

XXXIII

Visiting TaJoola (Day 277 on Tashoo)

Since the day I arrived in Talo-Vy and met Nachoo, I had always been bothered by certain things about him. Revenge and unscrupulousness were just two things that bothered me about him. He impressed me as being the kind of “person” that would make just such an offer to Ara just to fulfill a threat made twenty-five years earlier.

After thinking for about these things, I changed the subject. “I wonder. . .”

Naka jostled himself at the unexpectedness of my statement. He asked, “What do you wonder about?”

“I wonder if TaTara told Ara who her chorotha was.”

“I do not know. Ara was only about three years old when her norotha died. Why do you ask?”

“TeNaka, have you ever noticed how a Mory nohachy names her first-born anorothoo either a rearrangement of the syllables of her name or a slight variation of her name? I think it is a type of tradition that the achohachy do not realize is going on.”

“Are you joking, Mvilu? Why do say that?”

“Think about it, TeNaka. TaTara named her norothoo Ara. You told me that TaJoola named her first anorothoo Jalo, Lajoo and Looja. All those names are variations in spelling of TaJoola’s name. She even named her first chorothoo, Kana, after you.”

“What does that have to do with whether or not Ara knows who her chorotha was?”

“TeNaka, Ne-Raro was Ka’yno of Talo-Vy before Lo-Nachoo. He was the chorotha of Ara. Ara has a chorothoo and names him Rora, a rearrangement of the syllables of Raro. Does that not give you the impression Ara knows who her chorotha was?”

“Perhaps you are right. I just never thought about it, neither the fact that Ara named Rora after her chorotha nor that Mory anohachy name their first anorothoo after themselves by rearranging the syllables.”

After we finished this conversation, I noticed that Ara was walking up to us. I turned to Naka and subtly shook my head and nodded toward Ara. He looked over, saw her and nodded once. We changed the subject to something non-committal as she arrived.

She asked, “Mvilu, do you know where Rora is?”

“I ended the training early. A potential new trainee arrived and I had to talk with him. After several moments of conversation, I decided to accept him if he gets permission from the Ka’yno. After he left to get the permission, Ka’ Naka wanted to talk to me alone, so I sent Rora to see if he could assist TaJoola. Ka’ Naka had just finished telling me what he wanted me to know as you arrived. Do you want me to go and get him?”

“Yes, please. Tell him that the nakymoty is almost ready. Ka’ Naka, would you join us for the nakymoty?”

“I appreciate the invitation, TaAra but, I already have plans for the evening. Perhaps I can accept the invitation at another time. Would that be all right with you?”

“Of course, my Ka’. I hope you enjoy your evening. Tell TaJoola she is invited when you return.” Ara smiled slightly as she said the last. I was smiling as well.

Naka looked mildly startled. He looked from me to Ara and back again. I knew he was trying decide if he should admit to the truth or not. Finally, with a mild look of relief, he decided that the best defense was to tell the truth. He said, “I will do just that when I have the nakymoty with her and her family tonight.”

Now it was his turn to smile slightly, I joined him and it was Ara’s turn to be mildly startled. This was turning out to be a wonderful little cat and mouse game, so to speak. In all my months in Talo-Vy, this was the first time I had ever witnessed this type of tete-a-tete. I never knew that the Mory were capable of such joking around with each other. However, it was good to see that they both knew and admitted to the obvious and were willing to needle each other about it.

I said, “Since you have an invitation to have the nakymoty with TaJoola tonight, would you mind if I walked with you to her home?”

“I do not mind at all, Mvilu. I always enjoy spending time with you and talking. I believe that there may be a few things we need to talk about above and beyond what we were discussing earlier.”

We started walking toward TaJoola’s home. I said, “In that case, I will also enjoy your company Ka’ Naka. Besides, I believe that I would like to speak with TaJoola.”

“Or her slave?”

“Ouch. You, too? Is it that obvious?”

“More. I just choose to look the other way most of the time. Besides, I am happy for you. I think she would be a perfect mate for you.”

“You do know that she is promised to a chohachy in her home village, do you not?”

“No, I did not know that. So, what are you going to do about that?”

“I am going to do the honorable thing and, if it is at all possible, I am going to take her home so she can be mated to the chohachy to whom she is promised; however, if he will release her from her promise, I would be more than happy to take her as my mate and I believe she feels the same way about me. What do you know about her?”

