

XXXIV

Faux Pas (Day 367 on Tashoo) (Morning)

Sleep is a wonderful refresher. Everyone needs it, eventually. Dreams are also necessary to assist in the refreshing nature of sleep. Dreams are wonderful when they aren't frightening.

Needless to say, I'm dreaming. It's a wonderful dream. I'm in a grassy field near a large calm lake sitting on a red and white checkered cloth with a picnic basket in the middle. A meal is set out on the cloth. I'm not alone, naturally; in my company is the beautiful female companion that I usually have in these dreams, that being Tyarza. Her long blue-blond hair which reaches down to the middle of her back and her yellow-in-blue eyes with long lashes and blue-blond eyebrows are captivating as are her dark brown lips. She's wearing the two-piece leather strapless dress that reaches from just below her arms to the middle of her thighs that she normally wears. Down each side of the dress it is open with the front and back halves being held together with a leather strip on each side. The leather strips pull the dress together in such a manner as to accentuate rather than hide her feminine charms, but not obscenely so. She's sitting on the cloth with her long legs underneath her while she leans on her right hand. The soft breeze is blowing her hair in such a way as to make it look like a living creature instead of hair.

I'm wearing a white military-looking coat with braids, medals and woven golden oak leaf clusters on epaulet boards. Under the coat is a white shirt and a loosely tied navy-blue tie. I'm also wearing navy blue pants with light gray stripes down the sides. I have shiny black boots on my feet. A navy-blue triangular hat with embroidered gold braiding surrounding a silver embroidered Star Fighter on one side and an embroidered gold oak leaf cluster on the other is lying on the cloth next to me.

Tyarza is smiling at me and laughing. She's holding my hand gently and gazing longingly into my eyes. She starts leaning toward me. . .

Suddenly, the scene starts fading from color to gray to black. Blackness. Deep, blue-black blackness. Now there are pinpoints of blindingly white light. My eyes hurt from the piercingly white points of light. I see creatures, strange creatures, reptilian-looking creatures. These creatures look like bipedal dinosaurs and they talk. They talk? They are talking to me. I am fearful of these creatures. What do they want with me? Why are they here in my dream? I didn't invite them here, but they are here. I sense I am inside of a space ship. The walls seem almost too sanitary, too white. We seem to be inside a room that looks like an engine room, but the power plant is strange looking to me. Something isn't right about it. It looks too powerful to be a standard power plant. I must look at it again to verify my suspicions. But, how do I know about space ships and power plants?

At 0900, I arrive at the Khorchan ship. Dreydos seems truly delighted that I have kept my promise. I remind him that Admiral Yamashita had, more or less, ordered me to cooperate with them. I also inform him that I am honor bound, as well as by the Interstellar Terran Military Justice Code, to follow the Admiral's orders as long as they were legal, and, to the best of my knowledge, assisting him and Rokshesan is not, at this time, illegal.

We enter the ship and he gives me a complete tour of the ship. He tells me a bit about the ship and what will be expected of me. As we take the tour, I keep my eyes open for information about Khorchan war craft that could be used in the future against them, if necessary. This particular ship is a scout ship that holds four Khorcha. Dreydos tells me that, because of the sensitive nature of their mission, he and Rokshesan are the only passengers on it. He also assures me that the ship, as is true of all Khorcha scout ships, is unarmed. I have a hard time believing that any Khorchan ship is unarmed, but I also know that every time a Terran ship has encountered one of these scout ships, it's always turned and run as fast as it could toward Khorchan controlled space. During this tour, I notice something that seems out of place. I am hoping that I will be able to snoop through the ship a second time and, hopefully, verify what I think I saw is true, or untrue.

After the tour, we meet up with Rokshesan and she also seems genuinely pleased that I have returned. "Welcome back, Commander. I wasn't certain that you would return."

"Dreydos said the same thing, Rokshesan. As I told him, I obey orders. I still don't like this, but I am under indirect orders to cooperate. Now, what do you wish to learn?"

