

Playing Tricks on the Spies

(Day 234 on Tashoo)

Tyarza and I worked steadily until the nakyvo, during this whole time the chohachy never moved from where he was standing and continually stared at us. I was tempted more than once to look at him, smile and wave. At nakyvo time, Kyta arrived with a meal cooked by Joola. I guess Joola was starting to feel better. During nakyvo time, business dried up at Joola's booth, and at every other booth in the market for that matter. Prior to today, I had never noticed how nothing at all seemed to be accomplished during nakyvo time.

Since business was non-existent, we had time to sit and eat. It was just the four of us, including the chohachy who was watching us. I had my back to the chohachy so I could pretty much say anything I wanted to say, as long as I spoke relatively quietly.

I looked at Kyta and said, "Kyta, do not say anything out loud, but do you see the chohachy standing on the other side of TaZanoo's booth?" She nodded. "Why do you not go and offer him something to eat?" She looked at me questioningly. "I have my reasons. Would you do that for me?" Once again, she nodded.

Kyta stood up and walked over to the chohachy. I overheard her say, "Chitekuro, stranger. Please forgive me. I could not help but notice that you have nothing to eat. It would be dishonorable for us to eat while you have nothing. Would you please join us for the nakyvo? We have enough food to feed four."

Tyarza looked at me strangely. I knew she thought I had lost my mind. I just shook my head. I noticed that she was looking over my shoulder and her eyes started getting wider. That assured me that the chohachy was accompanying Kyta to the booth. Shortly, the chohachy and Kyta arrived and sat down. I introduced myself and Tyarza. Even though I knew he knew who we were, I didn't want to arouse his suspicions as to whether or not we knew his purpose in the market.

I said, "I am sorry, but we noticed that you were standing over there looking as if you had not eaten anything since the nakyvy. I hope you do not mind our bothering you."

He said, "You are not bothering me. I appreciate the offer to share your nakyvo with me. I am called Ze-Thyto. I am honored to meet you, Mvilu. I have heard much about you. You are the one that planned, designed and built the mota around the village."

"I must plead guilty to that, although saying I built the mota would be stretching the truth a bit. I understand that, before the mota was dug, a nohachy was killed every three or four days by wild animals while they worked in the gardens or they were kidnapped by raiding parties

from other villages nearby. That was bad enough, but I know that some of those anohachy had arothoo. Someone had to do something. I decided to try the mota. I was lucky it worked.”

We chatted like this until nakyvo time was over and business was starting to pick up. We worked steadily, but weren’t overwhelmed, for the rest of the day. After Ze-Thyto ate the nakyvo with us, he made his apologies and left. I assume that Nachoo had told him that if he thought we had figured out why he was there, he had to leave. I did not delude myself into thinking that he was the only spy.

Business started slowing about three ahi’nu after the nakyvo. This gave Tyarza and me more time to chat. I asked her about her home. She told me that she was from a village called Zasho-Thoo and it was about one hundred fifty kilometers north of Talo-Vy. She also said that Zasho-Thoo was on the same river as Talo-Vy, which meant that if we followed the river northward, that is downriver, from Talo-Vy we would eventually pass within the territory of Zasho-Thoo. Tyarza spoke in glowing terms of almost everything that had anything to do with her home.

I said, “The way you describe it, Zasho-Thoo is almost heavenly.”

She smiled and said, “Do you not feel the same way about the village you are from?”

I gave her a noncommittal look and shrug before saying, “It has its good points and its bad points. I do love my home and I would love to return one day, if I can ever remember where it is but, right now, I hope to one day visit Zasho-Thoo with you. I mean return you to your home and family. I am certain they miss you.”

She smiled at my faux pas. “I know they do. After all, I have been missing from Zasho-Thoo for over three hundred days.”

“Are you ever going to tell me why you were so far from home?”

“One day. I have some things I need to think about before telling you. I promise I will tell you. It just is not the right time.”

“All right, Tyarza. I will not pressure you. You will know when the time is right.”