“Next to nothing. I just know what you know. She was captured the same day you were. I know she very much intended to kill Joola and her family until you talked her out of it.” I looked at him with shock in my eyes. “Do not be surprised. She admitted it to TaJoola and TaJoola told me. Besides, I would have been more surprised if an adult Uany nojasa had accepted her slavery without any complaint.”

“Well, even with that explanation, I am surprised that you do not have any ill feelings toward the nojasa that wanted to kill your family.”

Now he looked shocked. “What do you mean, my family?”

“Ka’ Naka, you told me yourself the story of your relationship with TaJoola.”

He slumped his shoulders. He realized that he had said too much earlier. “I knew you were listening too closely as I told you the story of Ara’s ancestry. I only thought that you would figure out who her chorotha was.”

We arrived at Joola’s home and Naka scratched on the door. When Joola answered the door, she smiled when she saw Naka and invited us to enter her home. She said, “Chitekuro Ka’ Naka, Mvilu, welcome to my humble home. Please enter and grace us with your presence.”

Naka said, as he was entering, “Chitekuro, TaJoola. I wish my home was as luxurious as yours.”

As I entered, I said, “Chitekuro, TaJoola. I see you are feeling better.”

She said, “Yes, I only seem to be ill in the early morning. The illness goes away by midday, normally, especially if I can keep down any food.”

“I am glad that you are feeling better, TaJoola.” I looked at her abdomen and smiled.

Joola noticed my looking and asked, “What are you smiling about, Mvilu?”

“I was just noticing that you are starting to show, TaJoola.”

She ducked her head in embarrassment. She said, “You were the first one to realize that I was pregnant. You figured it out simply by being told that I had been sick in the mornings for a few days, even I did not know until after you left for the booth that morning.”

“You never did answer me that day. How far along are you?”

“I will tell you the same thing I told you then. Never mind.” She replied, smiling.

I smiled and decided to, once again, drop the subject.

After we entered, I found Kyta and Rora sitting at the dining table talking. When Rora turned and saw me, he had a slight, almost beatific, smile on his face. He was obviously very happy with the situation; however, as he was looking at me, he slowly turned his head and looked just behind me. Between his happiness and the fact that I had never been able to teach him to deceive with his eyes, I knew he was looking at someone behind me. I turned and saw Tyarza walking out of her room. When she saw me, she ran up to me and gave me a big hug and, to my appreciation, a big kiss.

After catching my breath because of the kiss, I said, smiling, “Well, thank you for the kiss, Tyarza. I was not expecting anything like that.”

“I am so happy to see you, Mvilu. I always look forward to your visits. I have told you why. Do you not believe me?” She asked the question as sadly as I have ever heard a woman ask a question.

“Of course, I believe you, Tyarza. I am just thinking about something else you told me. I know you said you hate him, but the situation has not changed and will not change until you confront him. Please understand my feelings on this situation.”

“I do understand, Mvilu.” She said, sadly. “I do not know when, or even if, that time will come.”

“I promise it will happen. I just do not know when.”

Naka looked at me with surprise. He wasn’t sure how to react to what I said. I looked at Joola and Kyta. They were looking at me with surprise also.

I knew I had to say or do something. So, I went on the offensive. “I know that none of us in this room likes the idea of slavery, Tyarza and me because we have experienced it, and the three of you because you oppose it. So, I want to ask you, what if the Slave Laws were to be repealed.”

Naka said, “Repealed? The Ka'yno does not like Uany at all. He thinks that all the Uany on Tashoo should be enslaved, or killed. I do not believe he would even consider repealing the Slave Laws and it would take all eight of the Aka’ to vote for the laws to be repealed before we could overcome any opposition the Ka’yno would put up and I assure you that at this time that would not happen, especially since one of the Aka’ is still trying to return to the good graces of the Ka’yno.”

I said, “What if we got a new Ka’yno? One that might think that slavery is a bad thing.”

Joola said, "That would be the only way, other than Tyarza doing something to win her freedom, just as you did, Mvilu but, I do not know of any chohachy that could best the Ka'yno in a fair fight and he does *not* fight fair."

Tyarza, who had been smiling earlier, lost her smile and became openly depressed. She knew the odds of either happening were slim indeed. She said, "A new Ka'yno is not likely, Mvilu, and the odds of me saving the life of some important Mory are next to impossible. But, you have hope, so I will have hope as well."

I said, "Do not give up hope, Tyarza. Remember, Tyarza, we are not dead yet. Ka' Naka, what would happen if the Ka'yno were to challenge me to a duel to the death and I won?"

