the time, I had always enjoyed talking with her and today was no different. She is perhaps the most intelligent woman I have ever met and I had met numerous intelligent women in my life.

We arrived at Joola's booth and opened it up. Almost as soon as we opened, we had customers. Joola sells fruits and vegetables gathered from the garden and the nearby forest. She always seems to have the best of both. As a result, hers is the most popular booth in the market.

Right after we opened the booth, the nohachy who operated the booth to the east of Joola's, her name was Moo-Nasha, noticed that Joola wasn't there. "Chitekuro." She said. "Where is Joola?"

"Chitekuro." I replied. "She was not feeling well today. While I was out hunting yesterday, she stopped by TaAra's house and asked if I would assist her today."

"You must be Mvilu. I have heard her speak in glowing terms of you. It is good that she has someone that is willing to help her when her chorothoo is not available."

Another neighbor, whose name was Cha-Zanoo, said, "Chitekuro, Mvilu. Do you know what is wrong with her? She looked like she was not feeling well yesterday and for three days before for that matter. As a matter of fact, she had been complaining of an upset stomach during that time."

I said, "Hmm. She has not been feeling well for at least three days and complaining of an upset stomach at the same time? That is curious, very curious indeed."

Cha-Zanoo asked, "Why do you think it is curious?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. It is just that since I have known her I have never heard of her not feeling well."

A small crowd had gathered by this time. It is unheard of for two Uany to be operating a booth in the market of Talo-Vy or any Mory village for that matter, even if one of the two is the slave of the Mory that normally runs the booth. We were accosted in a friendly manner by all of the other booth operators. They all wanted to know how well we knew each other, Tyarza and me. After a few athaloo, everybody had to get back to work due to the slow increase in traffic in the market area. We continued to talk with Moo-Nasha and Cha-Zanoo. They were very nice Mory anohachy, as nice as Joola and Ara. They told us all about their arothoo. TaNasha was an older nohachy and had given birth to several sets of cubs. TaZanoo was about Ara's age, but she had had three sets of cubs. TaZanoo's oldest set of cubs included Rora's good friend, Cha-Vamoo.

After a few athaloo, TaZanoo and TaNasha went about their business. Tyarza and I had a chance to talk. Tyarza asked me, "Mvilu, may I ask you a question?"

"Of course, Tyarza. You can ask me anything. I will not promise I will answer the question, but you can ask."

“Mvilu, we have known each other for a long time, have we not?”

“Yes, we have. I guess it has been about six and a half months. Why do you ask?”

“Do you enjoy it when I kiss you?”

I thought back to the times she had kissed me. The pleasure I experienced was something I couldn't remember experiencing before. I guess I had been walking down reminiscence lane too long because I heard Tyarza saying, “Mvilu! Are you listening to me?”

“I am sorry, Tyarza. I was just thinking about the times you kissed me. To answer your question, yes, I do enjoy it. Where are you going with this?”

She lowered her eyes a bit and said, “I—I believe I have fallen in love with you.”

So, now it is finally out. I had been expecting this for a while. But, how do I handle it. I suppose the only thing I can do is ask her some questions. “You think you love me? I thought you were promised to the greatest chohachy on all of Tashoo. What would he think about your admission to me?”

“I have told you that I do not care how he feels about my admission. He is a beast. He forced my father to promise me to him. He only wants me so he can. . .”

This caught my attention. “He only wants you so he can—what?”

“Never mind. I will tell you some day. Just suffice it to say that what he wants he cannot obtain without having me as his mate.”

“If you do not want to tell me, I will not pressure you. Uh-oh.” I had been looking back in the general direction of the Suala Ka'yonyony as Tyarza and I were talking.

“What is wrong, Mvilu?” She asked. My answer was to point. She turned and gasped. “What does he want?” She started trembling and eased closer to me.

Lo-Nachoo and his standard entourage walked up to Joola's booth and he glared at the two of us. He said, “What are you doing here?”

