One Precocious Toddler

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Summary

Family matters and Force developments

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

"No."

There was a chuckle from the other side of the table and Qui-Gon turned his attention away from the mulishly set face of the small boy beside him to the grinning face of his apprentice.

"Perhaps you would like to take over for me, Padawan," Qui-Gon said dryly.

Mace tried to unsuccessfully smother his smile. "You're doing fine, Master," he said reassuringly. "And I do have that astronavigation test to study for."

"I can arrange additional studies, Padawan."

This time Mace didn't even try to hide his smile. "Blackmail, Master? Surely that's against the Code somewhere."

"Anything is justified when trying to get a two-year-old to eat his lunch."

Mace looked back at Obi-Wan and found that the child was watching the two of them with
fascinated eyes. The three of them were seated at the small dining table in Knight Jinn's suite, and his master was enjoying a rare opportunity to spend some time with the little boy who had stolen his heart. His master had arranged to have the boy for the day, and Mace was amused to see that the knight wasn't having as easy time of it as he had thought he would.

On the other hand, discretion might be a good idea at this point - especially if Mace wanted to spend time with his friends later this evening. Mace turned to Obi-Wan and picked up one of the veggie sticks that Knight Trellin had assured them was the child's favorite food. "Here you go, Obi-Wan. Wouldn't you like a nice veggie stick?"

"No," was the determined reply.

Mace didn't look over at his master, but he somehow knew that the man was sitting back in his chair, watching them with amusement. "Well, then, how about some fruit?" Mace asked, placing a dish of sliced berries in front of the boy.

"No."

"Well, then, what do you want?" Mace asked in exasperation.

Obi-Wan seemed to consider this for a moment. "Ice Qweam." He gave Qui-Gon a reproachful look. "Zhinn promise. Obi eat. Obi get ice qweam."

Mace gave his master a look of mock outrage. "Master! You tried to bribe a child?" Qui-Gon gave Mace a look that didn't bode well for the young man's plans for the evening, and Mace returned to the battle, wondering if it was turning to the Dark to wish for Sith opponents instead of a two year old.

"Obi hasn't eaten," Mace pointed out craftily to the child, then quickly placed some of the food on the plate in front of Obi-Wan. "If you eat these veggie sticks and this fruit, then Master will give you some ice cream."

Obi-Wan stared at the assembled food, then looked up at Mace, then back at the food with all the seriousness of a high-level negotiator, and then he nodded. "'Kay." He picked up a veggie stick and happily munched on it.

Mace turned back to his master with a triumphant grin and Qui-Gon rolled his eyes. "All right, Padawan. You may have the rest of the afternoon off - before you completely undermine my credibility with the child. After you finish studying for that test."

"Yes, Master," Mace said, obediently, getting up to clear the dishes.

"Maaa-staar," Obi-Wan echoed.

Mace made a face at his master. "Do you think you could convince him to stop repeating words like a Malastarian echo-bird?"

"At this age, I doubt it," Qui-Gon said with an amused twinkle in his eyes. "Just be careful what you say around him."

"Right. And who was it that accidentally taught him to say - "

"Padawan," Qui-Gon said significantly. "Don't get him started again. Trellin's barely forgiven me for last time."
Obi-Wan, now bored with his meal and peeved at not being the center of attention, began banging his remaining veggie stick on the table. "Maa-"

"I don't know, Master. I thought it was rather amusing when she threatened to wash your mouth with soap."

Obi-Wan banged again. "Maa-

"Indeed? You know, Padawan, the best teams share such adversities."

Mace chuckled at that. "Point taken, Master."

"Maa-!" Obi-Wan banged harder. "Maa-Zhinn!"

That at least got him some attention, and Qui-Gon glanced at the child. "Yes, Obi-Wan. Finish your fruit and we'll get some ice cream."

Qui-Gon turned his attention back to his padawan. "Padawan, when preparing for that test, pay particular attention to the section regarding black holes. That's a tricky part and Master Greeb won't hesitate to take advantage of the confusion."

"Yes, Master. Thank you for the suggestion."

Obi-Wan pouted in frustration at being ignored and stared at the bowl of fruit that lay between him and his goal. Fruit that he didn't want to eat, but past experience had taught him that saying, "Not hungry," might get him out of eating the fruit but would also lose him the promised treat.

He glanced up to see if either of them was looking at him and, seeing that they weren't, pulled the bowl a little too close to the edge. It tipped, spilling the sliced berries and their juice all over his lap and onto the floor.

