

**Tales of Herilafor**

**TAIPYA**

Tales of Herilafor: Taipya

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**Tales of Herilafor**

**TAIPYA**

by

**Áine Stevens**



## PROLOGUE

The taipya hunters searched for a red night. They had spotted their target multiple times, and on that twenty fifth day, when the sky turned red, Ofua used her bow to drive an arrow into the beastly woman's shoulder.

They followed her tracks through the forest. A pained cry turned their attention to an abandoned cottage.

They rushed to it. Muddy footsteps and trailing blood lead them to a bed in the furthest corner.

With one hand, Potiil grabbed the bed and tossed it aside.

Each of the three hunters were ready to fight. The woman was on her back. Blood pooled from from the injury on her shoulder, and from between her legs.

Her eyes were vacant as she stared upwards. A wailing baby was in a heap on the floor between her splayed thighs.

Feshan stepped away, Ofua gasped, and Potiil stared with wide eyes.

'We have a job to do.' Ofua mumbled. 'We cannot let either of them live.'

Potil knelt beside the woman, feeling for a pulse. 'She's already gone.'

'What about the child? It will grow up and become like her.'

'It— It is a niidalard, not a taipya.'

The child in question did in fact look like their own race; niidalard.

Its mother was undoubtedly a taipya. She had ears longer than any niidalard, dark horns that curled either side of her face, fangs, a thick tail the length of her legs, clawed hands and feet, and patches of scales covered her body.

'Better safe than sorry. Kill it, and discard of them both.' Ofua turned on her heels and left the cottage.

Feshan watched her go as Potil looked to the helpless, sobbing, infant. He reached for its neck but hesitated just before touching it.

After a long pause, Potil suddenly yanked his necklace off and tied the rope around the umbilical cord.

Feshan pulled a knife from her pocket. She dropped to her knees and moved for the child.

He reached out to stop her but she moved faster.

She cut the cord and dropped the knife. She slipped her hands under the baby, gently lifting it to her chest as it continued to cry.

'I will take it away from here, to allow nature to do our bidding.' She kept her eyes on the child as she stood. 'You take care of the taipya.'

'No. I will take the baby, you deal with its mother.' He reached for the infant.

'Don't hurt it!' Ofua stepped into the cottage.

They turned to her in surprise.

After exchanging silent glances, they came to the same realisation — none of them wanted to harm the baby.

Once Ofua had the baby in her arms, Feshan closed the eyes of the deceased taipya, moved her legs together and lay them flat, she rested her arms over her waist.

‘I will do everything in my power to make sure your daughter is safe.’

‘You have our word.’ Potiil knelt beside her.

Ofua grabbed a blanket from the nearby draws and swaddled the baby in it. Immediately, the baby settled.

Ofua also kneeled beside the taipya’s lifeless body. She held her hand.

‘The three of us will raise her to be good.’





## EMYAV

Emyav ran as fast as her feet would carry her.

One foot after the other, she sprinted through the forest, leaping thick tree roots, ducking under branches, dodging trees, bushes and other such foliage that were in her way.

She leapt a boulder and saw a cliff drop, she halted to a sudden stop and looked over her shoulder with a fearful gasp.

'Get back here!' Potiil leapt the rock and hoisted her up.

She squealed as he started tickling her. 'No! Potiil, no! Feshan, Ofua, help!'

The two women heard the laughter and smiled to each other.

Potiil carried the child through the forest, returning her to the once abandoned cottage where they now lived. Feshan was carrying Potiil's backpack, while Ofua was pulling a cart full of groceries from the market.

'I hunted the mighty beast!' Potiil lifted the child above his head as if she were a trophy.

Emyav shoved Potiil's forehead with her foot. His grip loosened. As he slipped back she grabbed his wrists and pulled his hands apart.

She landed on her hands and feet with ease.  
She glanced over her shoulder at Potiil and tauntingly wiggled her rear.

‘Why, you little—!’

