

XXXV

New Trainee (Day 368 on Tashoo) (Afternoon)

I entered Ara's home and went to my room. When I walked into my room, Chy bounded up to me and made his normal demands for attention. Even after more than 100 days as my "pet", Chy still surprised me with how much like a Terran house cat he acted. He continually rubbed his head against me, lay on me and was just a general nuisance in his demands for my affection. Of course, I never refused to give him all the affection he wanted; after all, I had rescued him and I really did want the kind of attention he would give me.

After petting Chy, I got my bow, arrows, quiver, atlatl and spear. I knew I couldn't bring more than one game animal home by myself, but I didn't know how far I would be from the animal when I got my shot or, for that matter, what kind of animal I would have the opportunity to kill and I wanted to be sure I had the necessary minimum for virtually any animal I might possibly run across. After I retrieved my weaponry, I told Ara where I was going, where I should be and when I should be back and then, I headed out the door and went to the closest katooeka. Since I was well known to the guards, they let me pass without question and I headed along the mota about three kilometers and turned into the forest. As I walked along the edge of the mota, I looked back toward the communal garden and waved at Rora. When he saw my weaponry, he just nodded his head and told me to be careful.

While I had always had good luck hunting on Tashoo, the kind of luck I experienced today was beyond even my wildest dreams. I had walked maybe 150 meters into the forest when I saw a Jootaka (1) standing just to my right about fifteen meters away from me. I had to make a quick decision. I knew the Jootaka didn't know I was even in the world and, as long as I made certain to not make a lot of noise and I was down wind, it wasn't likely he would since the Jootaka are notoriously near sighted; but, they have a sense of smell that would put a bloodhound to shame. Fortunately, I was downwind; so, it would be a simple matter to nock an arrow and enrage him. It would also be just as simple for me remove my atlatl, insert my spear and bring him down. The problem would be getting the creature home. I knew that if I dressed him out, I would probably lose about one-quarter of its weight but, 375 kg is still quite a bit of weight for a simple Uany to haul back, no matter how I planned it, although that much meat would feed Chy, us and our neighbors for several days. I thought quickly, then decided to chance it.

I pulled out my atlatl, inserted the spear and threw it at the Jootaka. The spear sank to half the shaft deep into the Jootaka's lower chest. After I threw the spear, I dropped as low as I could behind the bushes along the trail I was following. I heard the beast bellow in pain and rage. As I crouched in the bushes, I listened intently but, the Jootaka didn't run off as I assumed it would. I risked standing high enough to look over the bush I was behind. I couldn't see the Jootaka. I thought I had missed it. So, I started walking toward the last place I saw the Jootaka. When I arrived, I was shocked into speechlessness. The Jootaka had fallen where the spear had hit it. When I dressed the Jootaka, I found that I had, once again, lucked out and the spear had

pierced the heart killing the Jootaka almost instantly. I guess that when the Jootaka didn't see an attacker, he just stood there until he died.

After I dressed the Jootaka, I dug a hole and buried the organs that the Mory don't eat. Then, I retrieved the rope from my Etyma Jivekoo and tied the front legs behind the head. After I did that, I tied a strong rope around the horns and around my upper body. After several athata of struggling, I was able to start dragging the Jootaka. I wanted to get him to the area of the mota; I was hoping that if I could do that, I could bribe one of the guards to help me get it home.

When I exited the forest, I was about ten meters from the katooeka I had crossed not a half hi'nu earlier. When the guards saw me exit the forest, one of them crossed the katooeka and came running up to me. He stopped and said, "Mvilu, I cannot believe that you got a Jootaka. I also cannot believe you got him so quickly. How was that possible?"

"I guess the Great Being was with me again. I had walked into the forest about 150 meters and he was standing to my right about fifteen meters away from me. You are A-Deka are you not?"

"Yes, I am, Mvilu. Do you need assistance?"

"Yes, TeDeka, I do. I will give you ten kilograms of the meat if you will assist me in getting the Jootaka home."

"Mvilu, I will assist you. You do not have to give me any of the meat. I know how hard TaAra has had it for years. When you arrived, her life started getting better. It would be an honor to assist you. Perhaps my life will start to get better if I am of assistance to The One."