The noise caught both Qui-Gon and Mace's attention, and Obi-Wan turned innocent blue-green eyes up to them. "Oh-oh," he said ingeniously.

Mace clapped his hand over his mouth to stifle a laugh and beat a hasty retreat to his room.

"'Oh-oh' is right," Qui-Gon said with a sigh, getting up. He moved the child's high chair away from the table and unstrapped him, then made a face as he took in the child's messy jumper. "Looks like bath-time for you, little man."

"No bath!" Obi-Wan said indignantly. "Ice qweam! Ma-Zhinn promise!"

Qui-Gon gave the child a stern look. "You didn't eat your fruit, Obi-Wan. You spilled it - on purpose. I don't know if you should get a treat after that."

Obi-Wan's lower lip trembled and his eyes filled with tears. "Maa-Zhinn mad?"

"I'm not happy with you at the moment, no," Qui-Gon said, unsnapping the front of the one-piece outfit and deftly removing it. As the threatened tears fell and he felt the child's unhappiness through their bond, he relented. He scooped the child into his arms and hugged him. "I'm not mad at you, sprout. And after your bath we'll get ice cream."

Small arms wrapped around his neck and an exuberant if sloppy kiss was planted on his cheek. "Love you, Maa-Zhinn."

Qui-Gon smiled. "I love you, too, Obi-Wan. But you're still getting a bath."
An hour later, the child was clean again and the 'fresher restored to order, and the two set out for the lift to take them to the dining hall. Obi-Wan clung to his hand as Qui-Gon shortened his stride to the child's, and the boy chattered about the latest news in his little world, particularly about his new friend, a little girl named Shesha who had just moved up to the Toddler room.

Qui-Gon listened in silent amusement, sometimes having trouble following the track of the child's conversation since Obi-Wan's language skills were still developing. He had missed this, missed being involved in the daily aspects of the child's life, and he knew that Obi-Wan missed him when he was away, but there was no easy solution to this situation. Because of their bond, he could have requested permanent assignment to the Temple till Obi-Wan was old enough to accompany him on missions, but that wouldn't be fair to his current padawan. At seventeen, Mace was on the verge of taking his Senior Padawan trials and it would be unfair to him to deprive him of the experience he needed, both now and when he became a knight.

Besides, it would be over twelve years before Obi-Wan would be old enough for fieldwork and Qui-Gon knew that he would chaff at being Temple-bound for so many years. And Obi-Wan needed the exposure to other people, other teachers. There would be plenty of time for them in the future, when Mace no longer needed him, when Obi-Wan became his padawan.

When - if - Obi-Wan became his life-mate.

His mind still shied away from that thought, reluctant to commit again, uncertain about tying such a vibrant spark of energy to a man so much older. While it would undoubtedly be easier if he allowed the bond that they now shared to deepen into a life-tie, allowing them to share thoughts and feelings no matter how far apart they were, Qui-Gon was resolutely against the idea. Better to wait till Obi-Wan was mature, able to make such decisions for himself - when he could knowingly choose Qui-Gon as his mate. Or choose another, more worthy, object for his affections. No matter how desolate the thought made him feel.

The turbo lift halted and Qui-Gon swung the giggling child up onto his shoulder as they headed towards the dining hall. They entered the Temple lobby, and Qui-Gon's attention was caught by the sight of a man and woman hovering uncertainly near the entrance. The man - barely older than Mace in appearance - seemed oddly familiar, and Qui-Gon crossed the floor to them. The woman, holding an infant in her arms, nudged the man and he turned as Qui-Gon approached.

"May I be of service?" Qui-Gon asked politely, bowing his head in greeting.

The redheaded young man gave him an uncertain look, blue-green eyes raised to his. "I am looking for Knight Meduri. Could you - would it possible for you to direct me to her?"

Qui-Gon shook his head. "I'm afraid that Knight Meduri left the Temple a month ago. She is on Search." The young man's face fell. "Perhaps someone else could assist you?"

The young man hesitated, seemed about to refuse, and then his eyes lifted to the child on Qui-Gon's shoulder. His eyes widened. "Obi-Wan?"

Qui-Gon blinked. "You know - " Recalling what Kishara had told him about Obi-Wan's discovery, he suddenly realized why the young man looked so familiar. "You're Ezra Kenobi, aren't you?"

Ezra nodded, his eyes not moving from Obi-Wan for an instant. "He looks just like her," he breathed, then flushed and turned his attention back to the Jedi. "Your pardon, Master Jedi."

