Tano and Kenobi

by FireflyFish

Summary

Master Skywalker always said “The Force works in mysterious ways” and Ahsoka Tano has to admit, getting thrown backwards in time by about forty years was very mysterious. Now she just needs to figure how to get back home and how to get Master Qui-Gon Jinn to take Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi as a Padawan before the young boy is shipped off to Bandomeer to take up the quiet life of a farmer.

Of course, that’s assuming she doesn’t take him as her Padawan first...
Master Tano, I presume?

“Stupid! Stupid! I am so stupid! I should known better than that!”

Ahsoka Tano, former Padawan learner of Anakin Skywalker and rebel alliance operative known as Fulcrum, found herself waking up face down on the floor of some room that looked absolutely nothing like the dark and decaying ancient temple sanctuary she had been exploring not five minutes ago.

Had it been five minutes ago?

Where was she? How long had she been unconscious?

What in the Force had compelled her to pick up that strangely carved loop of jointed metal that twisted and turned in on itself, over and over, like some kind of infinity symbol? She had felt possessed as if some unseen presence had taken command of her limbs. Ahsoka remembered stumbling forward as if she were struggling through a surging wave made out of the Force. She struggled to stay upright as it kept threatening to knock her over.

Maybe one of those waves had done just that. Ahsoka really couldn’t remember.

She remembered reaching for the silvery band, picking it up and turning it over and over in her hand. She ran her fingertips along the carved glyphs, not recognizing the language but understanding the feeling behind them.

This item was important.

It was dangerous.

_I should put it back._ Ahsoka thought, shaking her head. _I don’t know what this is or what it could do._

Almost regretfully, she lowered her hand to return the sinuous band of metal and ominous energy to the cracked and crumbling stand she found it on.

Apparently it didn’t like that.

“Fierfek!” Ahsoka cursed as the band seemed to leap to life, coiling and wrapping around left her hand, a writhing, twisting, and living thing. She tried to fling it off her hand and when that didn’t work she tried to dig her fingers under the cuff and peel it off.

That didn’t work either.

Ahsoka frowned at the undulating object, horrified at the way it seemed content to spiral endlessly around her wrist as if were living jewelry. She gave her hand another hard shake and when that didn’t work, she plucked the shoto saber from her belt. She carefully changed the length and intensity before laying her left hand down on a nearby flat surface. With the short saber in her right she slowly lowered the blade towards sliding infinite loop of metal and carvings.

“AAAH!” Ahsoka let out a trail of curses in every language she knew as the item constructed around her wrist. The pain was so sudden and intense she almost feared it had cut off her hand and she
dropped her saber.

The minute the white blade went out the blistering pain stopped and the cuff went back to what it considered normal, lazily spiraling around her wrist like a silver serpent.

Ahsoka bent down to pick up her saber, returning it to her belt and collapsing into a pile against the far wall. She hung her head, gazing at the floor and wishing that she had someone to help her, someone who knew more about the Force and its mysteries than her half trained experience.

She supposed she could try to meditate and contact Master Yoda through the Force but she doubted he would be of much help. He was difficult enough to understand when you were asking him simple questions. She would spend more time trying to untangle his distinctive grammar than pondering the mystery of the object.

And Anakin, her master, would have been no good. He didn’t have time for the great mysteries of the Force and after that strange episode of lost time and the vague memories of pain and death, he had been even less inclined to ponder the metaphysical.

Not that it mattered.

Anakin Skywalker was gone, beyond her reach and if she thought about it too much she was afraid it might break her. Again.

So many Jedi were lost, destroyed during Order 66 or the nightmare of the purges that came afterward. Master Plo. Master Shaak Ti.

Master Obi-Wan.

Ahsoka felt tears burn in the corner of her eyes at the memory of her master’s master, of his kind smile and his patient way with her and Anakin. If she were being completely honest she had been impossibly lucky to be assigned to Anakin Skywalker and by extension Obi-Wan Kenobi. She had learned so much from them both, how to lead, how to listen and when to not to listen. She learned when sweet words were more effective than a saber and when it was easier to apologize than ask for permission.

For a few brief years she had a family.

Obi-Wan would have known what to do. He would have remembered some story he had heard from a charming, disreputable friend or recited some old poem Master Jinn had taught him and it would have sparked a germ of an idea. They might have needed a side trip to the Archives but his hunch would have been borne out and between the three of them, they would have found some way to get this confounded piece of chagas off of her wrist.

