

XIX

The Decision of the Aka' (Day 126 on Tashoo)

Rora and I backed out of the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny toward the door to the anteroom. Just as we reached the door, it opened. Te'-Maky was still there at his proper place right beside the door and holding it open.

I had noticed that Vamoo did the same thing almost every time we left the Choko. I couldn't believe that the Mory were psychic, so I had to ask Te'-Maky, "How did you know we were about to exit the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny, my Lord, TeMaky?"

He looked at me funny and said, "Is this not done in your village?"

"Actually, my Lord, no, it is not."

Pointing, he said, "There is a speaker through which the goings on in the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny can be heard here in the anteroom. Right after the door closed when you two entered the Choko, I turned it on. When you were leaving, just as you reached the door, I heard and opened it. It tends to give the uninitiated a bit of a shock when the door opens before it is touched."

I laughed and said, "Since you had the speaker on, tell me. What do you think of my idea of a hierarchy for the achohachy of Talo-Vy?"

"I think you are right. Instituting a hierarchy among the achohachy would most likely make the achohachy more willing to fight for Talo-Vy."

"What about the idea of paying the achohachy according to their rank in the hierarchy?"

"I understand what you were saying and believe it might be a good idea, as well."

"Well, what about my idea of retaliatory attacks?"

"That one worries me, Mvilu. It brings to mind memories of ancient times."

"Like I told the Ishoo'se Aka'ny, my Lord TeMaky, if we make it painful for our enemies to attack us, they would probably be less likely to attack us again. In the long run, it would likely save lives. It has happened in my home—village. When we were attacked, we would attack our enemies until they no longer wanted to fight us. In fact, most of those former enemies are now our friends. Whether it is because they fear us, respect us, or do not want to have to face our wrath again, I do not know. I just know that they are our friends. I believe it would be the same here in Talo-Vy."

"Perhaps you are right, Mvilu but, I wonder if the Ishoo'se Aka'ny will agree."

"Only time will tell, my Lord. Only time will tell."

Rora said, "Mvilu, we must leave. The time is getting late and I am certain Norotha will have our ears if we are late for the nakyvo."

During the walk home, Rora was not as talkative as he normally was, which, as I have stated before, wasn't saying much. I could tell from the look on his face that he was worried about what would happen if the Ishoo'se Aka'ny voted to create the military hierarchy and approve retaliatory attacks. While I hoped that the Ishoo'se Aka'ny would agree with me about the retaliatory attacks, I hoped that we wouldn't have to use them very often. I had learned in my time here that word travels quickly in the Mory world. If we had to retaliate just once or twice, then we should be safe from future attacks. At least, that was my hope.

We arrived home and found Ara still relaxing where we had left her. When we entered, she realized how close it was to time for the nakyvo. Rora and I went into the living area and spent a few athaloo chatting with her before she got up and started preparing the nakyvo. I tried to convince her to let me do the cooking, but she laughed at the thought of my cooking. Because of her reaction to my suggestion, I put on a pouty face which caused her to laugh, but not change her mind.

Before she started cooking, I said to her, "Happy Birthday, Mistress Ara. With your permission, Rora and I will go outside while you prepare the nakyvo. There is something I would like to work on with him."

She said, "Go ahead. I have known you long enough to know that whatever you are working on will help us in the long run."

Rora looked at Ara, then at me. I thought for a thata he was going to get upset. But, he said, "I know what you are saying, Norotha. So far, Mvilu has regularly found things that have helped us, and Talo-Vy. I am certain that he will continue to do so." Turning to me, he said, "Come, Mvilu. Norotha will let us know when the nakyvo is ready."

After we went outside, I motioned for Rora to follow me and we went to a small clearing at the back side of the tree in which our house was located. When I was picking up sticks to mark the mota, I had also picked up a few sticks that were in the same basic size and shape of the Mory swords that I had seen so regularly since I arrived in Talo-Vy over one hundred fifty days before. While I was picking them up, Rora had looked at me curiously, but had said nothing. I am certain he knew I would tell him what they were for soon enough.

When we got to the back of the tree, I said, "Rora, I am sure you are wondering what these adauanka (1) are for. So, I will tell you. During the battle with the achohachy from Te'ka-Jy, I noticed that you are a good swordsman, but you are undisciplined and have a lot to learn about sword fighting. With these sticks, I hope to train you to be better."

"How can you train me to be a better swordsman using adauanka?"

