Risorgimento 3 --Reunion

by obi_ki, padawanewan

Summary

In a new place and time, two old friends get to start anew.

Title: Risorgimento 3 --Reunion
Authors: obi-kì and padawanewan
Pairing: Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan
Rating: PG for implied violence
Category: Q/O AU
Time Period: About 20 years post ABY

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Author's notes: This is the third story in the Risorgimento series and is the first segment that is totally cowritten and as such is told from both Qui-Gon's and Obi-Wan's POVs. Thanks to Monalee and Merry Amelie for their through betas and thoughtful suggestions. The story would be much less without their valuable input.
"Obi-Wan." A name Qui-Gon had spoken tens of thousands of times in the twelve years of their partnership but never before had it meant so much. Mere minutes ago, he had only dared hope that the other cloned Jedi would be familiar to him. Never had he expected to come face to face with the only man who had found a way under his Jedi veneer. He reached down and ran his fingertips over one bearded cheek. "My Padawan."

"Qui-Gon," was whispered in reply. Obi-Wan stood up and stepped closer, mirroring the taller Jedi's actions and drinking in the feeling of the familiar Force-aura

There were truths in Obi-Wan's life, in this time or any other. Some didn't bear mentioning, but there was one that would ever remain. Though a Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi may be, Qui-Gon Jinn was the only thing that mattered more than duty or the Force.

"My Master, it's been so long and I have missed you."

Qui-Gon looked into the grey-green eyes staring at him, mesmerized by the naked emotion blazing within. Although Obi-Wan's bearing embodied all the poise and serenity cultivated during his years as a Jedi master, his eyes told another story. Traces of the insecurities that once plagued a thirteen-year-old boy combined with the raw pain of the deepest betrayal a person could experience created an expression of vulnerability Qui-Gon had never seen in Obi-Wan before.

Before Qui-Gon could decide what to do or say, the sound of a throat clearing pulled his attention back to the man accompanying him. "Maybe I should leave you two alone to get reacquainted," Var-Son said with a smirk.

Most of Qui-Gon wanted nothing more than some privacy to speak with Obi-Wan, but the rest of him wondered at the coincidence the two of them being selected as hosts for Var-Son's project. After a moment, he replied, "That would be a kindness. Though I do still have a number of questions for you, Ser Meirr."

"I'm sure you do, Master Jinn," Var-Son agreed, "but there will be time for those later." With that, the healer stepped back into the hallway and closed the door behind him.

Qui-Gon watched the door slide shut and then turned back to Obi-Wan with a smile. "It seems that your old master is uncharacteristically at a loss for words. Although I've been told that over fifty-five years have passed, I feel like only moments have gone by since we were last together."

Having given the scientist a faint grin and a raised eyebrow as the door slid closed, Obi-Wan turned back to Qui-Gon. There seemed so much to say, yet it seemed to lose importance next to the simple truth. The love of his life and the one he had hoped to find in the Force was here.

Obi-Wan smiled in return. "Yes, Master. It seems that for someone who spent a great deal of time talking, I find myself at a loss as well." He reached out and touched Qui-Gon's hair. "The last time I saw you," Obi-Wan began before his smile faltered and his voice became softer, "you died in my arms. I have been waiting to be with you again for many years."

Although he had read the historical account of his death at the hands of Darth Maul on Naboo, hearing Obi-Wan speak the words made the event real for Qui-Gon. He had died at the hands of a Sith and had not been there to see his apprentice knighted or to help Obi-Wan and the Jedi deal with the events that had followed. He could only hope that he had remained cognizant within the Force to support and assist Obi-Wan through those ensuing years.
His thumb seemed to be moving of its own volition, stroking along the edge of Obi-Wan's beard as Qui-Gon struggled to put his thoughts into words. "From what I read in the history text, those were long and painful years, filled with death and destruction. Although I often questioned the Council's decisions on many things, even I was not aware of the extent of their blindness. How could a group made up of some of the wisest beings in the galaxy have been so completely taken in by Palpatine's manipulations?"

"Hard to see, the Darkside is," Obi-Wan said softly, quoting the apparently long-dead Yoda. He moved away from Qui-Gon and settled back onto the meditation mat, gathering his thoughts.

"We were all fooled by his lies." Obi-Wan sighed as he gestured gracefully for Qui-Gon to join him. "I am quite sure there are going to be many painful truths we will both have to face and come to terms with in order to make our way in this New Republic we have been reborn into."

Obi-Wan looked into Qui-Gon's eyes, dreading what he knew he must say next but knowing it needed to be said. "Dooku was the Sith Lord that helped Sidious until Ana…Vader became his apprentice."

Accepting the invitation, Qui-Gon took his place on the meditation mat. He knelt facing Obi-Wan with their knees almost touching, duplicating a posture they had taken thousands of times during their years together. "The historical data that Ser Meirr gave me detailed Count Dooku's involvement with Palpatine and I honestly must say that I am not that surprised. He always had an unhealthy fascination with the Darkside. There were rumors that he was involved with the theft of a Sith holocron from the Temple archives when he was still a padawan."