But Obi-Wan was gone too.

Ahsoka bowed her head, resting it on her arm braced across her knees. Sorrow washed through her, threatening to drown her. Hot tears slipped past her control and it all seemed so horribly unfair, so terribly, nightmarishly wrong.

How could there be a galaxy without her masters? They were always supposed to be there. Even if she wasn’t a Jedi, even if she would never be a Jedi again, Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi were supposed to be out there, side by side, saving the galaxy one witty quip and affectionate squabble at a time.

She missed them so much.
I miss you. I miss you both so much. I’m so tired and so alone and I just… I just want to give up. I know I can’t. I know you would tell me to keep going but… with Master Obi-Wan dead and Anakin…

No. Ahsoka wouldn’t think about Anakin.

If only Master Obi-Wan was alive, somewhere. If only he was still out there, with a warm cup of tea and smile.

I just wish I could see you again.

And that’s when the pain hit her and she passed out in an overwhelming wave of agony and blinding light.

Ahsoka pushed herself upright and looked around, her hands hovering over her sabers as she tried to figure out just where she was. The floor was smooth and paved, made of a pale granite or perhaps marble. The walls looked to be carved stone, also smooth but with egg shaped sconces set about four meters apart. There was a window at the far end of the room and as her eyes adjusted to the dim light, Ahsoka discovered that the room was full of storage crates, some covered with blankets and some left bare. She was in a large central area, the ground where she had been lying was clean, no evidence of any blast or attack.

It looked like an ordinary storage room from a typical old building in Coruscant.

Actually it reminded her of the countless storage rooms that had made up the warren of the lower floors in the Jedi Temple. And now that her confusion was clearing up she could feel a strange lightness to her step that hadn’t been present in that old crumbling temple.

Where am I? What happened? Why does the Force feel so different? It’s almost like it’s lighter here.

Wherever here is.

Ahsoka looked around for a door panel, spying one over to her right. She walked to the door, careful to move gingerly just in case there were sensors or some kind of alarm system. She was going to have a devil of a time explaining how she had ended up in someone’s storage room.

I don’t even know how I got here. All I remember is pain and that light. I don’t even know what triggered this… event? Blast? Trap?

Ahsoka pulled her saber from her belt and reached out for the door panel with her left when she remembered the mysterious, undulating ring of jointed metal. It had been wrapped tightly around her wrist, sliding soundlessly around and around before the explosion.

And now it was gone, her wrist bare.

“Oh kriff me,” Ahsoka murmured as she pushed the button and stepped out into the unknown.

The unknown appeared to be a hallway, well lit and clean. It echoed with the soft whisper of a ventilation system. The same oval sconces from the storage room lit up the towering passageway, a neat match to the large circular overhead lights that ran down the middle of the ceiling over four meters overhead. Ahsoka could hear the distant echo of people talking and heels clicking across a hard floor.
“There’s something familiar about this place,” Ahsoka murmured as she looked back and forth down the hallway, trying to deduce where exactly she had ended up. Returning her saber to her belt, Ahsoka turned towards the far right hand exit that led towards the sounds of a crowd.

Something felt familiar, like something that had been lost for a long time was finally returned to her.

And then that something familiar barrelled right into her, in the shape of a small being, sending them both crashing to the floor.

“I’m sorry! I’m so sorry! Please forgive me, Master! I wasn’t looking where I was going! I’m terribly sorry!”

A torrent of apologies filled the air, crisp, youthful, and frantic. There was more than mere sorrow behind those words, there was almost a blind panic, as if the person who had crashed into Ahsoka feared that she was going to strike out at them.

She waited for her tackler to remove themselves from their combined jumble of arms and legs before she sat up and turned around. “It’s all right. It was an accident. There’s no need to get so upset.”

True to her senses, the young human male in front of her looked absolutely horrified, his blue eyes downcast and his wheat colored hair cropped close to his head. His hands were folded over his stomach as he bowed profusely to Ahsoka. “I’m so sorry, Master. I didn’t see you there. Master Yoda is always reprimanding me for not keeping my focus on where I am going.”

_Did he just say… Master Yoda? Is he wearing Jedi robes?_

And why did this boy seem so familiar? She almost wanted to reach out and pull him into a hug, he looked that distraught. The Force hummed around him like an old friend and it took every ounce of her willpower to keep her hands to herself.

“It’s alright, young one,” Ahsoka smiled, standing up and brushing herself off. “I wasn’t paying attention either. And I’m not a master.”