"If you will notice, Rora, several of the adauanka are about the same size as your long sword and several are about the size of your short sword. I am going to train you how to use the swords in such a way as to make it difficult, if not impossible, to kill you. There are several things you need to

learn. One is defense; another is offense; a third is balance. There is one other thing I will try to teach you to defend yourself with. It is called a quarterstaff.”

Rora looked at me curiously as he repeated, “Kuartursutafu? What is that?”

“A quarterstaff is a stick about two to two and a half meters long and about one to two centimeters in diameter. You can use it like a sword but, unless you strike your opponent with sufficient force and in the right place, it will only injure. In ancient times, when the poor were banned from owning weapons, such as swords, it was the weapon that they could legally own because the royalty couldn't ban people from gathering wood.”

“Ah, I understand. But, what do you mean, ‘I have to learn balance.’? I can walk. I have balance.”

“Just because you can walk does not mean you have balance. To tell the truth, in my home—village, walking has been described as little more than a controlled fall. Balance in battle means that you cannot be knocked over easily, even by a larger and stronger opponent.”

“Is that possible? I mean, can you defeat someone who is larger and stronger than you are?”

“You saw me defeat the Ka'yna of Te'ka-Jy and he was larger and stronger than me. All it took was maintaining my balance *and* my sword fighting skills. When you learn proper balance, you will be able to do the same thing.”

“How will you teach me balance?”

“I will teach you balance with boards and then a rope. You will know when you are ready to learn balance and ask. At that time, I will show you what you need to know.”

“How will I know when I am ready to learn balance?”

“After you get knocked down several times when you think you should not get knocked down, you will be ready to learn balance.

“Now, after you learn these three things, you will be ready to practice battle situations. Are you willing to let a Uany teach you how to use a sword?”

“If it will make me a better chohachy, I am willing to let a Kootona train me.”

“Very well then, Rora, choose your weapon.”

He picked up one of the long “swords” and held it at the ready. I picked up one of the short “swords”. I said, “Are you ready, Rora?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Good. First we will have a mock battle so I can assess your abilities better.”

I raised my dauanka in salute. This confused Rora, as I thought it would. He looked at me in a confused manner. I smiled and asked, "Is there a problem, Rora?"

"Yes, why did you do that with your dauanka?"

"I did it as a salute to you."

"I am confused."

"I know. That is part of the reason I did it. One of the things you need to learn is to take any advantage of your opponent you can."

"That does not sound honorable."

"Rora, when you are fighting for your life, honor flies out of the window." He looked at me curiously. "What I mean, Rora, is this. You wouldn't hesitate to fight a weaker chohachy if he attacked you, would you? Of course not. Technically, that is not honorable. But, you are fighting for your life so you are not going to ask his experience and abilities and ask for references as to how good he is. You are going to defend yourself."

Rora looked as shocked as I am sure he felt. (2) "I do not know, Mvilu. Being honorable to an enemy is as important to the Mory as being honorable to a friend."

"I understand what you are saying, Rora. But, you can honor your enemy after the battle. Were we not honorable to the achohachy of Te'ka-Jy after I killed their Ka'yna? However, during the fight with him, I treated him like he was someone that wanted to kill me, which he was. I honored him afterward by not mutilating his body in any way nor stealing anything from him. Now, come at me as if I was the enemy and I was trying to kill you."

Rora mounted a half-hearted attack. I parried the attack and disarmed him with absolutely no problem. "Rora, I know you can fight better than that. You fought better than that against Te'ka-Jy. Why did you just attack me half-heartedly?"

"I did not wish to hurt you, Mvilu. You are my friend. Nobody wants to hurt a friend."

"Rora, if I was afraid you would intentionally hurt me, I would not have offered to help you become a better swordsman. Besides, that is why we are using adauanka. It will be difficult to hurt me badly using a dauanka.

"Now, I need you to fight with all your heart. I have things to teach you and I cannot teach them unless you fight as if I was going to kill you."

"All right, Mvilu. I will do better."

Rora attacked with more vigor this next time. But, I could tell he was still afraid of possibly hurting me. Now, I was getting upset. I decided it was time to start teaching him in a way I was hoping that I could avoid. He swung at me, again half-heartedly, and I parried his swing and went on the offensive. I swung and tagged him several times. He had a look of horror in his eyes as he realized

that I was not giving him a break. Once again, I disarmed him and looked at him, not angrily, but very unhappily.

Emphasizing my aggravation, I said, *“Rora, I told you to fight with all your heart. Once again, you fought like you were still afraid of hurting me. Are you still afraid of hurting me, now?”*

Speaking like he was ashamed, he said, “No. To tell the truth, I was afraid you were angry with me and were going to hurt me.”