With another joyful squeal, Emyav ran into the cottage ahead of her three parents and hid in a cupboard in the lounge area.

‘Oh, bother! Where has she gone?’ Feshan teased, able to see the hem of Emyav’s dress poking out of the cupboard door.

She carried the bag to Potiil’s workbench, smiling as they heard Emyav stifle her giggling.

‘Whelp, I suppose I could eat her dinner as well as my own so it doesn’t go to waste. I am rather hungry after such a long walk.’

‘Nooo!’ Emyav leapt out of the cupboard and hurried to the kitchen. ‘Don’t give her my food!’ She dramatically wept, grasping Ofua’s skirt, looking up at her with a whimper. The smell of meat entered her nose. She gave a small sniff. ‘May I have a snack? Do we have any spare food?’

‘Already? You ate right before we left the market!’

‘This child eats so much, yet she is such a pipsqueak! Where in Herilafor does it all go?’ Potiil ruffled the little girl’s hair.

She gave him a proud grin. ‘Food?’

Ofua handed Emyav a bun stuffed with meat.

‘Thank you! Can I go play?’

Ofua responded with a simple nod.

Emyav hurried out of the cottage and into the surrounding forest. She ate her treat as she started playing.

She found a big stick and imagined it was a

magical staff. She pretended to zap animals, acting as if she were slaying monsters. She caught several small creatures and insects and gathered them into her pockets, barely noticing when they escaped. She played with a family of kipp after earning their trust with bread crumbs.

She played until the sky turned dark.

‘Emyav! Dinner is ready!’

Her stomach let out a growl as the excitement of having food hit her.

With a grin, she ran home.

Not too far from the cottage, a large animal suddenly leaped from the trees, knocking her to the ground.

She screamed as a weofarn — a canine with long horns — bared its teeth at her.

‘Emyav!’

The weofarn looked up.

An arrow from Ofua’s bow buried into it’s side.

The creature yelped, turned, and ran.

Ofua rushed to Emyav.

‘Are you hurt?’ She checked the girl over for injuries.

Emyav, staring with wide eyes at where the beast had gone, shook her head. ‘That was so scary!’

‘A weofarn was *here*?’

‘Yes, it attacked Emyav. It is a miracle I had my bow! We must search the area and kill it before it returns.’

‘Feshan and I will take care of it after dinner.

Emy, you are unhurt, yes?’

The three adults looked to Emyav who had paid

no attention to their words. She was concentrating on her food, tearing into the meat greedily, creating a mess with every bite.

She burped mid chew, swallowed, guzzled some water, then continued readily eating.

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The following day, Feshan left the cottage to go to work, and Potiil sat at his workbench, making jewellery.

Emyav changed into one of her outdoor outfits and asked Ofua if she could go out and play.

'Not today, we should wait a few days until we know it is safe after yesterday's incident. Would you like to help me bake?'

Emyav pouted at the rejection but her face lit up at the prospect of helping Ofua bake — she always got to eat left overs!

Most of the day was filled with baking, but the girl also helped tidy the cottage, make lunch, go berry picking in the berry garden, and finally they had dinner when Feshan returned.

Emyav was desperate to go out and play, so she asked again and again, but all three of her parents gave the same answer.

"Not today. It is too dangerous."

Restless, Emyav couldn't sleep that night.

When she was sure her three parents were asleep, she changed clothes, then she opened her bedroom window and climbed onto the tree branch arching toward her room.

She nimbly made her way down the tree and hurried through the berry garden to the gate, which she climbed with ease, entering the forest.

She made her way through the trees and came

upon a cliff. She climbed the wall and crawled into a cave that was just big enough for someone to walk through if they crouched — as a child, Emyav was able to stand up fully.

She walked for a little while then saw the glow of a lantern up ahead. With a grin, she quickened her pace, then she peeked into the larger pocket of the cave.

It wasn't too big, but it was bigger than the tunnels and the rocks formed seating around the sides.

Sitting on the opposite side, legs crossed with a book across a thigh and a lantern at her side, was another child.