As we were talking, the Ka’ Sheshoo walked up. I noticed and acknowledged his arrival. I said, “Chitekuro, my Ka’. How is your day going?”

“Chitekuro, Mvilu, Tyarza, but, you should not call me, ‘my Ka’, Mvilu. After all, you do not live in my Ka’na and you are not my subordinate in a project. My day, however, is going quite well. Yours, on the other hand, I am not so certain about.”

“What do you mean, Ka’ Sheshoo?”

“You have managed to anger the Ka’yno, again. Why do you insist on doing that?”

“Are you referring to the document?”

“Yes, I am.”

“In that case, I am not guilty. The document was written by TaJoola. She is not feeling well and wanted me to take care of her booth today. Since I have no knowledge of how this is done, she wanted Tyarza to assist me and the only way for this to happen would be to temporarily give me ownership of her. The Ka’yno did not like this and, after bringing the Ka’ Mu-Naka who verified the legality of the document, stomped off in anger. I did nothing, personally, to anger him this time.”

“Still, you do anger him.”

“I assure you that I do not always do this intentionally. Out of one hundred things that I do to anger the Ka’yno, I may do seven things intentionally to anger him. Ka’ Sheshoo, you know that my mere presence is enough to anger him. He has had that attitude toward me since the day that TeRora brought me before him the day I arrived in Talo-Vy and then there was my trial before the Ishoo'se Aka’ny three months later.”

“I know, Mvilu. I remember I was one of the three that voted for your death at your trial. I have since recanted that vote because of all the things you have done to help Talo-Vy, especially in the battle with the achohachy from Te’ka-Jy and training achohachy in swordsmanship. You could have simply stood idly by and allowed the raid on the food trees to be successful. You violated the law by picking up the sword that My-Rora supposedly dropped and attacked the achohachy. You defended the food trees and the village without thought for what could happen to you afterward.”

“I was only fulfilling my promise to the Ishoo'se Aka’ny to defend Talo-Vy no matter the consequences.”

“I also know it angered the Ka’yno to know that the Ishoo'se Aka’ny had decided to grant you freedom from slavery because you saved the life of his chorothy.”

“I thought as much when he gave his speech concerning my freedom but, I did not ask for my freedom. The Ishoo'se gave it to me because, as I understand it, they were required to do so by law. However, I am glad that they did. Otherwise, I would not be able to help TaJoola today.”

During our conversation, Tyarza was busy assisting any customers that happened by. She was also listening to what was being said between Ka' Sheshoo and me. I'm not certain if she was concerned what he might possibly say to me or if she was just plain curious but, she was listening nonetheless. For some reason, she wouldn't say anything.

Even though Tyarza wasn't saying anything, Ka' Sheshoo did not ignore her. He turned to her and said, "Tyarza, I noticed as I walked up that you seem to have strong feelings for Mvilu. Would you please ask him to take care in dealing with the Ka'yno? I have grown to respect him immensely and would hate to see harm to befall him, if it can be prevented."

I smiled and said, "I thought you were about to say you have grown fond of me."

He looked at me and said, "I have grown quite fond of you, Mvilu, but, I respect you more. You have done so much for Talo-Vy, from designing and completing the mota, to fighting for Talo-Vy, to training achohachy to fight better in battle, and numerous other things. You did all of these things without as much as a second thought. As a matter of fact, more than 75% of all residents of Talo-Vy feel as I do concerning you. I believe it would be a waste of a great life should preventable harm befall you. That is my concern."

Tyarza was smiling this whole time. She looked at me and said, "Mvilu, I could not agree more with Ka' Sheshoo. He is right in so many ways, especially my concern for you. I do not want to see you die. Remember your promise to me. You cannot protect me, if you are dead."

I said, "I have said it before and I meant it. I do not always intentionally antagonize the Ka'yno. However, I do not fear anyone, nor am I afraid of a fight. If the Ka'yno intends to try to kill me, there is nothing I can do to prevent his attempt. I can, however, do something to try to prevent the success of the attempt."