“Good. Now, show me what you have got.”

I returned his dauanka to him and took my defensive stance. He came at me and swung at me with a lot more vigor. Unfortunately for him, he attacked with no finesse. Once again, I parried the attack and disarmed him. It was a little more difficult this time because he was now using his height and weight advantage against me.

After this attack, he was a bit winded and a little frustrated. Good. Now he would start getting upset with me and, hopefully, himself. I believed that I couldn't train him until he started getting frustrated, but not angry. There's an extremely fine line between frustration and anger in the martial arts. I wanted his frustration, not his anger. Frustrated, he would start looking at the mistakes he had been making and, hopefully, start learning from them. Angry, he wouldn't learn anything and give up, possibly even try to hurt me. I picked up his “sword” and handed it to him. He practically snatched it out of my hand.

I asked him, “Are you getting frustrated, Rora?”

Angrily, he said, “Of course I am. I am taller, heavier and stronger than you are. But, you have disarmed me three times with no problem. What am I doing wrong?”

“Now, you are starting to learn. By acknowledging that you are doing something wrong, it will become easier for you to accept and try new ideas. Ideas that you may not have considered trying before.”

Leaning on the hilt of the dauanka, I continued, “One thing you need to learn, Rora, is how to fight with finesse. Brute force may win an occasional battle, but it is not something that great sword fighters use to any great success. As a matter of fact, the only time you want to use brute force against an opponent is when you need to dispatch him quickly. When I fought with the Ka'yna of Te'ka-Jy, I noticed that he did not use his height and weight advantage. He fought with finesse, which caused me a bit of concern. However, I managed to keep him from killing me until he made the mistake I was looking for. You will learn finesse later, though.”

“I do not understand how finesse is an advantage in a sword fight.”

“Well, let me try to explain by showing you. This is how you attacked me both times.” I gripped my sword with both hands and swung it like an ax or a cleaver. “Do you see what I am talking about?”

“All right. So, what should I do?”

“Finesse is better than brute force. It allows you to react to an attack and, at the same time, gives you a chance to seek out an opening to attack. Now I will attack you. You show me how you would defend an attack. Now, defend yourself.”

I stepped about five paces away from Rora. Rora assumed a defensive position. I advanced on him slowly. Rora was not used to this type of attack. I saw, and sensed, apprehension in him. I never took my eyes off his eyes. I saw that he never took his eyes off of my dauanka. I nodded slightly and started weaving it back and forth in front of me. His eyes followed the movements almost as if he had been hypnotized by the movements. After about thirty athata of weaving, I feinted to his left. He almost instantly moved to block the stroke. Unfortunately for him, my dauanka never came near his left side. I made a quick turn and landed a stroke to his right side. Rora had a look of absolute shock on his face. It was quite a chore to not laugh at the look. I retreated a step, rested the tip of my dauanka onto the ground, rested my chin on the hilt, and looked at him. I felt sorry for him. He was hanging his head in shame. Four times he had been bested by a Uany, and a slave to top that. I could tell that he was not angry, just embarrassed.

Finally, he looked up at me and asked, “How did you do that?”

“Rora, as I advanced on you, did you notice my eyes?”

“No, I was too busy watching your dauanka.”

“That was where you went wrong. When fighting an enemy one on one, you should never take your eyes off his until he makes his move. If you follow the sword, your enemy could be thinking of an attack that you are not expecting, like I did. Is this honorable? I do not know. I do know that, had we been actually fighting for our lives, you would be dead and I would still be alive and ready to fight again. Do you understand what I am saying?”

“I believe so.”

“You know I do not have much of a memory of my life before I arrived here. But, I do remember that I had been training to be a swordsman for most of my life. When I first started training, I was covered from head to toe with bruises from all the times I was struck by swords such as these we are using today. As time went by, the bruises became fewer and fewer until, finally, I never received a bruise. Eventually, my master, my *sensei*, my trainer, said to me, ‘I have nothing more to teach you. You are now teaching me. Forthwith, you must go and teach others what you know.’ By the way, my *sensei* was considered to be the best sword-fighter in my village. By training you, I am attempting to fulfill what he told me to do. I want you to be the best swordsman in all of Talo-Vy, next to me, of course.”

“Mvilu, I am glad you told me what sensey means. We do not have such a word here. However, the word that you should have said is gevaora.”

“All right then, my gevaora sent me to train others. I will fulfill his request by training you to be a better sword-fighter.”