Dreydos speaks up. "What we would like to do is listen to your memories."

I answer in a shocked voice, "Listen to my memories?! How in the name of all that is holy on Terra and Khorcha do you intend to do that?"

I can feel myself tossing and turning. I can hear the moaning. I know it has something to do with the nightmare I am having and the nightmare has something to do with why I'm in Talo-Vy. I just haven't figured out what. I need to know what that something is. I keep hoping that I will eventually know, but the nightmares are so disjointed. I seem to be experiencing them out of the order in which the situation in the dream occurred. I keep hoping that, eventually, I will know.

Now, I feel a heavy weight on my chest. I also feel something rough and sandpaper-like patting on my cheek. I slowly awaken. As my eyes flutter open, I see a large black feline face with reddish-purple stripes looking at me. Golden yellow eyes with vertical oval pupils are looking out of the face and are peering into mine. It is an intelligent face that's looking at me. I believe I see concern in the eyes. As I awaken further, I recognize the face as that of Chy, my Kootona.

I reach up and pat and rub the top of his head and he closes his eyes slightly. He turns his head and, after wrapping his paws around it, licks and nips at my arm playfully. It looks to me like he is relieved and happy, but I don't want to be anthropomorphic. However, I do know that Chy is a very intelligent creature and these emotions are usually reserved for intelligent creatures.

I say to him, "It is all right, Chy. Chorotha is all right. Get up and I will go get you something to eat."

After I say this, he rolls over onto his back, but off of my chest. He forms himself into a gigantic C shape with his legs as the top and bottom arms of the C. He looks so cute, despite being almost 85 kilograms, I can't help but to reach over and scratch his belly causing him to grab my arm and nip and lick it.

I got dressed and went into the kitchen. I started looking in the cooler for some meat for Chy. While I was looking, Ara walked in. We were both startled and for the same reason. Ara was almost completely undressed. All she was wearing was something similar to a housecoat and it was not completely around her body. I had never even considered the thought of how I would react should I ever see a Mory female in any state of undress but, for some reason, even though I was fairly certain I would not have a sexual reaction, I was embarrassed. However, my embarrassment was nothing compared to hers. She quickly grabbed the edges of the coat and quickly covered herself.

Ara asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Uh, I live here?" I said both embarrassed and jokingly. She gave me a "you smart ass" look before I said, "I had another nightmare. Chy woke me up and I decided to feed him. I was not expecting anyone to come in unexpectedly and, obviously, you were not expecting anyone to be in here. Do you have a visitor?"

Ara was now more embarrassed than she previously was. She opened her mouth to say something, then thought about it. Finally, she ducked her head in embarrassment and said, "Yes. He is in my room. We decided to have something to drink. You were correct; I was not expecting anyone to be up this early. He will be leaving soon, though. Please do not say anything to Rora."

"Do not worry, Ara. I have told you that your secrets are my secrets." I looked toward Ara's room then back to my room, thought for a few athata, and then asked, "Does he know about Chy?"

"I have not told him so, if he knows, he guessed. Why?"

“Well, I am going to assume he does not know. Therefore, why do you not take your drinks and go to your room. After you close the door, I will take Chy’s food to him. Any time after that, he can leave. Does he know that I know he comes here regularly?”

“I do not know; I have not told him.”

“Well, I will not tell him until you let me. Good night. Sleep well. Well, I doubt sleep has anything to do with it.” Ooh! What a look she shot me after I said that. I just smiled. It's a good thing Ara loves me like a son.

I followed my promise and waited until she closed her bedroom door. Just as I left the kitchen, I heard the front door opening. I stopped in my tracks and waited expectantly. I was fully prepared to drop the meat and defend our house from the rare and unexpected home invader.