I hung my head. I hadn't been called that name in a long time. I thought that everyone in the village had forgotten it or that I might possibly be him. I wanted to nip this in the bud. "TeDeka, I am not denying that I am The One and I am not admitting to it either. But, I do need your assistance and I want to give you part of the meat for helping me. It would dishonor me, if you refuse my gratitude." This was the proper response to his refusal.

He said, "I do not wish to dishonor you, Mvilu. Therefore, I will accept your more than gracious offer for my assistance." (2)

After this discussion, A-Deka helped me drag the Jootaka across the katooeka and then on to Ara's house. I told him that if he came by Ara's house after he got off of guard duty, we would have the meat ready for him to take to his home. After helping me get the Jootaka onto the gambrels, he left and hurried back to his katooeka to continue his guard duty before the Ka'yno caught him being "derelict in his duties".

While I was skinning the Jootaka, I heard a sound behind me. It was a stealthy sound, as if someone was trying to sneak up on me. I didn't have my sword, wooden or steel, nearby. So, I decided to disarm the sneaker by acknowledging his presence before he could do anything that he planned on doing.

Without turning, I said, "Hello Jy-Choona. How are you this fine day?"

He said, "Just a thalloo. How did you know I was here this time? My-Rora is not here to give my presence away."

"I heard you walking up. I recognized the way you walk."

He whispered, "Tanko!" Then, he said more loudly, "It looks like you had some luck hunting today." He looked at the Jootaka and said, "How did you get it home?"

I told him the story making certain to omit the name of the guard that had assisted me. Then, I asked, "Do you mind helping me prepare the Jootaka? I promised the chohachy ten kilograms of the meat for helping me bring it home. I will give you ten kilograms also for your help."

"Of course, Mvilu. I would be glad to help you."

We worked on the Jootaka until Rora returned from guard duty. While we were working, though, Ara stepped outside to survey my luck. Visibly impressed, she walked over to me and said, "A Jootaka, Mvilu? You never cease to impress me with your hunting skills. How much meat do you think we will be able to retrieve from it?"

She had not seen Jy-Choona when she first arrived. I got between him and her and, through hand signs, let her know that we had a visitor so be careful what she said while I said, "By my calculations, there should be between two hundred and two hundred twenty-five kilograms of meat. I have promised a chohachy who assisted me in getting it home, ten kilograms and Jy-Choona ten kilograms for assisting me here. There is a lot of meat on a Jootaka so, I was thinking we could give some away to our needy neighbors." When I mentioned Jy-Choona's name, Ara looked over my shoulder and acknowledged him.

She said, "That is a grand idea, Mvilu. I am sure most of our neighbors could use fifteen kilograms of meat. Even if we keep twenty-five kilograms for our use, we could still help a lot of families. After we have finished preparing the meat, I will send Rora to our neediest neighbors with word that we have more meat for them, especially Hy-Moona. Her arothoo are growing, but it will be years before her chorothoo will be able to provide for their meat needs."

Ara, then, went back inside. Not five athalloo afterward, Rora came walking up. He was accompanied by someone who looked familiar, but I wasn't sure who it was until Rora arrived. He had Maky, one of the door guards at the Suala Ka'yony, with him. I had not seen him in a long time. It had been so long, in fact, I would not have recognized him, if Rora had not introduced him to me. Like everyone else, they were impressed with my good fortune but, at the same time, Rora was a bit leery about our visitor. He wouldn't say anything, yet I knew he was wondering why Choona was here. Since he had left for guard duty early in the morning, he didn't know about the spy nor that I suspected the spy to be Choona, so I didn't have to warn him

to watch what he said. I told him that his mother had something to tell him and he left for the inside of the house.

After we finished preparing the Jootaka, I said, “Thank you for your assistance, TeChoona. The meat should be ready in the morning. We are going to be training again tomorrow at the third hi’nu. When we finish training, I will have TaAra give you the meat.”

When I mentioned the sword training, TeMaky gave me his full attention. He said, “Mvilu, I have heard of your sword fighting training. I would appreciate more training. Would you be willing to take me on as a student?”

“I would be happy to train you. Does the Ka’yno know you want this training?”