As I finished speaking, I heard Ara calling us to let us know the nakyvo was ready. So, we went inside and ate. As we ate, Rora and I continued talking about sword fighting techniques. He was especially curious about the balance aspect and how I would train him to have better balance. In all of

my previous days in Talo-Vy, I had never heard him speak so much. He probably spoke more during this nakyvo than he had spoken in the previous ten days, combined. I told him that I would have to show him because he wouldn't understand if I simply explained it. I reminded him that he needed to learn unarmed defense and attack.

“Unarmed defense and attack?” He asked.

“Yes. It is a way to protect yourself if you find yourself in one of the situations that Kyna mentioned when he told me about the hunting techniques of the Mory. For example, what would you do if you were out hunting and a group of Mory achohachy from another village surprised you?”

“I had never thought about it. What would you do?”

“I will show you when I believe you are ready to learn the techniques that I will teach you. But, it will not be today.”

After the nakyvo, Rora and I went back outside and started training again. This time, I said, “Rora, this afternoon I want you to stand beside me and mirror every move I make. The moves that I will be showing you are defensive in nature and could save your life in a battle.”

Rora said, “Why not teach me to attack?”

“Because if you cannot stay alive, knowing how to kill will do you no good.”

He thought for a few athata, before answering, “That makes a lot of sense. I will do as you say, Mvilu.”

I started showing him different forms of defensive moves. As I showed Rora the different moves, sometimes he would make a mistake and I would make the necessary adjustments to his stance. After about half a hi’nu of this, I decided to see how well Rora was learning his lessons. So, I had him defend himself again. He was better, but he still had a way to go just to fight me to a draw.

After I had disarmed him once again, I heard a noise that sounded like a stifled laugh behind me. I turned and saw Zo-Kyna standing there. He was watching us curiously and smiling. Rora looked at him and motioned him over. We started talking and I told Kyna what I had told Rora before the nakyvo.

Rora asked him, “What do you think of what Mvilu is saying, Kyna?”

“I have never heard anything quite like it. Fighting with finesse is something I have never heard of.”

I asked, “Kyna, you are considered one of the best sword fighters in all of Talo-Vy, are you not?”

Swelling his chest with pride, Kyna said, “I have been told that. Norotha has told me that I am as good as my chorotha as a sword fighter.”

I was a bit taken aback when Kyna said that Joola knew who his father was. I was also a bit worried as to how Rora would respond to that revelation. However, I said, “Well, then, why not pick up one of the adauanka we are using and the two of you attack me at the same time.”

They looked at each other. This is a tactic that is unheard of to the Mory. They consider it dishonorable to have “unfair odds” on their opponents. However, Kyna didn’t say anything; he walked over to the pile of adauanka and picked one up. He walked over next to Rora and whispered to him. After listening to Kyna, Rora nodded.

I said, “Are you ready?” They both replied in the affirmative. “Then, defend yourselves.”

Both of them advanced on me. I watched them and saw that they were going to come at me from each side. I smiled and made sure both of them saw it. I have always believed that a smile could disarm an opponent as easily as and more effectively than an actual fight. As a result of this belief, I got the reaction I was hoping for. They looked at each other with surprise and apprehension. I saw that they were wondering what I knew that they didn’t know.

Since I knew that Kyna was the better swordsman, I decided to use that against him. I turned and made a quick movement toward him. He hesitated and took a step backward. His hesitation and step was the downfall of both of them. If Kyna had stood his ground, I would have been forced to stand and fight, exposing my undefended back. After Kyna took his step backward, I turned immediately toward Rora. He was pressing his attack from behind me. He had his sword high above his head. My quick turn caught him off guard. I made a quick motion and sliced across his chest area. Immediately after making my move against Rora, I turned on Kyna and saw that his hesitation was only for a thata. He was now advancing on me and swinging his sword. I parried his stroke and followed immediately with a quick motion and sliced across his lower abdomen. Both slices were killing cuts and they both knew it. Since we were training, they both stopped as soon as I made the movements.

Just as we finished, once again, I heard a sound behind me. I turned and saw Ka’ Naka standing there. He was slapping his right hand against his vest. This is the Mory version of hand clapping. He approached us and the three of us immediately turned, bowed our heads, and showed appropriate deference to him.

Ka’ Naka approached us and said, “Chitekuro, everyone.”

“Chitekuro, Ka’ Mu-Naka.” We replied.

Ka’ Naka said, “Kyna, I believe you have found a swordsman in our own Ka’na that is better than you are. Do you not agree?”