I thought I recognized the chohachy entering, but I waited until I was certain. Sure enough, it was Rora. I stood there and waited. After he entered and closed the door, Rora just stood there facing the door for a short while. After standing there for a few athata, he turned. I saw a smile on his face and a faraway look in his eyes. I recognized the look. I had seen it quite a bit when I looked in the mirror lately. When he saw me standing there, he let out a yelp and jumped back. He landed against the door and just stared at me.

I said, “You are getting home rather late, or early depending on how you want to look at it. Where have you been, or do I need to ask?”

Still shocked, it took him a couple of athata to respond. He decided to try to put me on the defensive. “Th—that is none of your business, Mvilu.” He failed.

I smiled and said, “I know it is none of my business, Rora but, you know that I know and you know that I will not tell the Ka’yno. How often do you go over there?”

He stood there with his shoulders slumped in defeat. “You . . . you. . .”

“I am waiting, Rora.”

“Almost every night. We do not do anything but talk, Mvilu. I swear.”

“Rora, I do not care what you do. After all, you are at the age of puberty and you are feeling the hormones starting to rage.”

“You will not tell Norotha, will you?”

“Rora, I promise that your secret is my secret. Nobody will know anything about it unless you tell them. Now, head off to bed before your norotha gets up and starts preparing the nakvyv. I was getting Chy something to eat when you got home. That is why I am up. You,

however, would have a hard time explaining to your norotha, especially since your vest is in the condition it is in.”

He glanced down at his vest and saw that it was very crumpled proving that he was not completely honest, learning the lesson I had told him some time back, about just talking to Kyta. “All right, Mvilu. Tell Chy I said chitekuro.”

I watched him head to his room. Once again, he had that silly smile on his face. I smiled as he entered his room. I was standing outside my door with my hand on the handle as he entered his room. Just as he closed his door, I heard the door to Ara’s room start to open, so I ducked into my room quickly, but left the door opened about a centimeter and looked out. Sure enough, I was rewarded with seeing Katoo and Ara leaving her room, with Ara in the lead. Just as she exited her room, she suddenly turned around and caressed Katoo’s face causing him to look directly into her eyes. I smiled to myself as I saw the looks of happiness and ecstasy on their faces. When they reached the door, Katoo turned, took her face in his hands and rubbed his cheek against hers, very slowly. Ooh, an overtly sexual “kiss”. After staring into her eyes longingly, he rubbed his cheek against hers again. Then he turned and walked out the door.

Before I could get my door closed, I heard Ara say, without turning away from the door, “Eavesdropping again, Mvilu, or spying?”

I could have denied it, but, since she knew I was up anyway, I might as well admit to it. I opened the door and said, “Not eavesdropping, Ara, nor spying. It just took me longer to get to my room than I expected.”

“Do not lie to me, Mvilu. I saw you entering your room. I am just glad that I came out of my room before he did. Otherwise, he would have seen you and possibly Chy.”

“Chy?” I looked down and saw Chy looking longingly at the bowl of food in my hand.

“Yes. I saw Chy looking up at you through your door as you opened it.”

“Thank you, Ara.” I said sheepishly. “I am going to go back to bed and back to sleep. I will talk with you shortly.”

Ara smiled a thank you to me, then went into her room. I went into my room, fed Chy and got back into bed. A few athaloo later the lighting went out and I went back to sleep.

After the nakyvy, Rora left for guard duty. Since we had finished the mota, his required guard duty had dropped to three days on and two days off. I decided to do something that I had never done before during daylight ahi’nu. I let Chy out of the room and brought him into the dining room. He bounded into the dining room and ran up to Ara and slowly sniffed and nuzzled her leg, eliciting a look of embarrassment from her, he probably smelled Katoo on her, and then he rubbed his body against her leg. After doing this, he walked over to me and did the same

thing, just not as insistently. Since I was sitting in a chair, he placed his gigantic paws into my lap and laid his head on them. I reached down and scratched his head. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the window that was next to the door. While I was scratching Chy's head, I noticed a shadow fall across the window. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, I moved my eyes until I could get a better look at the window. However, I still had my head facing the middle of the room. From the new angle, I saw a face in the window. Unfortunately, I couldn't see it well enough to know who it was.