“No, I have not mentioned it to him. Does that matter?”

“Yes, it does, I am afraid. I tell all my new students I need written permission from their Ka’ before I train them. Since, technically, the Ka’yno is your Ka’, he would have to give his permission.” When I said this, Choona made his apologies and left.

“I will go to him and ask for it immediately.”

“Wait a thalloo, TeMaky. I would ask a favor of you.”

“Yes, Mvilu. What can I do for you?”

“The chohachy that just left, do you recognize him?”

“Yes, I have seen him. He came to speak with the Ka’yno about ninety days ago. I do not know what he spoke with the Ka’yno about, though. I just know that they spoke and afterward, he left the Ishoo’s Choko Aka’ny with a paper in his hand and a smile on his face.”

“Hmm. The favor I would like you to do is to follow him and tell me where he goes. If the Ka’yno gives you his permission, be here tomorrow by the third hi’nu and we will begin your training.”

“Good. I hope to see you tomorrow. Have a good sleep, Mvilu.”

“I wish the same to you, TeMaky.”

After Maky left, Rora returned and I said to him, “We are almost finished here, Rora. Your norotha is going to give some of our neighbors some of the meat. She told me that she wants to give away about two hundred kilograms to our neighbors, especially TaMoona.” I looked around to be sure nobody was within earshot, then continued, “However, with Chy living with us, she may not give that much meat away. I know that she wants TaMoona to have at least twenty-five kilograms, though. It will help her to feed her family.

“We are also going to give ten kilograms to TeDeka and ten kilograms to TeChoona. When I killed the Jootaka, TeDeka helped me get it home and TeChoona helped me prepare it for freezing.”

“That is very kind of you, Mvilu. I will talk to Norotha and see to whom she wants to give some of the meat and then I will go and let them know. I know that TaMoona will appreciate the meat immensely.”

I was right about Ara keeping more than fifty kilograms of the meat. She decided to keep seventy-five kilograms and give two hundred away. She decided to give TaMoona thirty kilograms and ten kilograms to each of seventeen other needy anohachy.

I knew that Chy could survive on about ten kilograms of meat a day when he was full grown. However, since Chy was only about half grown which meant that he only needed about five kilograms a day. Keeping seventy-five kilograms of the meat meant that we could keep him, and us, satisfied for several days.

The next day, at the third hi’nu, thirteen achohachy arrived at the training grounds, among them was TeMaky. He had the necessary paperwork with him from the Ka’yno. Since he was the odd man out, so to speak, and the new trainee, I paired up with him. I told the other trainees to start their training exercises while I talked with TeMaky. I took him to the side out of earshot. Since I did this to every new trainee, none of the other trainees, including Choona, even gave us a second look as we walked about fifty meters away.

“TeMaky,” I said, “Did you follow TeChoona like I asked you to do?”

“Yes, I did. I was about sixty meters behind him.”

“Where did he go?”

“He went straight to the Suala Ka’ynony. The funny thing was that when I entered the door, he was not in the anteroom when I entered less than two athalloo later. I asked Vamoo what happened to the chohachy who entered just before I arrived. He said, ‘He walked right through and into the Ishoo’sse Choko Aka’ny.’ I asked Vamoo to announce me to the Ka’yno. He entered and almost immediately came back out. When I asked him what happened, he said that the Ka’yno was speaking to the visitor that preceded me and the Ka’yno told him to leave immediately and not to come in until the Ka’yno told him he could return. About three athalloo later, the Ka’yno called Vamoo and told him he could return. Vamoo entered and announced my request to speak with him. I was granted the audience and I made my request to the Ka’yno for sword training.”

“Where was TeChoona?”

“He was not in the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny. To my knowledge, the only other exit besides the anteroom, is through the Ka'yno's living Chambers behind the dais or to the dungeons.”

“He did not exit through the anteroom and he wasn't in the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny when you entered. Interesting. Either he went into the living quarters of the Ka'yno or he went into the dungeons. Since TeChoona is here, it is obvious that the Ka'yno did not send him to the dungeons. Well, anyway, I can see that the Ka'yno approved your training. I am glad to have you here.”

“Mvilu, I need to tell you something.”

“What is that?”