'Oserta!'

Oserta's short pointed ears were covered in feathers, on her back were feathered wings, and poking out from under her skirt was a feathered tail — she was of the gimman race.

'Emyav!' The girl's wings gave a small excitable flutter.

The two rushed to one another and embraced.

Together, they left the caves and took their time exploring and playing, allowing their imaginations to run wild with adventures of magical fights and slaying magical monsters and making lots of equally magical friends.

They were distracted by a sound just as they were picking mushrooms for their mushroom bouquets.

A whimper.

Oserta raised her chin. 'Do you hear that?'

Emyav listened and after a moment she heard it too. 'What do you think it is?'

‘Let’s go find out!’

They listened carefully for the whimpering and followed it, treading carefully.

‘There!’

Hidden in a bush were three baby animals that resembled taslod — small canines popular as pets.

Two were unmoving, but one was attempting to crawl away.

Oserta immediately crouched and carefully lifted the pup into her arms. It whined and squirmed, but then it snuggled into the nook of her elbow. ‘It looks too young to be alone.’

‘Poor thing! Will you take it home?’ Emyav stroked its back.

‘Huyo doesn’t like canines, and if my parents find it, they’ll get rid of it... can you take it?’

‘I’ll have to hide it from my parents, too. But, I think I can do it!’

Oserta carefully passed the quivering puppy to Emyav and walked with her a small distance toward the cottage, both watching over the tiny animal in awe.

Emyav carried the pup up the tree and to her room. She warmed it in a soft blanket and stayed awake through the night, doing her best to keep the puppy comfortable.

Nibbling on the last bread roll after breakfast the following day, Emyav looked between her parents curiously.

‘What’s on your mind, Emy?’

She glanced at Potiil then swallowed the food in her mouth. ‘Can we get a pet?’

‘A pet?’ Ofua echoed. ‘What kind of pet?’

‘A taslod.’

The adults looked at one another.

‘Have you ever had a taslod?’

‘Never had time for one.’ Ofua started gathering dishes from the table.

‘Me neither.’

‘I had one as a child. They can be a handful, but they are great as pets.’

They exchanged glances. Ofua gave a nod, which in turn made Feshan smile and look to Potiil.

Potiil turned to Emyav. ‘Be warned, they need constant care, lots of training, and—’

‘What do they eat?! When they’re *really* tiny babies, what do they eat?’

‘Their mother’s milk, I would assume, but by the time we have one it’ll be old enough to eat proper food.’

Emyav furrowed her brows contemplatively.

‘Emy?’ Ofua stopped cleaning the dishes. ‘Is everything okay?’

‘... Now I’m in the mood for milk. Can I have some?’

Potiil chuckled and stood, ruffling the girl’s hair, stroking with his thumb which she happily leaned into, before making his way to the other side of the large room to his crafting station.

Feshan gave Emyav a glass of milk.

‘May I take it to my room?’

Feshan nodded and the girl darted out of the room and up the stairs so quickly she nearly tripped and spilled the contents of the cup.

‘She must have found something last night.’

‘A wild taslod pup, perhaps?’

That night, Emyav hid the pup in the trunk at the end of her bed before Ofua entered the room.

‘Emy, time to sleep.’ She glanced around for evidence of animals.

Emyav leapt into bed after hastily locking the trunk.

Ofua glanced at the box and toys scattered around it, saw Emyav’s concern grow, and knew where the suspected animal was instantly.

She walked over to the bed and sat with the girl. ‘Today has been very quiet, what have you been up to?’

Emyav’s eyes darted not so subtly to where the puppy was hidden. ‘Nothing.’

Ofua held back a laugh. ‘Did you have fun?’

‘I did!’ Emyav grinned.

‘Good.’ Ofua placed her hand atop the girl’s head, stroking with her thumb. Emyav leaned into the familiar comforting touch.

Emyav snuggled into her bed and watched as Ofua left the room. The moment the door closed, she leapt from her bed and opened the toy trunk, peering in at the animal with a wide smile.