Qui-Gon smiled and held out a hand. "Knight Qui-Gon Jinn, and I am delighted to meet you. The Order owes you quite a debt for allowing us to take Obi-Wan."
"It is I who am indebted to the Jedi, and to Knight Meduri," Ezra said sincerely. "The thought of my sister's child being lost as well - " He trailed off, his throat tight, and turned to put his arm around the young woman with him. "My wife, Lahana, and our daughter, Sari. We've - we've brought her to the Temple for testing."

Qui-Gon smiled at the woman, Corellian by ancestry, he guessed. "It is a pleasure to meet you both. And I'd be happy to take you to the Healers for testing."

"Ice Qweam furst," Obi-Wan said firmly, and Qui-Gon rolled his eyes.

"Yes, Obi-Wan. Ice cream, first." He smiled at the family. "Perhaps you would care to have something to eat as well."

Ezra and Lahana exchanged a look and he nodded. "A warm meal would be welcome."

Qui-Gon gestured for them to follow him, leading the way into the dining hall. At this hour of the afternoon, it was mostly empty and he found them a quiet table. After getting meals for their guests and seeing Obi-Wan happily settled with his treat, Qui-Gon turned to Obi-Wan's uncle.

"I must admit that I am surprised to see you here. I understood from what Kishara said that you were determined to remain on your family's farm."

Ezra shrugged a shoulder, not looking up from his plate. "It became - difficult to remain. There were a series of accidents, and it was hard to sell or trade my crops. Lahana's father arrived to pick up shipments of grain for the Core, and I convinced him to let me work for my passage off the planet. That's when I met Lahana - best thing that ever happened to me." He looked over at his wife and his face softened. Her own eyes brightened at the look he gave her, and she briefly squeezed his hand. He looked back at Qui-Gon. "So I decided to go to work for her family's shipping business - it just so happened that they needed an expert on storing and shipping food-stuffs. Lahana and I were married a little over a year ago, and then Sari came along."

Qui-Gon studied the pair shrewdly. "And are you certain that you want her tested?"

Ezra's face tightened. "I won't have the same thing happen to Sari that happened to my sister."

Lahana laid her hand over her husband's again and looked at Qui-Gon. "We want to do what is best for the child, Knight Jinn. Even - even if that means giving her up."

Qui-Gon nodded and glanced over to see that Obi-Wan was finished with his ice cream, and had managed to eat more than he was wearing. He wiped down the child's face and hands, swung the boy up in his arms once again, and led the way to the Infirmary section of the Temple.

"The test will only take a few minutes, but you will undoubtedly want to take time over any decision you have to make. Have you secured a place to stay here on Coruscant?"

Lahana shook her head. "We've only just arrived."

"Then you must stay here in the Temple. We have facilities set aside for the families of our prospective Initiates, and I will see that you are assigned one," Qui-Gon said. "And I hope that you will join me for dinner this evening."

"We would be honored," Ezra said.

"Good." Qui-Gon glanced down at the child in his arms, now sleepily tucked against his shoulder, his eyes half-closed. "I'm sure that Obi-Wan would appreciate the chance to get to know you better."
Ezra glanced at the child and opened his mouth as if to say something, then closed it again. And then they were at the Infirmary and there was no opportunity for further talk.

The Healer on duty welcomed the little family warmly and soon had them settled into one of the side rooms. He numbed an area of the infant's heel with a touch of Force and deftly extracted a sample, popping it into the reader.

"The child is definitely Force-sensitive," he announced. "Her midi-chlorian count is at the low-end of our acceptable spectrum."

"What does that mean?" Ezra asked, looking over at Qui-Gon.

"It means that we would accept her into the Temple, and that there is every chance that she would become an excellent support staff."

"But not a knight," Lahana said shrewdly.

Qui-Gon shook his head. "Unlikely, although at this age nothing is a certainty. However, you should know that all of our Temple children are highly valued. Even if Sari didn't qualify to be a Healer or Warrior-Diplomat, she would be guided into the support service indicated by her skills." He smiled at Lahana. "Perhaps a pilot, since that skill appears to run in her mother's bloodline."

"And if she didn't come to the Temple?" Ezra asked, lowly. "Would she - would she be like Sarawan? Like Ben - Obi-wan?"

Qui-Gon leaned forward, speaking earnestly. "Your sister and nephew were very special cases. Both have a high midichlorian count, much higher than Sari's. If Sarawan had been on a more developed world, one where Force-sensitives were understood, she would have been supported throughout her pregnancy instead of being allowed to send all her strength and Force-energy into her child. She would have survived his birth with no difficulty. It is possible that she would have chosen to give him to the Temple, but a Healer would have been with them both to ease the transition of their bond, or she might have decided to come to the Temple with him. Many of our Temple support staff came here with their children, and all of them are honored for their choice."