I replied, “TaJoola is not feeling well. She stopped by TaAra's home yesterday and asked her if I could go to her home today and help her. When I arrived at her home, she asked me to take care of her booth.”

Nachoo just looked at me as I spoke. He said, “I was not talking to you. I was talking to her.” He indicated Tyarza.

Tyarza stood there trembling. Finally, she said, meekly, “I am working in my mistress’s booth like I do every day, Great One.”

He turned to Tyarza and, glaring at her, said, “You know that no slave may leave the home to which they are enslaved without their master or mistress escorting them.”

His sudden appearance bothered me, but, I interrupted and said, “Great One, I believe I may have the solution to this problem.”

Sarcastically, he replied, “Of course you do. You always seem to have a solution to any problem. What is your solution to this problem?”

I reached into my Etyma Jivekoo and produced the document that Joola had given to me earlier. I handed the document to Nachoo. He read it, reread it, and then read it again. After he had read the document three times, I noticed the pupils of his eyes dilated and his ear and a half laid back. He thrust the document back into my hand, wheeled, and stalked off, but not in the direction of the Suala Ka’ynony. I watched him leave and where he seemed to be heading.

After Nachoo walked off, Tyarza relaxed a bit. She said, “He is very upset. I am glad he is gone.”

“He will be back, though, Tyarza. I believe I know where he is going and, if I am right, he will be back and he will be bringing someone with him.”

“Who?”

I decided to change the subject. “Tyarza, are you absolutely certain you love me?”

“You are changing the subject, Mvilu, but, as you said earlier, if you do not want to tell me, I will not pressure you.”

I smiled at her. “To answer your question, he will be returning with the Ka' Naka.”

“Why?”

I held out the piece of paper that Joola had given me and said, “This.”

“May I look at it?”

“I will show it to you after the Ka’yno returns.

“Now, will you answer my question, please, Tyarza?”

“I do not really know why you want to know now rather than later. However, I will answer your question since you answered mine. Yes, I am absolutely certain that I love you, Mvilu. You have done nothing but inspire me ever since the day we met. You have shown me

respect and love in a way no one has ever shown me before, even my own family. You have made me think about things that I would have never thought about nor even considered before I met you.”

“I am glad to know this, Tyarza. Now, may I ask you another question?”

“I do not know if I like the timing of your question, but you may ask.”

“On the day you were captured by Kyna, why were you so close to Talo-Vy? You had to know you were close to a Mory village.”

“I did know it, Mvilu; however, I would rather not answer your question right now, Mvilu. I will answer it one day, but I would rather not right now. Can you understand and accept this?”

I gave a non-committal shrug and said, “Yes, of course, I can, Tyarza. But, I think you should know . . . well, here he comes.” Once again, I had been looking off as I spoke to her.

“What?” She said, looking where I was pointing.

Sure enough, from the general direction of Ka’ Naka’s Suala Ka’ny walked Nachoo and, accompanying him, Naka. Nachoo was walking in a deliberate manner toward where we were. Naka was having a hard time keeping up with Nachoo, but he was managing.

When Nachoo and his entourage arrived, he turned to me and said, “Show Ka’ Mu-Naka the document.”

I produced the document and handed it to Naka. He read it and said, “All right, Great One. I have read it. What is the problem?”

“Please tell me it is illegal.”

“No, Great One, it is not illegal.” Naka returned the document to me. I replaced it into my Etyma Jivekoo.

“WHAT! This cannot be legal!”

“Yes, it is, Great One. As a matter of fact, it is legal because of you.”

“Me? How can that be?”

“You convinced the Ishoo'se to pass the law not long after you became Ka’yno and, by a vote of five to four, it was passed with you casting the deciding vote, naturally.”

“But—but—but, I—I—I thought it would only apply to a Mory allowing another Mory to do this.”

“No, Great One. If you doubt me, just ask Ky-Kikoo to read the exact wording of the law to you.”