I must say that the great thing about the Mory is that they rarely hold anger or embarrassment for any length of time. Even though I had bested him in a manner that he was not used to fighting against, Kyna was effusive, almost childish, in his praise of my swordsmanship. “Did you see him, my Ka’? He bested two, *TWO* Mory swordsmen with four movements. I am going to have him train me while he is training Rora, with your permission of course.”

Ka' Naka smiled and said, "Permission granted, Kyna. Perhaps you will be willing to train an old chohachy as well, Mvilu?"

I looked at him somewhat shocked, but said, "I would be more than a little willing, my Ka'."

"Thank you. I watched the moves you used against the two of them. I was exceedingly impressed. To my knowledge, no Mory chohachy has ever even considered doing the things I saw you do today, Mvilu."

"I thank you, my Ka'. As I told my master, those are moves I learned long before I arrived here. He was worried that the moves would not be considered honorable."

"I do not know if they are honorable, but they could be lifesaving in a battle, and more importantly, they are definitely not against any law that I know of. But, I will say this. Saving your life in battle is more important than honor. Would you be interested in training all of our achohachy, Mvilu?"

"My Ka', it would be difficult to train over five thousand achohachy at the same time." I thought for a couple of athata and said, "Perhaps I could train a few achohachy, then, after each of them have proven to me that they know what I want them to know, they could assist me in training different aspects of sword fighting that the other achohachy would need to know to be the best sword fighters on Tashoo. We could train like that until all of the achohachy in our Ka'na have been trained."

"That would be acceptable, Mvilu. But, of course, it would have to wait until you have finished digging the mota. By my estimation we should have less than twenty kilometers until we have finished. We have made good time on the mota. I never thought we could average one kilometer a day."

"I did not think we could either. I guess the fact that the mota will protect anohachy as well as the village has inspired the achohachy to work even harder than they might normally work. Is that why you are here, my Ka'?"

"Ah. Thank you for reminding me, Mvilu. Watching you teach these two the intricacies of sword fighting finesse made me forget why I am here. I came to bring you a message from the Ishoo'se Aka'ny. By a vote of seven to one, the military hierarchy you suggested will be implemented throughout the village."

"Good. I believe that the achohachy will find the idea more than a little acceptable. May I ask who voted against it?"

"It was Ky-Kikoo."

"I guess I am not really surprised. After nearly losing his life thanks to the Ka'yno sending him to Ka' Sheshoo's Ka'na the day of the battle with the achohachy of Te'ka-Jy, he probably wants to do whatever he can to return to favor in the Ka'yno's eyes."

"Perhaps you are right. But, that is not all, Mvilu. By a vote of five to three, the Ishoo'se Aka'ny voted to implement your suggestion of retaliatory attacks as a policy of the defense of Talo-Vy. The three that voted against it stated that they feared a return to the days when the Mory came close to

extinction. But, after the vote, those three said that they would include their achohachy in any retaliatory attack that may be necessary. They asked for one stipulation added to the retaliatory attacks law. It has to be requested and/or approved by the Ka'yno."

"That part is not going to be easy to overcome. Will the Ishoo'se Aka'ny be able to overrule the Ka'yno if he is opposed to a retaliatory attack?"

"Yes, it has to be a unanimous vote of a quorum of the Aka' voting; there can be no assumptions of unanimity. An Aka' quorum is six."

"I am confused, my Ka'. Please explain."

"The vote has to be unanimous and there has to be a quorum of Aka'. So, if there are less than six

Aka' present, the vote cannot be taken."

"Okay. I see what you are saying now. However, I do not believe the Mory will have to worry about the possibility of extinction, if retaliatory attacks are used. What we have to do is make war so frightful that nobody will want to attack a neighbor. Remember what I said, in my home—village, there were times when we would be attacked, we would retaliate and, by the time we finished, our enemies usually became our friends, possibly because we helped them to rebuild after defeating them so soundly. We could use that as a way to convince the Ka'yno to approve any retaliation. It is said that some of our former enemies did not want to have to face our fury a second time. It was also said that some of the others came to respect us for our willingness to protect ourselves. Whatever the reason, we did not even come close to extinction. As a matter of fact, we flourished and I believe the same will happen for the Mory as well. All-out war is the most frightful thing that any people can engage in. It is so fear inducing that the people that engage in it soon decide it is not worth the effort and they choose to stop fighting war completely for fear of reprisal. These little skirmishes that the Mory fight do not cause sufficient fear to make the Mory want to stop it."