"If you won such a duel, the Ishoo'se Aka'ny would have to pick a new Ka'yno since you could not be Ka'yno. But, do you believe that he will make such a challenge, or that you could win it?"

"Ka' Naka, you and I both know how he feels about me. Sooner or later, he is going to issue such a challenge. I have been an embarrassment to him. I have found so many ways to make life better here; he has not. To be perfectly honest, I doubt very seriously he has even tried to make life better in Talo-Vy. What I have done embarrasses someone in a position of power and no one in a position of power likes to be embarrassed, especially when that embarrassment could have been prevented by simply doing what was right. Plus, I have heard from you and almost every other Ka' that he continually rails against me. These all tell me that the challenge is just a matter of time. As far as winning the challenge, I cannot make any guarantees but, I will say that I do have secrets that he knows nothing about. Plus, I have been training the achohachy in sword fighting. That is not just to train them, it is to teach me the way the Mory handle swords. This would help me against the Ka'yno in a sword fight.

"So, I would like to ask you this. If I did kill the Ka'yno in a duel to which he challenged me, would the Ishoo'se Aka'ny consider someone I suggested to be the replacement?"

"I believe the Ishoo'se would take your suggestion into consideration. But, why would knowing how Mory achohachy handle swords help you in a sword fight with the Ka'yno?"

"My Ka', there is one thing I learned in my training of the achohachy. They all use almost the exact same moves until I teach them to think and plan their moves. If we assume that the Ka'yno fights the same way as the achohachy I have trained, and there is no reason to believe he does not, then I have a slight advantage. I know how to defend against his moves, but he does not know the moves that I know and, therefore, would have a hard time defending against them."

"I hope you are right, Mvilu." Tyarza said. "I would hate for you to be killed if it can be prevented."

"As you have told and shown me." I smiled at her. Then I continued. "I hope I am right, too, Tyarza. I also hope I am wrong about the Ka'yno possibly challenging me to a duel to the

death. But, this conversation is about a possible future not a current situation so, let us not dwell on it.

“TaJoola, Rora and I need to get home to eat the nakymoty before TaAra has our ears. I look forward the seeing all of you again soon. Oh! While I am thinking about it, she also invited you, Ka’ Naka and your family over to the nakymoty soon.”

“Tell her that we would be honored to enjoy the nakymoty with her and her family soon, especially since the two best hunters in Talo-Vy live in her home.”

Rora stood up and started toward the door. Before he could take a step, however, Kyta stood up quickly, grabbed his arm and gave him a very impassioned hug. Everybody else in the room was embarrassed, or mildly offended. Tyarza was looking at me and smiling broadly. Something told me that she was behind this action. I looked at Joola and Naka. They were at a loss as to what to do. So, they settled for looking the other way. It looked as if they were implying that if they never saw the hug, then it never occurred, a reaction that is not uncommon among humans of Terra. This reaction told me something about the two of them that I had suspected but didn’t know for certain until this particular moment.

I turned to Tyarza and asked, “Did you have something to do with this?”

“In a manner of speaking. Kyta had commented to me earlier today about how she wished that she could show Rora the affection she felt for him, like I do with you. I asked her what was stopping her. She said tradition, plus unwritten laws. I told her she would never know for certain how it felt, if she never tried.”

“Tyarza, you are going to get them into big trouble. Right now, the biggest reason they are not in trouble is the fact that I know for certain they are not related.”

I turned back to Rora and cleared my throat. I said, “Rora, I know you are enjoying yourself, but we really do need to get home. I believe TaAra is probably standing on her head by now. You know how she is if we are late for the nakymoty.”

Unwillingly, Rora extricated himself from Kyta’s embrace. He moved quickly to the door. When he reached the door, though, he looked back longingly at Kyta, a slight smile was on his face. This caused a big smile to cross Tyarza’s face and mine. After a thata or two of standing there, Rora turned and walked out the door and I was hard on his heels.

As we walked home, I turned to Rora and said, “You were enjoying yourself before we left, were you not?”

“I must confess that I was, but I was not the only one. I saw you and Tyarza watching us and saw the smiles on your faces. You seemed to enjoy what Kyta was doing as much as I was.”

“She was enjoying it too, Rora. I found out that she had wanted to hug you for a long time.”

“That is beside the point. Ka’ Naka could tell the Ka’yno and I could be expelled from Talo-Vy for that. I was afraid of what he would say to me.”

“I doubt very seriously that the Ka’ Naka will say anything to the Ka’yno. I believe he would be proud to have you as a chorothoo-in-law.”