Ka' Sheshoo thought for a few athata then said, "I see you are not armed. Since you are no longer a slave, you do have a right to carry weapons. I would suggest you start carrying the swords that you received from Sha'-Naky."

"I looked at them the night I received my freedom. I believe that, even though I could wield them, they are not quite of the quality I want. I decided to design a long sword and short sword that would fit my needs better. I have the sword smith manufacturing the new swords right now; however, perhaps tomorrow I will start carrying the short sword and dagger that Sha'-Naky gave me."

"Do you want me to escort you when you leave here later today?"

"No, Ka' Sheshoo, I do not think that will be necessary. I believe I can defend myself without swords. I remember learning how to defend myself without weapons when I was a child. I even use some of these techniques when I train achohachy in swordsmanship. Some of the achohachy think what I want them to learn is dishonorable, but most like the idea of having an advantage over an enemy during battle."

Sheshoo smiled that menacing Mory smile and said, "I will have to watch your training sessions more closely, and perhaps I will have you teach me these methods."

During our conversation, I had been looking around. I guess it was a habit I had picked up during my time with the Interstellar Terran Navy as a fighter pilot. Whatever the reason, I continually scanned the area. I noticed that Sheshoo seemed a bit put off by the fact that I did this, yet, he seemed to accept this as a part of my nature. After all, I had been doing this for as long as I had been in Talo-Vy. This was how I noticed that Ze-Thyto was spying on us. As I did my scans, I noticed a chohachy standing about thirty meters away from Joola's booth and staring straight at the booth. If he was a spy, he was worse than Ze-Thyto, or he was a decoy to try to get me to concentrate on him. I continued my scanning of the area and found another chohachy that had not moved very far from where I had originally seen him. As a matter of fact, he stayed within two meters of the tree I had originally seen him leaning against. This chohachy, however, was not looking directly at us. I decided to play a little game with the two of them.

Smiling mischievously, I said to Sheshoo, "Ka' Sheshoo, would you do me a favor?"

"I do not see why I could not. What do you wish me to do?"

"I would like you to play a little game."

He looked at me with surprise. He scratched the back of his head, then said, "A game? I would think I am a little old to be playing games other than Zachos but, it sounds interesting," he smiled and added, "and fun on a boring day. What do you want me to do?"

"Ka' Sheshoo, as I was looking around just now, I found two spies in the area." He started to look around. I said, "Do not look for them. One of them is obvious, the other is not. If the first one notices you are looking for them, they will leave. They are most likely trying to find something negative about me to report to the Ka'yno. I would like for you to do me the favor of what is known in my—village as running blockade."

"Running blockade? What does that entail doing?"

"I just want you to create a little bit of a diversion. Tyarza, I will need you to assist in this little diversion as well."

She smiled a mischievous smile and asked, "What can I do?"

"If you both are willing to do this, I want Ka' Sheshoo to start arguing with you about something, the freshness of the fruits and vegetables for example. While you two are discussing this, of course, Tyarza will need to be as subservient as possible to make it completely believable. By doing this, I hope you will attract a crowd. I will slip away and verify whether or not these two are spies. Would you be willing to do this? However, be sure that you do not start this until I give you a low whistle that I am ready. Okay?"

Sheshoo smiled once again and Tyarza got that mischievous look in her eyes again. I knew they would be willing to do this. They both nodded. I excused myself saying I needed to relieve myself and went to the back of the booth where it would be difficult for the spies to see me. I slyly looked toward both of the spies and, when I saw that they couldn't see me, gave

Sheshoo the whistle. He picked up a Zazoo fruit, turned to Tyarza and made a comment that the fruit looked damaged. Tyarza apologized about the defective fruit and attempted to try to get him interested in another one. Sheshoo acted as if he was not going to be placated by this. After all, he was a Ka'; he should expect the best of anything he wished to purchase. I looked toward the spies and saw that, because of the altercation and who was involved, they were interested in what was going on, along with most of the browsers near Joola's booth. Because the browsers interfered with the vision of the spies, they paid significantly more attention to what was going on. They paid so much attention to the altercation that they didn't even glance around to see if anyone was near them. I knew that with the crowd that had gathered to listen to Sheshoo and Tyarza, the spies wouldn't be able to see me. I used this diversion to slip out of the back of the booth.