Qui-Gon was silent for a moment and then continued, "He was well aware of his lineage, not hesitating to embrace his background of wealth and power to influence or manipulate a situation. It was as if he thought himself better than his peers because of his heritage."

Deciding to lighten the mood, Qui-Gon threw out a comment that he was certain Obi-Wan would not be able to resist jumping on. "Not to mention that my former master was very stubborn when it came to thinking that he knew what was best and did not hesitate to act on his own beliefs even when they came into conflict with those in authority."

Obi-Wan nodded as he listened to Qui-Gon's remarks about his former master. He was relieved that there seemed to be no emotional pain.

However, when he heard the comments that followed, Obi-Wan slowly grinned. "One does have to wonder where the phrase, 'Obi-Wan...I mean Padawan, I will do as I must', came from." Shrugging nonchalantly, as if he had been simply thinking aloud, Obi-Wan continued on. "How put-upon you must have been, having the poster-boy for rebellious mavericks in the Jedi Order as your master. It must have been such a challenge, Master, not letting all that disregard for authority affect you. I do recall the esteem in which you held the Council."

Laughing quietly, Obi-Wan shook his head. "And then there was me, Master. All snark and lightsaber combined with such a rigid devotion to the rules. I must have been a trial."

Obi-Wan's sardonic responses to Qui-Gon's statements were like a soothing balm and he drank in the sound of his former padawan's soft laughter. Over their years together, Obi-Wan had raised subtle sarcasm to an art form. There had been many times that the sly comments and irreverent mental dialogs had been the only thing that had gotten Qui-Gon through some of their more boring negotiations. The remark about Qui-Gon's opinion of the Council had his laughter joining Obi-Wan's.
But at Obi-Wan's last comment, Qui-Gon became totally serious. "There may have been challenging moments, especially in your adolescence, but never think for one moment that you were a trial. Your presence in my life brought me more joy than I thought possible in a life of service to the Order."

Obi-Wan simply looked at Qui-Gon for a moment and then shook his head. "Master, Qui-Gon...would that you had said that long ago. I would have followed you anywhere." Then he smiled wickedly. "Oh, wait. I did and on more than one damned crusade. What was that line you quoted to me when I used some colorful language in the mudpit on Myrthrax?" Obi-Wan sat up straighter and in a very grave voice he said, "Who is more the fool, my Padawan? The fool or the fool who follows him?"

Qui-Gon couldn’t help but smile at the memory. Obi-Wan had been blindsided by a rampaging ronto while evacuating some of the local populace from a flooded area and had been thrown face-first into a pile of vile-looking yellow mud. When his padawan had climbed from the pool of nasty stuff, the creative streak of curses he had spewed at both his master and the galaxy in general would have done a Drovian spacer proud.

Looking at Qui-Gon again, something odd struck Obi-Wan. "Master, what in the stars happened to your nose?"

The quick change of subject caught Qui-Gon off-guard and he reached up to touch the body part in question even as he answered, "What's wrong with my nose? Am I bleeding or something?"

"Qui-Gon, it's bloody well not broken anymore." Obi-Wan peered closer and then backed away quickly. He pulled up his own sleeve and saw that the skin of his arm was unmarked. Swearing softly, but quite fluently in several dialects, Obi-Wan looked back at Qui-Gon. "I imagine all of our various scars and the one rather personal tattoo I had done are gone." He did not explain that the tattoo was in the ancient tongue of his home-world and simply said, 'One more day and then Forever.' It was a promise he had made to himself, one he had reaffirmed every day after Qui-Gon had died.

Moving to stand in front of the wall-cabinet's reflective surface, Qui-Gon studied his face. As Obi-Wan had said, his nose was perfectly straight, showing no sign of having been severely broken in his youth. Looking closer, he saw no trace of the scar under his chin that he had acquired during his first mission as a knight or of the one along his hairline that he had earned during his final confrontation with Xanatos.

Turning away from his reflection, Qui-Gon's chuckled half-heartedly. "Another upside to our new bodies. No old scars or lingering aches and pains to mar them." He reached for Obi-Wan's arm, tracing the spot the missing scar would have occupied with his fingertip. It had been earned in the early years of Obi-Wan's apprenticeship, pushing aside a durasteel beam that would have crushed Qui-Gon's leg.

Looking down into Obi-Wan's eyes, Qui-Gon whispered, "Though I must say that I for one will miss some of those scars." Needing to know more than he could tell by just looking, Qui-Gon reached through the Force for their training bond. His eyes widened in shock when he found nothing.

Obi-Wan felt Qui-Gon using the Force and then saw the look of shock on his face. "What's wrong?" he asked, as he rose to his feet and reached out to Qui-Gon, brushing his fingertips across his face. Trying to make contact with Qui-Gon in the Force over their bond, Obi-Wan felt nothing. He felt the Force responding to him as easily as ever. He also felt the power surrounding his former master, but it was as if his own innate sense of self was missing and that Qui-Gon was himself, but not.
"Qui-Gon, what in blazes is this? What are we?" Obi-Wan's own eyes were widening in horror. "Who are we? I know I am Obi-Wan and you are Qui-Gon, but I don't feel it."