"Personally, I believe you. Since the day I met you, you have impressed me as an honest and intelligent Uany, Mvilu. The Ishoo'se Aka'ny wishes for you to return tomorrow and help us to understand your ideas more clearly, especially the idea of putting marks on the vests of the achohachy so they will know who their superiors are."

"I will be happy to assist the Ishoo'se Aka'ny in any way I can, my Ka'. Will the door guard be sent for my master and me or does the Ishoo'se wish us to arrive as soon as we can?"

"Just arrive as soon as you can. They do not want to keep you from working on the mota any longer than is absolutely necessary."

"Have no fear, my Ka'. My master and I will be there as soon as possible after we finish having the nakyvy."

When we arrived at the Suala Ka'ynony the next morning, Vamoo admitted us and went to announce us to the Ishoo'se Aka'ny. After we entered the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny, Rora and I stopped

five meters from the steps to the dais. The Aka' had numerous questions concerning the suggestions I had made on my previous appearance before them. I answered all of their questions, especially concerning the ranking system and made suggestions concerning the symbols of rank. After a couple of ahi'nu of discussions, during which the Ka'yno did not participate, it was finally decided that the following symbols were going to be placed on the left side and rear of the vest and used to indicate the rank of the individual wearing the vest: Rayvatu – One white inverted chevron; Kashara – Two white inverted chevrons; Sajate – Two white inverted chevrons with a diamond nestled in the upper chevron; Ensana – One solid yellow circle; Looten – One red circle superimposed on a yellow circle; Maja – A red circle superimposed on a yellow circle above a solid yellow circle; Kamada – Two red circles superimposed on two yellow circles in a vertical row; Kanara – Three yellow circles in an inverted equilateral triangle with a red circle superimposed on the upper two yellow circles; Kachata – Two red circles superimposed on yellow circles above two yellow circles; Genara – Three red diamonds superimposed on three horizontal yellow circles; Ka' – One yellow diamond; Ka'ynu – Two horizontal yellow diamonds; Ka'yny – Three horizontal yellow diamonds; Ka'yni – Four yellow diamonds in a diamond shape; Ka'yne – Five yellow diamonds in two rows (two above three); Ka'ynoo – Six yellow diamonds in two offset rows (three, three); Ka'yna – Seven yellow diamonds in three rows (two, three, two); Ka'yno – Eight yellow diamonds in a square pattern with a red circle superimposed on a yellow circle in the center.

After a couple of ahi'nu, all of the details had been hammered out. However, there was one more thing that I suggested to the Aka'. I suggested that on the right side of the front of the vest and on the rear above the rank symbol, a symbol to represent the village of Talo-Vy also be attached. After several more athaloo of discussion, the symbol chosen was a blue, similar in hue to cadmium blue, nine pointed star burst with every third point elongated starting with the point at the top of the star burst. The reason a nine point star burst was chosen was to symbolize each of the Aka' and the Ka'yno.

Since our presence was no longer necessary, Rora and I backed out of the Ishoo'se Choko Aka'ny. Because of the necessity to get back to work on the mota, we didn't spend any more time chatting with Vamoo than it took to tell him good-bye. Since Mu-Naka was the Ka' of the project, he left with us. Along the way to where we were working today, we made small talk. Mu-Naka once again said he was impressed with the way I handled the adauanka yesterday and how he could hardly wait until we had time to start training in earnest. He was also impressed with the way I would handle myself before the Ishoo'se Aka'ny during my appearances. For some reason, I felt that I had done such things before, during the time in which my memories were missing.

Along the way to where we were digging, we stopped at each of the akatooeke. I studied how the work was progressing and answered any questions that the workers had for me. Mu-Naka was surprised and impressed by the fact that the workers hardly even noticed that he was there when they had a question about the katooeke they were working on. As we continued walking toward the digging site, Mu-Naka commented on this. He told me how shocked he was with the way I had convinced the achohachy of Talo-Vy to believe in my vision and to accept me as their leader.

“Never have I ever seen any Mory listen to anything a Uany had to say, let alone listen to the orders a Uany gave them.”

“Well, I do not actually order them, my Ka'. I merely answer their questions and make suggestions that include reminders that we are doing this to protect the anohachy.”

“Yes, and you know that invoking the protection of anohachy will motivate even the most hard-hearted Mory chohachy to listen to you.”

I feigned a shocked look and pointed at my chest which elicited a laugh from both Mu-Naka and Rora.