“The Ka'yno said he would approve my training only if I did something for him.”

“Really? Can you tell me what the something is?”

“I have not been told to not tell you so, I guess I would not be betraying a confidence if I tell you. He wants me to watch everything you do and report to him anything that I see you do. I wonder why he wants me to do that.”

“Because he is looking for something to allow him to, once again, put me on trial for my life. He wants me dead, TeMaky.”

“Then I will tell him I saw you do nothing wrong.”

“No, TeMaky. A good chohachy follows his leader's legal orders, even if he disagrees with them. You go ahead and tell him everything you see. I will deal with the consequences of anything you tell him.”

“But, what if I tell him something that could be detrimental to you.”

“I would rather you maintain his trust than to keep something from him that he might possibly already know and would test you about.”

“So, if he asks me if I saw something, what should I say?”

“Tell him the truth. If you saw it, say you did. If you did not see it, tell him you did not see it. Never deny that it happened if it did.”

“All right, Mvilu. I do not understand why the Ka'yno hates you. I have never seen nor heard of you doing anything detrimental to Talo-Vy.”

“I probably have and do not know it. But, we have talked about as long as I usually interview new trainees; therefore, we need to go back and start your training.”

We walked back to the training field. I got Maky a dauanka. As I returned to him, I asked him, "Are you ready to start training?"

"Yes, Mvilu. I am."

"You say you are but, you have to answer the following questions before your training can start. Are you willing to do whatever I tell you to do without questioning why I want you to do it?"

"Yes, Mvilu. I am."

"Are you willing to accept me as your Ka' of training?"

This question shocked him and it showed in his face. After thinking for a few athata, he said, "Yes, I am, my Ka'."

"You do not have to call me Ka', just accept me as the Ka' of your training." I handed him the dauanka and said, "Now, take this sword and prepare for training."

I picked up a dauanka and, holding it with the point down, said, "First, we are going to learn defense."

"Defense? I know how to defend myself with a sword."

I smiled as I said, "I knew you would say that, because every one of my trainees has said that. That is why you will defend yourself from my attack."

He took his sword and held it at the ready. I took my sword and moved slowly toward him. I made sure to move as slowly as I could. I watched his eyes and, sure enough, he watched my sword tip. Therefore, I made sure to move even more slowly. As I moved, I started waving my sword slowly in a mesmerizing circular pattern. As I moved my sword, I changed the way I waved it, first I circled it clockwise, then I circled it counterclockwise, then I started weaving it in a figure eight circle. Maky's eyes never left the sword. While I was weaving the sword, I was watching his every move. Soon, I noticed a pattern in his movements and, suddenly, I feinted to his right. When he went to block my swing, I just as suddenly whirled around and slapped his left side.

Maky grabbed his side, then looked at me in shock. "How did you do that? How did you know my left side was unprotected?"

"Simple, you do not know how to defend yourself with a sword. You think you do, but you do not. You were watching my sword not my eyes. Now, you attack me."

I went on the defensive and he attacked me. He moved just as every other Mory had moved when I first started training them. He feinted to the left, twirled quickly and swung at my right. However, I was not fooled by his move and had my dauanka ready. As with every other

new trainee, the look of utter shock on his face was so comical, it was all I could do to not laugh at him. But, he continued his attack. Next, he backed off and moved quickly, trying to overpower me with his strength by rushing me. When he rushed at me, I merely sidestepped, parried his swing, and slapped his thigh with my sword. He continued on for a couple of steps before turning on me again. I was ready when he swung a powerful overhead swing. I had my dauanka almost parallel to the ground and over my head. His dauanka struck mine and slid toward the ground. Immediately after his dauanka fell off of mine, I swung quickly and slapped his right side. He stopped his attack and I stood there looking at him with my sword at the ready. He realized he was defeated and lowered his sword tip and rested it on the ground.

“I guess I have a lot to learn.” He said, smiling embarrassedly. “I am now ready to learn anything you think I need to learn.”

I nodded and said, “You have just taken a major step and quicker than most of my new trainees. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that you were born and grew up in Te’ka-Jy.”

As we were sparring, Ka’ Naka walked up. I had acknowledged his arrival while I was in the defense mode. The fact that I did that and could stop Maky’s attack may have been the biggest reason he acknowledged how little he actually knew about sword fighting.