Ezra was crying silently at this point, and his wife slipped her hand into his, then looked squarely across at Qui-Gon. "So you are saying that Sari would do perfectly fine outside the Temple, is that correct?"

Qui-Gon nodded. "As well as Ezra himself, since he is only a little less Force-Sensitive than she is."

Ezra dragged a sleeve over his eyes and glanced at his wife gratefully. "Thank you, Knight Jinn. We - we would like to take that offer to stay at the Temple tonight since it appears that we have much to decide."

When Qui-Gon opened the door to his suite that evening to admit Ezra and his family, there was something about the way the younger man avoided looking at him that told him a decision had been made - and one not favorable to the Temple.

He said nothing, waiting for them to speak of their decision, and easily switched into host-mode. Mace was introduced to them and then hurried off to join his friends for a rare evening of freedom, although he had offered to stay to serve his master's company. Qui-Gon had declined his offer with thanks, deciding that the Kenobi family needed as little outside pressure as possible.

Obi-Wan had awakened from his nap to his usual sunny good temper, and within minutes of their arrival, had both his uncle and aunt wrapped firmly around his little fingers. They were treated to
stories about his nursery mates and his nurturers, and Qui-Gon wryly reflected that the child would be an asset to Jedi recruitment with his artless prattle demonstrating just how clearly he was loved and cared for by all at the Temple. His stories were liberally sprinkled with references to "ma-zhinn", and Qui-Gon caught an occasional curious look from Ezra although the young man didn't say anything.

Obi-Wan even behaved well during dinner, eating everything without a fuss, although there was a smug look in the child's eyes when he looked over at Qui-Gon that made the knight determined to have words with a certain little boy who thought he had him wrapped. Lahana's compliments to Qui-Gon about the child's manners did nothing to dissuade him from that decision.

It was after dinner, when they were settled back in the living area with the dessert tray, when the subject of Sari and the Temple was broached. Ezra drew in a deep breath and said, "Knight Jinn, we appreciate your hospitality, but Lahana and I have decided not to give Sari to the Temple."

Qui-Gon nodded as he poured out the tea. "I know."

Ezra blinked. "You do? And you're not - upset with us?"

Qui-Gon gave him a surprised look. "Why should I be? It is your decision to make, and in this situation, Sari will do equally well in or out of the Temple. I know that it isn't easy to give a child up - especially your first." He smiled at the pair. "I do hope that you will allow any future children to be tested and that, perhaps, you will allow one of them to come to the Temple."

"We will certainly consider it," Ezra said, nodding. He looked over at his wife who was holding the baby and talking quietly with Obi-Wan and said, "Our liner, the Denelia Star, leaves early tomorrow morning, so we had better get some rest - "

"No! No go!"

Qui-Gon closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath, and decided that it was inevitable that Obi-Wan would choose the last moment of his uncle's visit to display his newfound contrariness.

He crossed the room to pick up the child and said, seriously, "Obi-Wan, your aunt and uncle have a long trip to make, and they need to get some sleep - "

"No!" Obi-Wan said insistently, clutching at Qui-Gon's sleeve. "Bad!"

Qui-Gon caressed the child's head. "What's bad, Obi-Wan?"

"Feeling bad," Obi-Wan said, and now tears were filling his eyes. "Very bad."

Qui-Gon frowned and laid the back of his hand to Obi-Wan's forehead, trying to sense just what might be making the child feel bad. "Are you sick, Obi-Wan? I'll call Trellin - "

Obi-Wan shook his head, and Qui-Gon could feel the waves of frustration rolling off the child. Not for the first time, he wished their current bond allowed the child to mind-speak to him, so that he would have an idea just what was upsetting the boy.


"Sari's sick?" Ezra asked, alarmed, and turned to his wife. Lahana felt the infant's forehead and gave her husband a troubled look.

"She's a little bit warm, but nothing unusual." She looked over at Qui-Gon. "Knight Jinn, is it
possible that the boy could know something?"

Qui-Gon was trying to quiet a nearly hysterical Obi-Wan by now and he gave her a quick glance. "It's possible. Obi-Wan is strong in the Force, although it's a little early for him to be displaying skills with the Living Force that would allow him to tell if she was ill. I certainly can't sense anything."