We arrived and worked on the mota until about mid-afternoon. It was on the suggestion of Mu-Naka that we stop work that early. The achohachy were willing to work until just before dark. But, from the very start, Mu-Naka didn't want to overwork them and we would stop working at mid-afternoon every day that we worked. Even though the achohachy would only work one day and be off seven and would probably not have to work on the ditch more than five times, I decided that we would work four days and take one day off, because Mu-Naka, Rora and I would have to work on the ditch every day.

After we stopped working, Rora and I made a short detour and stopped at Joola's home. It had been several days since the last time we visited and I wanted to see Tyarza again. I know it's dishonorable to want to be with a woman who is promised to someone else; but, I found myself attracted to her and I wanted to get to know her better. Besides, she said that the one to whom she was promised would not willingly take on achohachy from Te'ka-Jy which raised me in her estimation. I did try to explain to her that I didn't know anything about Te'ka-Jy and I might have thought twice about attacking them had I known about them but, she refused to believe that I would have second thoughts about protecting Talo-Vy had I known about the prowess with swords that the achohachy of Te'ka-Jy had. I suppose she's probably right. Subconsciously, I knew I was a chohachy and, like any real chohachy, I never thought twice about the possible consequences to my life when I chose to defend anyone that I cared about.

When we arrived, Rora didn't hesitate and scratched on the door. Imagine his shock when Joola answered the door, instead of Kyta. “Uh, Chitekuro, TaJoola. I hope you do not mind, but Mvilu wished to speak with Tyarza.” I shot him a look of utter shock and surprise; but, I smiled to myself and kept my mouth shut. After all, it wasn't a total lie. It seemed I was rubbing off on him in a negative way.

Joola looked at me and said, “Really, Mvilu? Well, come in, Mvilu.” She looked back at Rora as I entered smiling back at him. She looked at Rora and added, “Would you like to come in as well, Rora?”

Rora was now in a very precarious position. He wasn't certain what to say, nor how to say it. Finally, he said, “Yes, TaJoola. I know that Mvilu has the permission of the Ishoo'se Aka'ny to travel through Talo-Vy unescorted, but, we normally do walk around the village together. So, I would appreciate that very much.”

“Well, come in, Rora. Mvilu, I will see if Tyarza is through with the work she has volunteered to do for me.”

Rora looked a bit disappointed. I could tell that Joola was picking fun at him. I had to cover my mouth to hide my smile. Finally, she asked innocently, “Rora, would you like to speak with Kyta as well?”

Sheepishly, he answered, “Y—Yes, TaJoola. I—I would appreciate that very much.”

As she left the room, Joola looked at me and smiled a bit mischievously. I returned her smile and received a look of irritation from Rora, which made me laugh. After a few athata, Tyarza and Kyta came into the room. When she saw Rora, Kyta smiled, almost flirtatiously. When she saw me, Tyarza smiled, but not as openly as Kyta.

Tyarza suggested that she and I go into the kitchen and talk. As we entered the kitchen, Tyarza turned around and said, "I must admit, you are very persistent."

"Why do you say that, Tyarza?"

"No matter how I treat you, you always come back and try to get me to talk to you."

"I am sorry, Tyarza but, I did make you a promise to always protect and defend you. Remember?" She nodded her head. "However, if you would prefer, I will never bother you again. All you have to do is say so. I would not be happy, but I would walk away and never look back, until it was time to take you home to your chohachy."

She sat there in silence for a few athata looking at the table we were sitting at. Finally, she looked up at me and I saw sadness in her eyes. "I am sorry, Mvilu. I do not want you to do that. I have never met a chohachy (3) like you. You are kind and caring. Yet, you are a great chohachy. You have no fear of the Ka'yno and I doubt you have any fear of any chohachy, Mory or Uany. I guess I just miss my home and I do not know when, or even if, I will ever make it back."

"I have said it before, Tyarza, and I will say it again. If it is even remotely possible, I will help you get home or die trying."

"I believe you will, Mvilu. Please forgive me for my attitude. I think I am also afraid of what will happen to you if you do get me home."

"Do you mind if I ask why you refused to talk to me lately? Remember, I am a chohachy and we are inherently ignorant of the way a nohachyny (4) mind works."

"It is not because of anything you did. It is because of something you did not do the last time we visited TaAra's home. Now I realize that your honor probably prevented you from doing what I had hoped you would do."

"What is that?"

She ducked her head slightly and lowered her eyes. Then she almost whispered, "I was hoping you would put your arm around me. I truly wanted to feel your arm around my shoulders to make me feel as safe and secure in reality as I do when you are merely nearby. I am sorry for getting so upset about such a trivial matter."