I snuck behind two of the booths and eased up behind the chohachy that was making it obvious he was watching us. As I stood there, I was debating what to do. Finally, I decided to make a mark on the back of his vest and steal his dagger. For a mark, I chose the Tashoo letter that was my initial in the language of Tashoo. After making this mark, I eased his dagger out of its sheath. After verifying that he did not realize that I had purloined his dagger, I eased up behind the other spy. I decided that I would do the same thing to him, except that the initial I chose was the initial of my family name. I made my mark and removed his dagger. I placed both of the daggers into the waist band of my Etyma Jivekoo. After doing this, I snuck behind the booths again and back into Joola's booth. When I returned, I whistled again. When Sheshoo heard my whistle, he calmed down his arguing and accepted Tyarza's offer of something else.

I walked from the back of the booth, apologized for not responding sooner. I asked if there was a problem. Tyarza said that the Zazoo fruit seemed to be bad and the Ka' thought we were trying to cheat him. I apologized profusely and asked if he was now satisfied. He said he was and apologized for his rant stating that he had purchased Zazoo fruit from another vendor at another time and had received bad ones there but, after re-examining TaJoola's fruit, he had been mistaken. I offered to give Sheshoo extra Zazoo fruit to apologize for his previous experience. I suggested that Tyarza go to the back and check on the inventory of Joola's wares. We made sure that the spies heard this part of our conversation. When they went back to their business, we started speaking soft and low again.

Sheshoo asked me, "What did you do?"

"I put my initial on the back of their vests. I also removed their daggers."

When I said this, Sheshoo's eyes grew large enough to see the whites. He said, "I do not believe you stole their daggers." I cocked my head to the right slightly and produced the daggers, low enough that the spies couldn't see them.

Sheshoo's eyes once again grew large. He said, "Mvilu, do you know what this means? You have shown these two that you could kill them and they would never know you were there. You have shown them that an assassin was standing next to them and they never knew it. What are you going to do with the daggers?"

“Ka’ Sheshoo, I am going to trust you to mean all that you said earlier. I am going to give these daggers to you. You can keep them or you can give them to the Ka’yno and tell him where you got them and how I received them. You can also tell him about the letters on the back of the vests of the spies. Let him stew about that for a while.” I paused and thought for a thata before adding, “On second thought,” I took some of the Zazoo fruit, put them into a bag, along with the daggers, and handed the bag to Sheshoo. “If you do not wish to risk the Ka’yno’s wrath, just say after you approached Joola’s booth I handed the bag of fruit and daggers to you and asked you to give them to the Ka’yno as a peace offering.” (1)

Sheshoo took the bag, smiled and gave us fifty Shurtan, more than five times as much as was necessary for the fruits. As he did this, he said, “I believe I will follow your second suggestion. Even though you said you rarely intentionally anger him, I am going to enjoy seeing his anger when you intentionally anger him.” I guess Sheshoo despises Nachoo as much as anyone else in Talo-Vy does.

I looked at the money and said, “Ka’ Sheshoo, this is too much money for the fruits.”

He said, “Keep the extra, Mvilu. It was worth it to see you work your little trick on the spies.”

I smiled and said, “Thank you, Ka’ Sheshoo. I look forward to seeing you again soon.” He nodded, turned and walked away. After Sheshoo left, Tyarza returned to her duties up front with me.

About half a hi’nu later, Ka’ Kikoo happened to pass by. I saw him and hailed him. He turned, smiled and walked over. He apologized and said, that he was on very important business for the Ka’yno. He was looking for someone to give a message to, then because it was getting late, he needed to return to his Suala because he was expecting visitors.