I got up and turned away from the window. I didn't want to arouse his suspicions. I planned on opening the door and catching him in the act. I started toward the living area. When I got out of eyesight of the window, I turned, went to the door and opened it suddenly. Unfortunately, I guess he realized what I was doing, because when I opened the door, I saw him walking away.

"Tanko." I said.

Ara, surprised, said, "What is wrong, Mvilu!? You never talk like that!"

"Someone was staring in the window and, when I went to catch him, he had already left."

"Did you recognize him?"

"No, but I believe I know who he is and, if I am right, I know where he is going."

Ara stood there for a moment, suddenly she inhaled loudly. She looked at me with abject horror in her eyes. Then, she looked at Chy and back at me. "Mvilu, if he saw Chy—"

"We have to assume he did, Ara, and plan for it."

"All right, but what are we going to do?"

"I will think of something. Sometimes the best defense is a great offense. But, at this time, I am at a loss as to what to do today. I have no sword training planned. Is there anything you need, or want, for me to do?"

She said, "Maybe you could go hunting, or. . ."

"Or what?" I asked suspiciously.

"Or you could go see your girlfriend."

I rolled my eyes. Here we go again. I might as well play along with this little game. "I doubt very seriously she is interested in me in that manner Ara. After all, TaJoola is easily fifty centimeters taller than I am."

I must admit Ara had changed and was able to understand my sense of humor better than when I first arrived in Talo-Vy. She said, "Oh, I do not know. She has told me she thinks you are very attractive."

I walked over to her, gave her a hug and said, "Ara, you know I only have eyes for you. Besides, I do not know if Ka' Naka would appreciate the competition."

She just laughed and said, "Get out of here, you Atako, and do not return without something for the nakymoty."

Ara was smiling a devious smile. I shook my head and headed to the door, then stopped, went to the door of my room, opened it, ushered Chy inside, went inside and gathered my hunting equipment, and closed the door.

As I headed for the door of the house, I heard Ara ask, "What do I do if the Ka'yno shows up?"

"I doubt he will now. I believe he is trying to get enough bad things about me to put me on trial before the Ishoo'se Aka'ny so he can have me killed. In the meantime, I will go and see if TaJoola needs any help today. Otherwise, I am going to go hunting. I will be back later today." Then, I left and headed for Joola's house.

After a three thaloo walk, I arrived at Joola's house. I knocked on the door and after a few athata, I was rewarded by seeing the furry face of Kyta in the doorway. She smiled the typically menacing, yet friendly, smile of the Mory. She stepped back and said, "Chitekuro, Mvilu. Welcome to our humble home. Please enter and grace us with your presence."

I responded, "Chitekuro, TaKyta. I wish my home was as luxurious as yours." Then, I entered.

As soon as I entered, Kyta turned and said loudly, "Tyarza, your boyfriend is here."

I ducked my head and said, "Kyta, I am not her boyfriend. She is promised to someone else, if she ever makes it back to her home village."

"So, you are saying you do not wish to be her boyfriend?"

"I am not going to answer that, Kyta, because no matter how I answer it, you could twist the words to mean anything you want it to mean. I do not believe in a no-win situation and I am not going to walk into one, at least not one that I can see."

"Errr. You are no fun today, Mvilu. You should play along."

“I learned a long time ago, Kyta, you do not fight, or play, the way the other person wants you to. You do it the way you want.”

I looked over Kyta’s shoulder and saw Joola walking up. Maybe I should say waddling up. She saw the bemused look on my face and said, “What are you laughing at?”

“Chitekuro, TaJoola. I am sorry. But, you look funny in your condition. You look like you are carrying four arothoo.”