"Think nothing of it, Tyarza, besides, to you it was not trivial. Even though my chohachy pride was hurt during the time you ignored me, I cannot see me ever being angry with you. But, what do you mean you are afraid of what will happen to me if I get you home?"

“It is the chohachy I am promised to, Zegila Sagarooda. He thinks he owns me and has threatened to kill any other chohachy that so much as looks at me. I believe he will do it, too.”

I laughed and said, “Do not worry about me. I believe I can handle myself. Anyway, it is late and Rora and I need to get home. I hope that you do not mind if we come by to visit occasionally. I truly do like talking to you. I have never met a nohachy like you before, at least, I do not remember meeting a nohachy like you before.” I smiled at her before I finished saying, “You do something to me that I cannot explain.”

She smiled warmly and said, “I would like it very much, if you came by and talked with me.”

“Thank you, Tyarza. I will do my best from now on to not overstep my bounds with you.”

“You have not overstepped your bounds yet, Mvilu. As a matter of fact,” she smiled a bit impishly, “as far as I am concerned, you have not gone far enough. But, I will warn you if you start to come close to crossing any bounds.”

“Thank you, Tyarza.”

We stood up and walked out of the kitchen. As we entered the dining area, I caught a quick glimpse of Kyta and Rora holding hands. I leaned over and whispered in Tyarza’s ear. She looked toward them and saw the same thing. I turned toward the living room and saw Joola standing in the doorway. She was smiling happily. She looked at me and smiled even broader. I looked at Rora and saw him smiling ecstatically, but not at me. I couldn’t see Kyta’s face clearly. However, from my angle, it looked to me that she was smiling happily as well.

Rora didn’t see Tyarza and me for a few athata. When he finally saw us, he quickly snatched his hand from Kyta’s, so quickly, in fact, she didn’t notice for a couple of athata. When it hit her that she was no longer holding Rora’s hand, she looked up at him questioningly and saw him looking at Tyarza and me. She turned, saw us, and smiled happily at us.

I said, “Rora, it is getting a little late. Perhaps we should go home. I hope you will forgive us, TaJoola, for intruding uninvited, I mean.”

Joola looked at Rora and Kyta before saying, “Well, all things considered, forgiveness is easy. You will stop by to visit again soon, will you not?”

“Yes, we will, TaJoola.”

Embarrassed, Rora stood and walked to the door. I followed him out the door, but not before I gave Tyarza a smile. We walked home in silence. I knew that Rora was embarrassed, so I only spoke when he spoke to me and that was even less than normal. I decided to not mention what I saw at Joola’s home until after we got home.

After about three athaloo, we arrived at home. Ara had the nakymoty ready when we arrived and we cleaned up and sat at the table. I tried to draw Rora into conversation, but he was totally reticent. I doubt very seriously that I could have gotten a word out of him if I had stuck him with a pin. I wanted to let him know that he shouldn’t be embarrassed by what I saw. Unfortunately, after dinner,

he went straight to his room. Ara asked me what was wrong with Rora. I told her what had happened at Joola's home. She was both happy and worried.

She said, "Joola and I have been hoping that Kyta and Rora would become mates. But, we both know and worry about the 'Mating Law'. If the Ka'yno ever found out, it could give him an excuse to expel Rora from the village." It didn't seem to matter to her that Joola was standing in the doorway and watching to insure that nothing untoward happened.

After a short while, Ara and I decided to go to our rooms. As I was about to enter my room, Ara caught my arm and, surprisingly, bent over and rubbed my cheek with hers. This caught me so off-guard I all I could do was move my mouth, but not speak. I had never even remotely experienced anything like this from her. I looked her in the eye and she looked away quickly. She apologized and said that she meant nothing more than she appreciated everything I had done for her and Rora since I arrived.

I smiled and told her, "Thank you. Do not worry, Ara. I am honored to know you think so highly of me." I went into my room and got undressed and got into bed. I lay there for a few athaloo thinking about the events of the last several days. I knew that life in Talo-Vy would change and soon. I felt certain that it would change for the better. With the implementation of the hierarchy and the ranking symbols, this extremely warlike species would slowly force themselves to be less and less warlike. As I thought these things, the lighting dimmed and, after several athaloo, I finally drifted off to sleep.

1-sticks

2- The Mory achohachy place honor above almost anything else. It is unfathomable to a Mory chohachy to be anything but honorable when doing anything, especially in battle, no matter who the enemy is and Rora said so to me.

3-male/chohachy

4-woman's