I followed his movements surreptitiously and saw him approach one of the spies. Kikoo handed him a piece of paper and walked off. The spy opened the paper and looked at it. When he read the paper, a look of shock crossed his face. He reached for his dagger and a bigger look of shock crossed his face. He went to the other spy, said something to him. The other spy also reached for his dagger and a look of shock crossed his face also. After these circumstances, both of them left.

Tyarza noticed this as well. She looked at me and asked, “What do you think that was about?”

“I think TeSheshoo went straight to the Ka’yno with the bag of fruit as he promised to do. When I left while Sheshoo was arguing with you, I stole the daggers of the spies. I put the daggers into the bag of fruit and asked Sheshoo to give the bag to the Ka’yno. When the Ka’yno saw the daggers, he knew his spies had been discovered and told them to leave.”

Tyarza glared at me. I smiled and said, “I know but, this is one of very few times I intentionally antagonized him and I enjoyed every thata of it. He has got to learn that he is not dealing with an ordinary Uany. His attempts at subterfuge are not going to work easily.”

I looked around and noticed that most of the other booths were being closed. TaZanoo and TaNasha still had their booths open; but, business was slowing down. I noticed that they were looking at me in a funny way.

I asked, “Is there something wrong?”

By this time, they had both closed their booths and were approaching me. Zanoo asked, “What was that all about earlier?”

“What do you mean?” I asked innocently.

“That with Ka’ Sheshoo. I have never heard him get so upset over some bad fruit. I have heard you are very tricky. So, I believe you had something to do with it. What did you do and why did you do it?”

“The Ka’yno had a couple of spies watching me. I wanted to let the Ka’yno know that I knew they were there. I needed a diversion and Ka’ Sheshoo willingly obliged. That is all.”

TaNasha laughed to herself and, after looking around to be certain no one was listening, said. “I am so glad to see someone getting the best of that tyrant. The fact that you are a Uany makes it even better. Well, it is time to go home. I hope you have a nice sleep, Mvilu and you as well, Tyarza.” TaZanoo echoed the sentiments.

Tyarza and I closed up Joola’s booth and walked to Joola’s home. When we arrived, we were met by Joola’s stern look. Uh-oh. Somehow some of our, my, antics got back to her and she wasn’t happy. I just smiled at her and showed her how much we had earned today.

Joola asked, “What have you been doing today? Ka’ Naka came by and said you knew a secret. Sheshoo stopped by and showed me a bag of Zazoo fruit that had two daggers in it and said you had something to do with it. Sheshoo also said that his opinion of you had grown fivefold as a result. Now, tell me the truth.”

Tyarza started to say something and received the stern look. Smartly, Tyarza hushed and let me talk. “TaJoola, the daggers came from two achohachy that the Ka’yno had sent to spy on us, well me. I had Ka’ Sheshoo create a diversion with Tyarza and I left the booth, took the daggers and wrote my initial on the back of the spies’ vests. I wanted the Ka’yno to understand that spying on me will gain him nothing.”

“And Naka?”

I looked around and didn’t see Kyta. “Do you want me to say this in front of Tyarza?”

“I have nothing to hide from her. Speak.”

“All right. How far along are you?”

This question caught her completely off guard. She took a short step backward as she spoke. “What? What did you say?”

“I said, 'How far along are you?'”

Now Tyarza was curious as to what I meant. Joola, who had been half standing when I asked the question, slumped back into her chair. She asked, “How did you find out?”

“I did not find out. I just put two and two together. You were sick yesterday. You were sick this morning when I arrived. TaNasha and TaZanoo mentioned that you had been sick on your stomach for the last few days, but you were feeling better by the afternoon. That can only mean one thing, morning sickness; morning sickness can only mean one thing, pregnancy. So, how far along are you?”

Joola hung her head and said, “I am about two months along. You are more observant than even I thought you were.”