I had seen Nachoo angry before, but this time he was practically foaming at the mouth with anger. “Tanko!” (1) He said loudly. He turned to me and said, “I have just about had enough dealing with you, Uany. One day, and one day soon, I shall rid myself of you.” That was all he said before he stormed off back to the Suala Ka’ynony.

With a surprised look on my face I said to Naka, “I have never heard a Mory, nor even a Uany for that matter, use that kind of language.”

Naka just shook his head, smiled and said, “It takes a powerful anger for us to talk like that. Be on your guard, Mvilu. The Ka’yno does not make that kind of threat lightly.”

“I will do just that, my Ka’.”

Watching Nachoo's receding body, Tyarza said, to no one in particular “I wonder how the Ka’yno knew that TaJoola was not working her booth today and that I was here without her?”

Naka answered her question by saying, “I am not certain, but I have heard that he has spies everywhere in Talo-Vy. I have even heard rumors that one of these spies is his own chorothoo.”

I asked, “Spies? I thought spying on the residents of Talo-Vy was a major faux pas on the part of the Ka’yno. And his own chorothoo? I thought the Chorotha-Rothoo Law meant that Achorotha were not supposed to know which arothoo were theirs, especially their achorothoo. If they ever found out, they were supposed to fight to the death.”

Naka replied, “That is true. But, rulers do not always follow their own laws.”

I smiled as an unexplainable memory intruded on my mind. I said, “I seem to recall hearing something to that effect somewhere, and sometime, before I arrived in Talo-Vy. By the way, my Ka’, have you stopped by to see TaJoola in the last few days?”

“No, I have not. Why do you ask?”

“I was just wondering. As you have no doubt guessed by now, she obviously is not feeling very well. Perhaps, you should stop by tomorrow and talk with her.”

He just looked at me questioningly, shook his head, turned, and walked off. As long as I lived among the Mory, I never was able to get used to that aspect of Mory culture. Naka never asked why he should stop by. He never said another word. He walked off, not angrily, just calmly walked off.

After Naka walked off, Tyarza turned to me and said, “You promised to let me know what the document says. What does it say?”

Once again, I produced the document. This time I read it to Tyarza. “It says, ‘To any who should read this document. Please be advised that, due to being ill and unable to perform my duties at the market today, I am temporarily giving ownership of my slave, Kerga Tyarza, to the Uany, Mvilu Uatusun, to assist him as he performs my duties at the market.’ It is signed, ‘Zo-Joola.’”

I heard the voice of TaNasha saying, “No wonder the Ka’yno was so perturbed. Normally, Uany do not operate booths in the market, nor do they bring slaves with them. So, he is doubly perturbed. I would listen to Ka' Mu-Naka’s suggestion concerning spies, Mvilu.”

As we were talking, I noticed a stranger standing nearby, about two booths away from us, just looking at us. I thought I had seen him earlier, then he was gone; now, he's returned. I wouldn't acknowledge his presence by looking directly at him. But, I wanted to know what he was doing hanging around Joola's booth.

I calmly turned toward Tyarza and asked her, “Tyarza, do not stare, but do you see that chohachy standing on the other side of TaZanoo's booth?”

Tyarza acted as if she was getting some more fruits to put on display and glanced where I had indicated. After quickly glancing at the chohachy, she said, “Yes, I do. Why do you ask?”

“Have you seen him hanging around the market place before today?”

“No, I have not. But, the market is normally very busy with a lot of customers milling around. Why do you ask?”

“I wonder if he is one of the spies that Ka' Mu-Naka implied the Ka’yno has around the village.”

Without looking at, or even toward, him, Tyarza said, “It bothers me that he is standing there staring at us. I wonder what he wants.”

“If he truly is one of the Ka’yno's spies, he is not a very good one; he is so obvious about it. But, I have no doubt he is trying to find something to report to the Ka’yno about me.”

(1)-Tanko is a general usage curse word similar in usage to the Terran word, “Damn”.