“I am carrying five to be exact. But, I know I look funny when I walk. Why do you think I have not worked my booth lately?” She turned toward Tyarza’s room and said, “Tyarza? Did you not hear Kyta? Your boyfriend is here.” She was looking at me, smiling, when she said the last.

I just rolled my eyes, shook my head and looked at them. “You two sure are enjoying yourselves, are you not?”

“You pick on us all the time. I think it is time we repaid the favor. Do you not agree?”

“I cannot get upset, TaJoola, because you are right.”

About this time, Tyarza walked out of her room. When she saw me, she smiled broadly and walked up to me and hooked her arm through mine. “Mvilu, what a pleasant surprise. What are you doing here?”

“I stopped by because I thought that TaJoola might want some help here today.”

Tyarza put a pouty face on. “Aw. I thought you might be here to visit with me. I am disappointed to think that my boyfriend did not want to see me today.”

I let out a little groan and said, “Am I going to have trouble from you, too? This is no fair. There are three of you and only one of me.” They all laughed. I shook my head wearily.

I asked, “TaJoola, do you need me to help with anything around your home today? Or should I find something else to do?”

“I think you should find something else to do today. Kyta is doing everything she can for me here before she takes Tyarza and goes to work my booth today. She is extremely excited about having young arothoo around. She wants to practice being a norotha, I think.”

Before I could even remotely react, Kyta had grabbed my hands and held them to her breasts and said, “See, Mvilu. I am becoming larger here. I think I am starting to produce milk as if I were the one pregnant.”

I have been used to the openness of this family, but this action caught me completely by surprise. Not only I, but, Joola and Tyarza were caught off guard by the suddenness of her

action. I slowly removed my hands, opening my fingers and making certain that I pulled my hands straight back. I didn't want to accidentally give Kyta the idea that what she did was all right.

Joola said, almost too calmly, "Kyta, I know you are very close to Mvilu and like him a lot, but we do not do that to achohachy, no matter how close we are to them, unless we are mating. I do not know how Uany would react to that either. So, please do not do that anymore."

I was standing near the window by the door as the aforementioned situation occurred. As it occurred, I had noticed a shadow cross the window and stay there. Somebody was standing outside the window and spying on us. If he saw what Kyta just did, he may report it to the Ka'yno as me initiating the act despite the Mory propensity for honesty. I wanted to find out who it was, but there were more important things to worry about right now.

Kyta looked at her mother, then at Tyarza. Tyarza had a shocked look on her face. She didn't know how to react, same as me. I did notice a slight look of anger and jealousy cross her face, though. I knew Kyta had done it in complete innocence without realizing that what she had done was not socially acceptable.

Kyta said in a very embarrassed manner, "I—I am sorry, Mvilu. I—I acted without thinking. Norotha is right. I am very close to you and I do like you a lot. I also trust you to not do anything that you should not do. Please forgive my indiscretion."

She looked at Tyarza and saw the look on her face. "Please forgive me, Tyarza. I truly did it without thinking. Please do not be angry with me."

I said, "Do not worry about me, Kyta. You are forgiven. But, I was probably the most embarrassed one in the room when you did that. Had I even remotely expected you to do that, I would have been able to stop it before it got that far. I am just glad that Kyna was not here when you did that. He would have probably felt some kind of obligation to protect your honor which would have been detrimental to the both of us."

Tyarza said, "Do not worry, Kyta. I am sorry for my being upset. I should have known you did in innocent exuberance."

As I was speaking, I had been moving about the room. Slowly, I worked my way toward the door. I was hoping to catch the spy this time; however, just as I opened the door, I noticed that the shadow was moving away. When I opened the door and looked out, all I saw was the same chohachy walking away from Joola's house and in the general direction of the Suala Ka'ynony, just as I saw him do before I left Ara's house. I couldn't tell for certain who it was, but I believed it to be Jy-Choona. I was determined to find out, just not now.