“A what?”

“Never mind. It would be too hard to explain. Let us just say, I doubt Ka’ Naka would mind if you and his norothoo were mated.”

Rora’s eyes got big as he realized what I was saying. He said, rather loudly, “What do you mean, ‘his norothoo’?”

I grabbed Rora’s arm and pulled him into an empty door way. I said, “Sh! Why do you not just stand in the middle of the Atasho Chyzakoo'do and shout that Ka' Naka is Kyta's chorotha.”

He whispered, “But, what do you mean?”

“What do you think I mean, Rora? Ka’ Naka is the chorotha of every one of TaJoola’s arothoo.”

“How do you know this?”

“He told me, that is how I know.”

“Does Kyna and Kyta know that Ka’ Naka is their chorotha?”

“Yes, they do. Kyna told me himself.”

“Then, why has he not challenged Ka’ Naka as is required by the Chorotha-Rothoo Law?”

“I do not know. I would guess it is because both of them are offended by that aspect of the law.”

“But, the law. . .”

“Rora, how many times do I have to tell you that sometimes a law must be disobeyed simply because it makes no sense or is detrimental to society? The Chorotha-Rothoo Law and the Mating Law are two of them. If it was not for the Chorotha-Rothoo Law, there would not be a need for the Mating Law.”

“Be that as it may, I could still be expelled if the Ka’yno found out what happened just now.”

“How is he going to find out? Are you going to go to him and tell him?”

“Of course not. He is trying to find a reason to expel me anyway. But, I have to be honest. I cannot lie.”

“Rora, you can be honest and not tell the whole truth. You are also not required to tell the truth unless you are asked directly. Right?” He nodded. “Besides, if you do get expelled from Talo-Vy, what would stop Kyta from leaving and going with you?”

“Nothing, I guess.”

“And suppose she did decide to leave with you. What would stop Kyna and Joola from giving Tyarza to Kyta as her slave, especially when they found out I was leaving with you?”

“Again, nothing, I guess.”

“Then, do not worry about it. Everything will work out. Now, we need to get home. Your norotha is going to feed our meal to Chy, if we do not get home soon.”

Rora was silent the rest of the way home. I assume he was thinking about what I had said. By the time we got home, he was actually smiling at the thought of possibly running away from home with the woman he loved.

Ara, on the other hand, was anything but happy. As we walked into the house, she was glaring at us, especially me. Oops. It had taken us, me actually, longer to get home than she had wanted it to take. I chanced a quick glance at the table.

I said to her, “I am sorry, Ara. Something happened at TaJoola’s home that was both unexpected and entertaining. Is that not right, Rora?”

Ara's anger turned to curiosity about as quickly as I can describe it. “What happened?” She asked.

I turned to Rora and asked him, “Do you want to tell her, or should I?”

Rora looked a combination of angry and embarrassed. “Mvilu, you know what could happen if that incident got to the Ka’yno.”

“Rora, is your norotha going to tell? Am I? Boy, sometimes you are so thick headed. Besides, I personally believe your norotha feels the same way as TaJoola does.”

Ara said, "Mvilu, what are you talking about?"

"Rora, are you going to tell her?"

Rora wouldn't look directly at his mother as he spoke. "As Mvilu and I were about to leave TaJoola's home, when I stood up, Kyta stood up with me and hugged me, like she was never going to let me leave."

A look of pleasant surprise crossed Ara's face just before she said, "Oh, Rora, I am so happy for you. I have been hoping for this day for as long as I can remember."

"You mean you are not worried or upset?"

Ara said, "Yes, I am a little worried. But, Rora, let me tell you something. Joola and I have noticed the feelings you and Kyta have been having for each other ever since you were arothoo. As a matter of fact, we have decided that when you are forced to leave Talo-Vy, Kyta will leave when you do and meet you somewhere. We want the two of you to be mated."

"Norotha, there is nowhere on all of Tashoo where we could live as mates. You know that as well as I do."

This interested me, so I said, "'So, you are interested in her?"

"Mvilu—" He ducked his head in embarrassment and then at a loss as to what to say, continued, "Yes, I am interested in her. You finally got me to admit it. Are you happy?"

"Yes, I am, Rora. It is about time. I noticed how you two felt about each other ever since the first time I saw the two of you together at TaJoola's home. What do you think of your norothany (1) plan? Do you think that you and Kyta might possibly get away with it?"

"Only if the Ka'yno does not know that Kyta is leaving with me."

"May I make a suggestion?"

Ara said, "What?"

