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Check in next Friday for the next chapter of A Year And A Day.

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Chapter 3 - Choices Made

AT BREAKFAST the morning after the children arrived, Katherine announced that she had arranged for a tailor from town to come and take measurements for Gideon and his men so they could all be set up with at least two outfits suitable for Vensoog.

"Tomalson's will be bringing out several tailors for the measurements, if it's convenient, perhaps you could organize your people so this can be done efficiently?" she suggested to Vernal. "If that is alright with you Lord Gideon?"

"That's a good idea Vernel, if we don't get some organization into it we'll have men piling up to wait in line."

"Excellent, I have some orientation data crystals for you to begin distributing to the men also. I'm sure they are anxious to begin learning about the planet. We use sleep learning extensively on Vensoog, so if they plug in the crystal above their bunks at night, when they wake up they will be surprised to find out how much they already know about us."

"Children, if you've finished, clean up your plates and cups. A tailor is coming to our rooms to take your measurements also."

When the boys made faces, she smiled and added, "this afternoon we will be going out to the Arboretum to make arrangements for Sooka and Divit to have access during their mating cycle. We'll take a picnic basket with us and enjoy the outdoors."

"Why don't I go with you?" suggested Zack. "I'm sure we will all be done with the tailor at about the same time."

"That's an excellent idea. It will give you the opportunity to know the children better."

Vernal, choked and turned it into a cough instead of a laugh and Gideon grinned since they were sure getting to know the children had not been why Zack had suggested going with them. His interest in Katherine hadn't gone unnoticed by his friends. Zack gave both of them a dirty look.

When they arrived back at their apartment, Corrine suggested the children watch a vid while they were waiting for the tailor.

Once they were well occupied, she drew Katherine aside. "That Grouter from the placement center asked for a meeting in the Commandant's office next week. I heard he wanted it sooner, but Harris put him off," she said in a low voice.

"Really," Katherine remarked. "I think I'll put in a call to Commander Veratos and ask her to meet us there also. Van Doyle "adopted" a lot of children out of that placement center. I really think that a conscientious administrator would have noticed he was related to so many of the children placed there, don't you? What time did you say this meeting was?"

Corrine grinned nastily. "Ten o'clock. Go get 'em girl. I'll arrange to keep the children occupied that morning. I think an assessment of their knowledge and abilities is called for, don't you?"

The trip out to the arboretum the next afternoon turned out to be a lot of fun. Although open to the sun and air, the park was enclosed with a force field that ensured noisome flying insects didn't make nuisances of

themselves, and the larger birds of prey didn't attack the variety of colorful imported songbirds it for which it was famous. Katherine rented two-wheeled cycles for all of them and they had a wonderful time touring the sights. If Zack was disappointed at not being able to spend time alone with her, it didn't show. He and the children raced each other around on the trails, stopping occasionally to enjoy the areas set aside with swings and slides for children and adults. By lunchtime, everyone was ready to enjoy the picnic dinner she had ordered from the robochef and tired enough to be sleepy on the way home.