Ezra looked troubled. "Still, if there's a possibility that Sari is sick, we should look into it. If it would be possible for us to speak with your Healers, to remain here for a day or two more - "

Qui-Gon nodded. "Of course. You are more than welcome to stay - and I am sure that Obi-Wan would like the opportunity to visit longer with you. I'll summon a Healer."

He paged the Healers and Trellin, then set about the task of calming the still sobbing child. He rubbed his hand over Obi-Wan's back and sent waves of reassurance as he murmured, "It's all right, Obi-Wan. They aren't leaving. Baby Sari will be just fine." He repeated it over and over until he could feel the child's sobs easing up.

Obi-Wan raised a tear-streaked face, hiccupping as he tried to stop crying. "Really, Ma-zhinn?"

"Have I ever lied to you, Obi-Wan?"

Obi-Wan drew in a shuddering breath and leaned his head against the knight's shoulder. "Never ever."

"That's right. And I'll never ever lie to you in the future. I promise."

Obi-Wan nodded, rubbing his cheek against the tunic material. "Ma-zhinn keeps promises," he murmured, sleepy now from the emotional upheaval.

The door chime sounded. It was a Healer and, after a hurried discussion, Lahana followed her to the Infirmary with the baby while Ezra remained with Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan till the Nursery worker arrived. Obi-Wan had dropped into a fitful sleep and Qui-Gon sat down in a chair with him, carefully cradling the sleeping child.

"You're very good with him," Ezra observed, sitting down across from them. "I can see that you are fond of him."

Qui-Gon smiled down at the sleeping child's tumbled hair. "It's easy to become fond of Obi-Wan."

"Forgive me, Knight Jinn, but I don't imagine that it's common for Warrior-Diplomats to look after small children."

Qui-Gon gave the young man a cautious look; this was Obi-Wan's uncle, after all, and there was no telling what he would think about this situation. "All Jedi are committed to caring for the children here at the Temple."

"I doubt that includes caring for one full-time. And I can see that Obi-Wan is familiar with you - as if you spent a lot of time together. He talks about you in every other sentence."

Qui-Gon closed his eyes and took a deep breath, then opened them and met Ezra's forthright look. "I don't look after Obi-Wan full time - it wouldn't be good for either one of us. But you're right that we spend a lot of time together. Obi-Wan and I are bonded."

"Bonded? Like my sister was bonded to him before he was born?"
"In a way. The bond between us is as strong as the one with his mother, only different. When Obi-Wan is older, he will become my apprentice." He hesitated. "And it is possible that - in time - this will become a life-bond."

"A life-bond?" Ezra asked sharply. "Are you saying that one day he will become your husband?"

"If that is his choice," Qui-Gon said simply.

Ezra frowned. "Is this usual here in the Temple?"

"No," Qui-Gon replied. "It is not unheard of, but bonds like these don't usually form until puberty."

"Then how - "

Dryly, Qui-Gon said, "Obi-Wan is very determined. He was the one who formed this bond, and he will be the one to decide when - or if - it goes further. You need have no fears for him on that account."

Ezra studied his face for a long moment, then nodded. "I trust you, Knight Jinn."

Qui-Gon smiled. "Under the circumstances, I think you can call me Qui-Gon."

Ezra laughed at that. The door chimed again, and Qui-Gon relinquished the sleeping child to Trellin's care, after informing her of the evening's occurrences. Then he escorted Ezra down to the Infirmary to check on his family.

The Healers reported that the infant was running a low-grade fever, possibly from exposure to something on the trip to Coruscant - nothing serious or that wouldn't have been able to be treated on the Denelia Star. Ezra and Lahana decided to err on the side of caution, however. A quick communication with Lahana's father confirmed that one of the Solo Shipping fleet's vessels was scheduled to stop at Coruscant in two days, so they decided to change their plans.

Two days later, after having seen Ezra and his family off, Qui-Gon knelt on the floor in the Toddler's playroom. Around him stood a circle of children from 18 to 36 months, and he gently tossed a ball into the air with the Force, pushing it towards one of the children. Giggling, the child pushed it away, towards another child, continuing the game. An exercise in telekinetics to some, a favorite game for the children.

Suddenly, Obi-Wan stiffened and the ball he was pushing away dropped like a stone. The child dropped as well, huddling into a small ball and wailing, his arms wrapped around his head as if warding off a blow. Qui-Gon automatically extended his shields around the child, seeking to mentally soothe the child.