"When it is time for Rora to leave, why not plan on the direction he will be leaving and have her leave the village ahead of time and meet him at a predetermined location."

Ara and Rora looked at each other. Slowly realization crossed both of their faces. This was a thought that had never crossed their minds before. Ara said, "That is a wonderful plan, Mvilu. I wonder why we never thought of it before."

"Because the Mory as a species are not devious like we Uany are. Now, are we going to eat the nakymoty?"

Ara smiled and said, "I guess we should. Chy has been crying for his nakymoty for over a hi'nu. Do you want to let him out of your room or do you want to wait?"

"Let us let him out. He does not get that chance very often."

I went to my room and opened the door. I said, "Come on Chy. Come on out and visit."

Chy bounded out of the room and ran to Ara. When he got to her, he sniffed her from her hips to her toes. After he did this, he started rubbing his cheek against her thigh and looking up into her eyes. Ara reached down and scratched his chin. After Ara scratched him, he ambled over to Rora and repeated the procedure with him. Rora couldn't help but to scratch his head. As Rora scratched Chy's head, I saw a look of contentment cross Rora's face. This caused me to smile, but I turned my head so Rora couldn't see it.

After Chy made the rounds, he walked over to the living room and lay down on the rug. As we sat at the table and enjoyed the nakymoty, I kept looking toward the living room. I wasn't a bit surprised that he stayed in the living room. I had taught him from the time I brought him home when he was a rothoo that, despite what happened when Joola and her family first met him, the dining room and table were off limits to him during meals. I knew he would stay there until I called him.

After we ate, I fed Chy. As big as he had become, he had a corresponding appetite. But, with the kind of "luck" Rora and I had been having hunting lately, it wasn't a problem to supply him with enough of the meat he needed; plus, we had been including vegetables with his meals since he became a member of the household. Because I almost always ended the day's sword training at nakyvo time, Rora and I usually went hunting about two out of three days. Thanks to his size and strength, Rora could carry two small to medium sized animals by himself and we rarely got less than two. If we were extremely lucky and got more than two, I could usually assist with one myself.

After I fed Chy, I put a harness on him. (2) When I put the harness on him, he acted like a little puppy who knew he was just about to get to go outside and play. I walked to the door, opened it and looked outside. It was getting dark and most of the Mory were inside, still unable to get used to the fact that there was little chance of wild animals attacking them. When I saw that there was no one within about one hundred meters, I took Chy outside and walked him toward the north garden. I knew he would want to get some exercise after eating. (3) We walked along the mota and listened to the sounds in the forest. I wanted to gauge Chy's reaction to those sounds. I knew that one day I may have to release him into the wild and, if these sounds interested him, the release would be easier on him. However, he showed only mild interest in these sounds. That, of course, could be the result of him still being a rothoo of less than half a year old. He was more interested in chasing leaves and play hunting. After Chy got tired of playing outside, he walked up to me, placed a front paw onto my legs and whined quietly and we walked back home by a different route.

After we returned to the house, I looked back down the "street" that we lived on to, once again, verify that it was safe. Fortunately, there was no one on the street so we were able to get

inside without being seen. We went into my room and I removed the harness. Chy looked up at me, jumped up and placed his front paws on my shoulders. I was amazed at how quickly he had grown. After he jumped up, he proceeded to lick my neck and jawline. I have always hated to have an animal lick my face, especially around my mouth. Because of this, I had trained Chy to avoid licking my face. As he licked my neck, I thought I heard a voice saying, "I love you, Chorotha. Thank you for saving my life."

After a couple of athalloo of this, Chy dropped to the floor and went to his corner and lay down. I got undressed and got into bed. I knew that as soon as the room got dark Chy would get into bed with me. I didn't mind, though, it was better than sleeping alone. Soon, the room started getting dark and shortly afterward, I was fast asleep.

1-mother's

2-I had made the harness shortly after Chy came to live with us. I also attached the leash that I had made at the same time I made the harness. I had made them strong enough that, when he was a rothoo, he couldn't chew through nor could he break them. Later, as an adult, he never tried to get away from me because of this early training.

3-I wasn't concerned about him relieving himself. I had trained him to use the toilet facilities in the bathroom area of Ara's house shortly after he arrived at Ara's home. It made me laugh when I saw him sitting on the toilet facility doing his duty. Later, as he grew up, it became even funnier to me. Teaching him to use the toilet to relieve himself became even more important to me after I learned how the trees depend on the homeowners to provide them with water and excrement for their food.