Searching within the Force, Qui-Gon sensed much the same thing that Obi-Wan had described. The Force was there as it had always been, potent and waiting, but the connection between his mind and the Force was lacking somehow. It was as if the Force did not recognize him and, even more important, did not seem to recognize his connection to Obi-Wan. The bond that had formed without conscious effort between them was missing as if the part of his essence that connected with his former padawan was absent.

"I sense it as well," Qui-Gon admitted. "Although Ser Meirr's discoveries allowed him to clone our bodies and restore our memories, it appears that there is a portion of us that he was unable to recreate." He was silent for a long moment, his mind contemplating the situation and the possible solutions. In the end, he opted for the one method that had never failed him in all his years. "We will just have to be patient, Padawan. I am certain that the Force will show us the correct path."

"Be patient? Correct path?" Obi-Wan asked with both eyebrows raised and the very real sounds of displeasure and overwhelming disbelief. Of all of the frustrating things about his former master in particular and the Jedi Order in general, this was a sore point with Obi-Wan. 'Wait and see' was never a good tactic in battle or in life.

"Or, Qui-Gon," Obi-Wan shot back using the name purposefully, "we can do something about this. We can ask this fellow where in the Sith hells our inner selves are or try to find our Force selves. We can do more than wait for the Force to randomly drop help into our laps, as I doubt it gives a damn."

Obi-Wan's insolent tone shocked Qui-Gon and he looked intently at the other man. Although he had noted the physical differences when he had first come upon his former padawan, this exchange had quickly shown that the man before him was lightyears away from the twenty-five-year-old padawan that had stood beside him on Naboo. That Obi-Wan would have never spoken up so forcefully, would never have totally dismissed his master's opinion. Remembering the details of the history tome he had read earlier, Qui-Gon reconsidered Obi-Wan's reaction. General Kenobi had not had the luxury of waiting for the Force to provide. Split-second decisions had become the rule instead of the exception and from what he had learned, those instant decisions had saved Obi-Wan's life on more than one occasion.

But even with all that, Qui-Gon couldn't let the last comment go unanswered. "If the Force didn't give a damn, as you so succinctly put it, I doubt that either of us would be standing here at this moment. We must put our trust in the Force, Obi-Wan, or we deny everything that we believe in."

"You misunderstand, Qui-Gon. I do trust in the power of the Force. However, I rather doubt it cares one way or another about you and me as individual beings. It is our responsibility to use the Force to follow the Light." As he spoke, Obi-Wan's hands were clasped within the sleeves of his robe, his rigid posture mimicking the familiar stance that his master had always used when lecturing his padawan.

"We are Jedi and that is the highest commitment to the Force and to the Order. However, we are also self-reliant beings. Most times, we are not granted the luxury of long debates or dithering over every detail. Things must be achieved, goals must be reached and we must be the ones to direct our own fate." Obi-Wan's voice rose a notch as his control wavered. "We need information and I need my damned lightsaber." He looked around and sighed. "Is it really so much to ask? I am a clone and over forty years have passed since the last event I actually remember. I have been reunited with the master who died in my arms, but not before learning that my padawan became an evil bastard who helped to erase democracy from the Republic. And after all of that, I still do not have either my soul
Qui-Gon listened to Obi-Wan's argument, feeling both pride in the man's logic and a touch of irony that he had become the recipient of his years of debate training. Again he was struck by the differences in the man before him, the calm control so different from the impulsive padawan he had raised. But the zeal that Obi-Wan had always carried within him was still present – it was just focused differently.

When Obi-Wan had finished, Qui-Gon was silent for a moment as he considered his padawan's declaration. He wasn't sure if he would have expressed what he was feeling in the same words that Obi-Wan had used but there was something. "I do feel like there is something is missing, like my body is devoid of its essence. When I reach for the Force, it's as if my spirit is sitting out there, just beyond my range. When I try to take hold of it, an unknown barrier prevents me from reaching it."

Taking a step closer, Qui-Gon placed his arm on Obi-Wan's. "It felt the same way when I reached for you over our bond. I could feel you within the Force and could sense you the way I would any Force-sensitive being. But the deeper, more intimate connection we have always shared is missing."

He stopped for a moment as another idea came to him. "Or maybe it would be more accurate to say it is obstructed in some way, as if a shutter has been closed over it."

Obi-Wan's frustration was leeching out across the Force and Qui-Gon used the point of contact to try to bleed off some of it. "As much as I empathize with your desire to be proactive, at this point I don't see what we can do to resolve the situation."

Nodding, Obi-Wan replied, "I feel the same," even as he started to think more strategically. They were both Jedi masters. Even though this situation was highly personal, it could also be looked at as a mission. "The first step to completing a mission successfully is gathering information. You taught me that, Master. We need more information before we can devise a plan of action."

TBC

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