"Obi-Wan, what's wrong?" Master Mrill, the head of the Nursery asked, moving toward the child. Then he stopped, rocking back on his heels, and Qui-Gon was hit by it at the same time. Disaster, of immense proportions. He paled and tried to catch his breath, wondering what in all the Sith Hells had happened.

The other children, frightened by Obi-Wan's wailing and sensing something wrong from the other adults, began weeping as well. The Nursery master pulled himself together, gathering his assistants with a word and a thought, and began the process of quieting and calming the children, sending out soothing thoughts.

Qui-Gon scooped the sobbing Obi-Wan up into his arms, shushing him gently, and turned towards the Nursery master. "I'll take Obi-Wan into the sleeping chamber and try to calm him down while
Master Mrill nodded, and Qui-Gon carried the child into the empty sleeping chamber. He settled into a rocking chair, leaning back and laying the small child along his chest as he rubbed and patted the quivering back. Racking sobs gradually eased into hiccups as he murmured soothing words, reassuring the frightened child. Exhausted from his emotional upset, the child's eyelids grew heavy and began to drift closed, only to force themselves open a moment later.

"It's all right, Obi-Wan," Qui-Gon said softly. "Sleep. You won't be left alone. I promise. Sleep." He reinforced his last word with Force and the child's lids slid shut again. A small hand clutched at a fold of his cloak just before the child went under, as if seeking additional reassurance.

Another entered the room, and Qui-Gon looked up at his Padawan with a gesture requesting quiet. Mace Windu settled on the floor nearby, and waited patiently for his master to ascertain that the boy was asleep, transfer the small body to a bed, pry loose the tight grip on his cloak, and then summon Trellin to sit with the boy. Then knight and padawan moved into the hallway.

"It was the Denelia Star," Mace said without preamble. "On a regular cruise, two days out from Coruscant with four-thousand people on board. No one's sure what happened as of yet - it appears to have simply exploded." He shuddered. "I've never felt anything like that before now."

Qui-Gon nodded. "I felt the disturbance, too. All of the children did as well, probably magnified off all the Jedi here in the Temple."

"Is that what happened to Obi-Wan?"

Qui-Gon shook his head. "No. Obi-Wan felt it before it happened. He froze suddenly. Then, at the moment that we all felt it, he fell down wailing." Then he stopped abruptly. "By the Light!"

"What, Master?" Mace asked, concerned.

"Three days ago, when his aunt and uncle were here - they were booked on the Denelia Star. Obi-Wan went into hysterics - said something about 'feeling bad' but that it wasn't him but the baby he was worried about. We thought that he meant that Sari was ill, but this must have been what he sensed."

Mace's eyes widened. "The Unifying Force? In one as young as he is? Master, are you certain?"

Qui-Gon nodded, feeling numb all over. Force-Sensitivity this strong in one this young was dangerous, for the child as well as for those around him who could be subjected to unshielded projections. It was fortunate that he had been here, that he had been able to shield the child when this hit, but it didn't bode well for the future. If he was in Temple all the time, with Obi-Wan, he could provide shielding for the boy, but as things were -

He'd have to talk with his former master. And right now, he knew exactly where the diminutive Jedi would be.

Qui-Gon re-entered the toddler ward and saw a familiar figure standing in front of Obi-Wan's bed, watching the sleeping child. It was a sight he had grown accustomed to over the years, and as a youngster he had often wondered what his master saw as he stood watching the sleeping children. He moved to stand next to Yoda, looking down at the current source of his former master's interest.

"You heard what happened earlier, my master?"

Yoda nodded. "Felt disturbance then broadcast to entire Temple he did. Fortunate it was that there
"He is young to be so sensitive to the currents of the Force. And it's bound to happen again," Qui-Gon asked, troubled. "What can we do, Master? I can't be here to shield him all the time."

Yoda considered. "One thing only to be done. Shielded he must be. Trained to shield he must be. Teach him you cannot. Padawan you have. Teach him I must or - "

Yoda didn't need to finish that sentence. Qui-Gon had seen what happened to those Force-Sensitives who had been unable to learn that vital lesson. Those who hadn't been immediately killed by psychic blasts such as this disaster were reduced to mindless husks. It was a powerful lesson that each initiate learned, reinforced with visits to the ward where damaged Jedi were cared for by their brothers and sisters for the rest of their lives.

Qui-Gon shivered at the thought of his bright flame being snuffed out. But the realization that the strongest Jedi among them would be shielding the young Kenobi was reassuring.

It would do until Qui-Gon was able to take care of the boy himself.

End

End Notes

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