I said to Naka, “Chitekuro, my Ka’. What brings you to the training field today?”

“Chitekuro, Mvilu. I heard you had a new trainee and I wanted to see how good he is.”

Maky knew Ka’ Naka was talking about him. He said, “I obviously am not as good as I thought I was, Ka’ Mu-Naka. Did you see how well he defeated me, thrice? Is he really that good?”

“He is better than that, TeMaky. He let you off easily because you are a new trainee. I have seen him take a more experienced trainee and nearly beat him senseless with all the slaps he gives him during training and continued to make the trainee fight until the trainee was almost exhausted.”

“If that is what I have to look forward to, then I had best get into better shape and pay close attention to what he wants to teach me.”

I said, “Good. I am glad that you know how much you really do not know, TeMaky. But, I need to go watch the others train. Ka’ Naka, TeMaky has no partner. Would you be so kind as to continue his beginner training?” Maky gave me a surprised look when I said, ‘beginner.’ “I will keep an eye on him while I am watching the others and tell you what he needs more training on.”

“Of course, Mvilu. I do not mind working on my swordsmanship.”

Maky said, “Thank you, my Ka’ and thank you Ka’ Mu-Naka for assisting in my training. I am honored to have you as my first training opponent.”

I turned and walked toward the other trainees. As I walked toward them, I saw something that I didn’t like.

“Choona! What are you doing? How many times do I have to tell you how to defend in a sword fight?”

Choona and his partner, Mo-Ke’ka, stopped their sparring. Choona said, “But—but, my Ka’, I was defending.”

“Yes, you were in defense position, but you were not defending properly. How many times have I got to tell you, *and everybody else for that matter*, when you defend against a swordsman, especially a better trained swordsman, expend just enough energy to block his swings and thrusts? Make him wear himself out, then you can go on the offensive and he will not be able to defend against your attack. Now, Choona and Ke’ka start again. Choona, you are on the defensive and do it right.”

Choona was angry, but that is what I wanted. If he is angry with me, then he is more likely to do what I tell him to do. I believed, knew actually, he was the one spying on me yesterday, and by being tough on him, I hoped that he wouldn’t figure out that I knew about what he was doing. I also figured that, if I was tough on him and he reported this toughness to the Ka’yno, it would not be anything that the Ka’yno would be able to use against me. After all, I had written permission from the Ishoo’s Aka’ny to be as tough as necessary to train the achohachy of Talo-Vy to be the best swordsmen on Tashoo.

We continued training until time for the nakyvo. When we broke for nakyvo, I said, “It is time for the nakyvo, everyone. You are doing very good today, even you TeMaky. Therefore, I will make the afternoon training session optional. If you have anything you would rather do after the nakyvo, I will not hold it against you in your training.

“TeChoona, if you have a thaloo, I have something to speak with you about before you have your nakyvo. Also, TeMaky, if you will wait here for a thaloo until I speak with TeChoona, I have something I need to speak with you about as well.”

Both of them said, “Yes, my Ka’.”

After everybody else left, I took Choona with me to the door of Ara’s house and had him wait outside. I went inside and got the ten kilograms of meat I had promised him. I told him, “I am sorry that I am giving the meat to you in this manner. I did not want the others to wonder why I am giving this to you. Take it and enjoy several good meals, TeChoona. Perhaps, My-Tara will prepare some meals for you.”

“I will ask her to do that, Mvilu. Thank you for your kindness to a stranger.”

After he left, I went back to the training field and spoke with TeMaky. I stood in a position that would allow me to watch Choona as he walked away. I wanted to make certain he wasn't close enough to hear me speaking with TeMaky. I said, “TeMaky, you did well today. Ka' Mu-Naka told me how well you followed his instructions. Because of what Ka' Mu-Naka said, I believe you will become a very good sword fighter. Perhaps you will become good enough to assist in training in the future.”

After I knew that Choona was far enough away, I said, “TeMaky, I need you to do something for me.”

“What is that, my Ka’?”

“I need you to follow TeChoona and verify that he goes to the Suala Ka’ynony. Do not follow him too closely. I do not want you to risk injury from helping me. Let me know if my suspicions are right.”