‘We’re going to the market today.’ Feshan reminded Emyav the following morning.

Emyav stopped eating and paused, her nonchalant attitude dropped into worry. ‘Okay! I will get ready now!’ She shovelled the lasts of her food into her mouth before rushing to her room with another glass of milk.

She changed clothes then took the puppy from the toy trunk and sat on the bed with it, feeding it some milk by dipping a finger into the liquid and



carrying droplets to it's mouth.

She threw the blanket over the pup when her bedroom door was knocked on.

'We're leaving.' Potii gestured for her to follow.

'I- um- okay.' She hurried to her boots.

He saw her eyes dart across the room and looked at the moving lump on the bed as she started to leave.

'Emy...?'

'Yes?' She turned to him tensely.

'You forgot to brush your hair.' He glanced at her unkempt hair.

'Oh! I will be right down!'

He headed down the stairs, giving her a chance to put the animal some place safe.

She glanced over her shoulder at their home several times as they walked away.

'Emy, keep up, there's a good girl.' Feshan held her hand out.

Emyav grabbed the hand held to her and walked with her parents, following them all the way to the market.

After a long day of selling Potii's jewellery and then shopping for groceries, the family returned to their home that resided within the forest.

Emyav hurried inside and rushed up the stairs, eager to check on the pup.

'Wait, Emy! You need to... try on these clothes.' Feshan started with a shout but her voice trailed to a mumble. She grabbed the clothes and made her way to Emyav's room.

Emyav had left her bedroom door open and was pulling the puppy from the toy trunk just as

Feshan was about to knock.

‘What is that?’

With a flinch, Emyav turned to the woman. She quickly stood, holding the animal close to herself.

‘Ofua, Potiil!’

Emyav wrapped her arms around the animal protectively.

The other two adults arrived.

Ofua folded her arms and Potiil sighed.

Emyav lowered her chin. ‘Am I in trouble?’

Potiil waved his finger, telling Emyav to move closer as he crouched.

She cautiously approached.

‘Do you know what this is?’

‘A taslod puppy...?’

‘It is a weofarn, Emy.’

Her eyes widened and she quickly stepped back, turning her body and the pup away. ‘Don’t hurt it!’

‘Emy! What makes you think we’d hurt it?’

‘You killed the big one that attacked me!’

‘We had to kill that one for our safety. For *your* safety.’ Potiil explained. ‘This one is a baby, and babies can probably be trained.’

‘Trained? ...Does that mean I can keep it?!’

Ofua reached for the puppy.

Emyav allowed her to take it.

She checked the animal over carefully.

‘She’s a little underweight, but looks otherwise healthy. Weofarn are closely related to taslod. I am sure with some strict training she will be safe to keep in our care.’

Feshan knelt down and looked at the weofarn pup. ‘Have you given her a name yet?’

Emyav shook her head.

Ofua smiled, holding the pup to Emyav who took it into her arms again.

They waited as Emyav stroked the pup's back thoughtfully. Then she raised her chin with a big smile.

'Her name is Shuka!'

Raising the weofarn pup was difficult to begin with, but it became easier as the days passed.

Days turned into blue nights, blue nights turned into red, and red turned to purple, a full white night — four hundred days — passed, and the pup that was small enough a child could hold it in one arm, had grown to a third of its full size.

She was already taller than Emyav!

Despite being a weofarn, Shuka had the nature of a pet taslod. She loved to play and eat as much as Emyav.

Shuka would bring Emyav food from the kitchen, or peoples' plates, or even directly from their hands whenever the girl complained of hunger.

Shuka would hardly leave the child's side, and when they ventured into the market once a blue night she waited on Emyav's bed, eager for her return.

When the animal had gotten big enough, she started following Emyav out of the window at night and together they would play with Oserta.

\*

Emyav grabbed the slice of meat with her hands, instead of using cutlery, and greedily bit into it.

She yelped and dropped the food, covering her mouth with both hands.