When I closed the door, I turned back into the room and saw everybody looking at me. I said, “I saw someone looking into your window, TaJoola. I believe he was spying for the Ka’yno because when I opened the door, I saw him walking toward the Suala Ka’ynony.”

Joola said, incredulously, “A spy? From the Ka’yno? That is a serious breach of protocol. If the Ishoo'se Aka’ny were to find out and it could be proven that he sent the spy, they could remove him as Ka’yno. I do not understand. Why would the Ka’yno wish to spy on me?”

“Not you, TaJoola, me. I also saw him outside Ara’s house before I came over here.”

Kyta said, fearfully, “Did you see who it was? Was it the same chohachy?”

“No, I did not see who it was, although I believe I know who it is, and, yes, it was the same chohachy. If the Ka’yno is sending a spy to follow me around, see what I do, and report back, I would guess the Ka’yno is planning on trying to rid himself of me sooner rather than later.”

Tyarza asked, “Is there a chance that what you are saying is true?”

“Yes, when I saw the spy earlier, I had just let Chy out of my room and was playing with him when I saw the shadow on the window. Well, there is little or nothing I can do about it now. I am guessing all the spy is going to do is report to the Ka’yno when he sees something that he thinks the Ka’yno needs to know.”

Joola asked, “What are you going to do now, Mvilu?”

“I was hoping that you would allow Tyarza to step outside and sit with me for a few athaloo before I leave. If I am outside, I can catch almost any spy that may happen to want to spy on me. It is much more difficult to sneak up on someone when they are outside than when they are inside, especially if they are expecting you to spy on them. Is that acceptable with you, TaJoola?”

She smiled and said, “Go ahead. I know you would prefer to talk love in privacy.”

I just rolled my eyes and said, “You are not going to let that go, are you?”

“No, I am not. Now get your backsides outside and enjoy the sun. The rainy season will be here before too much longer.”

Tyarza and I went outside and sat on the chairs. She asked me how Chy was doing, if he was getting bigger, how Ara was taking her new-found prosperity, etc. Finally, after several athaloo of this small talk, I said, “Tyarza, do you ever miss your home?”

“Sometimes I do. Most of the time, I am happy here. I have someone that visits me and makes me feel happy. Other times, I miss my arotha and arothy, but, the chohachy that I am promised to, I would just as soon never see him again. Do you miss your home?”

“Yes, I do, what I remember of it. You know my past is in the shadows of my memory.”

“Do you have someone you miss from there?”

“If I do, I do not remember her. She is so far in the shadows of my memory, I cannot even picture what she would look like, if she even exists. Every time I picture a woman . . . never mind. I just know that right now, I am with the one I want to be with. Unfortunately, I cannot be with her, because she is promised to someone else.”

As we were talking, I was looking around. I wanted to catch the spy if he decided to return. As I looked around, my eyes fell on the window in Joola’s house. I saw Kyta staring out at us. When I noticed this, I turned my head suddenly and looked her right in her eyes. It startled her so badly, that she almost fell getting away from the window.

I smiled as she did this and returned my eyes to Tyarza. She was looking at me funny. Then she said, “You should not do that to Kyta. You know she has a healthy curiosity about chojasa-nojasa relationships.”

“I know. I just do not like being spied upon, even if that spy is someone I consider a friend. I was planning on going hunting this afternoon, Tyarza. I should go home and prepare. Rora will be off of guard duty tomorrow and we need to get back to sword practice. I will see you at another time.”

“All right, Mvilu. I look forward to seeing you again.”

As we stood, she reached out, grabbed me and gave me a big hug. She also stood on her toes and gave me another wonderful kiss. I could get used to experiencing that every day, and night. As she pulled back from the kiss, she smiled innocently. Then, she turned away from me and headed toward the door. She put her hand on the handle, turned toward me, blew me a kiss and entered the house. I waited for her to enter Joola’s house, then I headed toward the nearest ekakatoo and went hunting.