“Does Ka' Naka know?”

“WHAT?!?” She said. “What do you mean?”

“Oh, come on, TaJoola. He has been spending a lot of time here lately. Once again, I put two and two together. Plus, I know that he has chorothono (2) every rothoo you have ever birthed.”

She was quiet for a long time. I was beginning to think that she was going to refuse to answer. Finally, she said, “No. I have not told him yet.”

“Does he know that no other chohachy has been with you?”

“I—I do not know; I think so; but, I do not know for certain. I do know that he knows that he is the chorothono of Kyna and Kyta.”

“Are you going to tell them that you are pregnant?”

“Kyta already knows and Kyna is off hunting for our needs. I will tell him when he returns.”

“May I congratulate you?”

She smiled and said, “Yes, you may.”

“Well, congratulations, TaJoola. I hope you can have many, many more arothoo.”

“Thank you, Mvilu. Now, you need to get home before Ara starts wondering where you are. Odds are pretty good that Naka and Sheshoo have been by and told her of your antics.”

I nodded and turned to leave. When I reached the door, Tyarza caught my arm. I turned and she kissed me. I finally gave in and returned the kiss. As she pulled her lips from mine, I could hear her faintly say, “I love you, Mvilu. I have loved you before I ever met you. You have been in my dreams since I was a norothoo. Now that I have actually met you, I hope that eventually we can be mated.” After saying this, her cheeks darkened slightly and she turned quickly away and almost ran to her room.

I looked at Joola and saw her smiling at me. She said, “I was wondering when she was finally going to say that to you.”

I nodded, and said, “You have better hearing than I thought.”, while noticing a warm feeling in my cheeks. As light as my skin is, I knew the redness had to be obvious to Joola. Her smile proved I was right.

Even though I had been a bit embarrassed, both by what Tyarza had done and said, I felt good. I had never had a woman actually say she loved me and wanted to spend the rest of her life with me before. More importantly, I had never met a woman that I felt that way about. I barely felt the ground as I walked back to Ara’s home.

When I arrived, dinner was waiting on me. I took something to Chy for him to eat and then returned to the dining room. As the three of us ate, I felt Ara’s stern eyes looking at me. It seemed that Joola was right. Ara told me that Sheshoo had stopped by and told her what I had done. She also said that, even though she was worried about me, she was proud of what I had done and dismayed at the same time but, she also thought it was a funny trick to play on the Ka’yno. She asked me to tell her about my day at Joola’s booth. Rora, who had been assigned as a garden guard, had heard rumors about the interesting goings on at the market. He also asked me to tell him exactly what had happened. I told them everything that had happened that day, except for what Tyarza had said.

After we ate, Ara went to clean up the kitchen. I tried to help, but she refused the assistance. So, I went to my room and sat on my bed. Chy walked over and jumped up on my bed. He nuzzled my arm. He had missed me and wanted some attention. I reached over and gave him a hug. As I hugged him, he turned his head and licked my neck. Then, he rolled over onto his back and let me rub and scratch his belly. While I did this, I was thinking about the day’s events, the spies, working Joola’s booth, her pregnancy, the run in with the Ka’yno, and the fact that I had spent the whole day with Tyarza and the things we discussed. But, the most important thing was the way she kissed me as I left Joola’s home.

After about twenty athaloo, I turned to Chy and said, “Chy, buddy, it is time to go to sleep. Come on, let’s go.”

Chy looked up at me, then jumped off the bed and went to his sleep area. He curled up on his bedding and then he looked at me and churred. I got undressed and got into bed. The day had been so tiring I was asleep within ten athaloo. Sometime during the night, as usual, Chy got up and got into bed with me. I guess he was afraid for me after the nightmare I experienced last night. I guess my nightmares affected everyone, as well as me.

1-A Mory warrior puts his name on the blade of his dagger. By giving the daggers to the Ka’yno, I was telling him that I knew these achohachy were spies and that I took the daggers without the knowledge of the spies.

2-fathered