“I will do that, my Ka’. But, what are your suspicions?”

“I do not want to tell you, TeMaky. That way, if you are discovered following TeChoona, you can honestly deny knowing why I want the information. Now, go before he gets too great of a lead on you.”

“Yes, my Ka’.” He left hastily.

I turned to Ka’ Naka. He was staring at me. “What is wrong, my Ka’?” I asked.

“Why are you sending TeMaky to spy on TeChoona? Do you know he is a spy for the Ka’yno?”

“I do not know for certain but, I believe he is. However, I want verification. I just gave TeChoona ten kilograms of Jootaka meat that I promised him for helping me yesterday. I also suggested having My-Tara cook the meat for him. He did not act as if I knew he had lied to me about meeting her.”

“Errr. That makes me wonder if the Ka’yno really believes that she is still alive or if he thinks you will never learn the truth.”

“I do not know, my Ka’. I will be back here after the nakyvo. If any of the achohachy return, I will give them any training they want or I think they need. Thank you for assisting with TeMaky this morning. I believe that he experiences hero worship where you are concerned.”

“I believe he experiences it with you as well, my friend. I will be back after the nakyvo, Mvilu, in case you need my assistance.”

He left immediately after I thanked him, heading in the general direction of Joola's home. I smiled as he walked away. He was getting bolder about his relationship with her. But, I guess he wanted to be there when it came time for her to deliver her cubs and he could always use his rank in the village, plus the fact that Joola is a resident in his Ka'na, to prevent any suspicions.

I went inside and ate the nakyvo with Ara and Rora. Rora and I talked about the training this morning. I reminded Rora that he didn't have to come back this afternoon for further training, unless he wanted to do so. He assured me that he would be there, saying that he didn't think he could have too much training.

That afternoon we continued training with Rora, Ka' Naka, Maky, and four other trainees. Choona was not one of these four, which surprised me. Maky told me that he followed Choona to the Suala Ka'ynony again and once again he entered the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny without an invitation from the Ka'yno. This most definitely verified my suspicions about who he was. But, without definitive proof, I couldn't say anything to anybody.

After training for another three ahi'nu, I called off training for the day and sent everybody home. I also told them to be back the next morning. I went inside and told Ara that we had finished training for the day. I also told her that Ka' Naka, Rora and I were going to visit Joola for a short while before the nakymoty. She sternly told me that if Rora and I were not back in time to eat the nakymoty, she was going to give it to Chy. I laughed as I left, not because I didn't believe her, but because I did.

After visiting Joola and her family, especially Tyarza, for a couple of ahi'nu, Rora and I returned home and the three of us ate the nakymoty. I fed Chy half a kilogram of Jootaka meat and took him out for his evening constitutional. I kept a wary eye out for any spies and found none. After I got Chy back home and into my room, I got ready for bed and crawled in. After several athata, the lights started getting dimmer. Just before the room was completely dark, I felt a heavy weight on the bed. I smiled, stroked his scruffy head and very shortly thereafter, I was asleep.

1-The Jootaka is a large animal. It is approximately two meters tall at the shoulders with large horns that are parallel to the ground and form a squared off C. Its fur is rusty red in color, the color of dried blood. It has a pumpkin orange stripe down the length of the back and orange peel stripes starting along the backbone and ending about two-thirds down the sides and neck. The legs are stripe free below the elbow and knee joints and end in cloven hoofed feet. The tail is short, approximately 25 cm in length and somewhat triangular in shape with a ten to one ratio and the wide part of the tail is away from the body. The eyes are amber in color with round pupils. Its weight is somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 kg. Other than these obvious differences, the animal generally resembles an American Bison, down to the hump on the back and shaggy woolen coat.

2-This is normal between Mory warriors. They consider it bad luck to accept a gift the first time it is offered to them, especially if the gift is food of some kind because the recipient must be

convinced that the giver isn't implying that the warrior can't provide for himself. So, if a gift is offered, the recipient must refuse the gift until and unless the one offering the gift states that he would be dishonored unless the gift is accepted. Sometimes, these conversations can go back and forth for up to 5 minutes before the recipient accepts the gift.