He frowned, confused. “Oh. My apologies Knight…?”

“It’s Ahsoka Tano. But you can just call me Ahsoka,” she smiled, resting a hand on her hip. “What’s your name?”

The young boy looked up at Ahsoka, a weak attempt at a smile on his face. “Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi.”
Senior Initiate Kenobi

Chapter Summary

Ahsoka is absolutely convinced the Force is giving her a vision of the past to guide her future, helping her move past her pain and grief on Malachor.

Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi is just trying to get to his lightsaber lessons without getting into more trouble.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Was Ahsoka losing her mind?

“I’m sorry. What did you say your name was?” she sputtered in shock.

If it was possible, the boy in front of her looked even more crestfallen than before, his blue eyes darting off to the side as he hunched his shoulders defensively and bowed his head. “My name is Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

Yes. Ahsoka decided she was losing her mind.

Or maybe this a dream? Or a Force vision? Yes! Let’s go with Force vision. But what is the Force trying to tell me?

And why did this tiny version of Master Obi-Wan look so terribly depressed?

“It’s nice to meet you, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka finally said, returning his bow with one of her own. “Where were you headed in such a rush?”

Obi-Wan seemed startled at her kind words and looked up at her, his wide blue-grey eyes doing that squinting thing Master Obi-Wan’s did whenever Anakin was trying to pull a fast one over him. It was almost comical coming from a child half her age.

Comical and heartbreakingly familiar.

“I was on my way to saber practice with Master Drallig,” Obi-Wan sighed, apparently deciding that Ahsoka was to be trusted. “I’m afraid I shall be late now. Master Drallig will be most displeased with me.”

Saber practice? With Master Drallig? Then that meant…

This is the Temple. I’m in the Temple. On Coruscant. This is a vision of the past. Of Obi-Wan’s past.

But why was the Force showing her this?

“Why don’t I go with you and explain it to him?” Ahsoka offered, a smile on her face. “If it hadn’t been for me, I’m sure you would have been right on time, right?”

Obi-Wan bit his lip and looked off to the side, his hands clasped behind his back as he rocked on his
heels. “Ah… well, to be perfectly honest, Master Ahsoka, I am already tardy for my instructions.”

“How late are you?” Ahsoka asked, incapable of believing that Obi-Wan Kenobi could be late to anything, let alone to a class on lightsaber instruction. Anakin, yes, but Obi-Wan? Never!

Obi-Wan frowned. “Class started fifteen minutes ago.”

“Fifteen minutes ago?” Ahsoka echoed, shocked. That did not sound like the Master Obi-Wan she knew. “Why are you already so late?”

And why do you still look so sad?

Pursing his lips, Obi-Wan managed to get out a pained but polite answer. “I was talking with Master Sinube and he can be a bit… loquacious. It would have been terribly rude of me to interrupt him! He is a very wise master and I… eh-hem. And now I am even more late, Master Ahsoka.”

Then Initiate Obi-Wan did the same thing that Master Obi-Wan did when it was clear he was done explaining himself: he pulled his hands from behind his back, set his chin, and nodded solemnly. When she had been younger it had been intimidating at first, then amusing and now, to see the origins of that little head nod on such a small boy, it was positively endearing.

“Well then at least let me go with you to explain my part in this whole mess,” Ahsoka smiled, a soft and affectionate laugh following her statement. “Where is the class being held?”

“In the Northern Solar Room,” Obi-Wan explained, marching forward and his head held high. “And thank you, Master Ahsoka, but you need not impugn your honor on my account. I, alone, am responsible for my actions. I chose to offend Master Drallig’s sense of punctuality and I should pay the price for it.”

Ahsoka shook her head, a feeling of warmth and affection for this tiny version of her master’s master suffusing the Force. “I think my honor can take the hit, Obi-Wan.”

Obi-Wan looked back at her, one eyebrow arched in skepticism. He gave her a long look with those clear blue-grey eyes before he came a conclusion and shook his head. “As you wish, Master Ahsoka.”

Ahsoka followed Obi-Wan out into the hallway, stunned after such a long absence from the Temple to see a class of younglings passing by, led by a Twi’lek creche master. Obi-Wan bowed to the master and greeted them by name. The younglings waved to Obi-Wan and looked up at Ahsoka in surprise and awe and she returned their questioning gazes with a smile and a wink before she turned her attention back to Obi-Wan, who was moving swiftly towards the far turbolift. She was surprised at how fast he moved, how he darted in and out of the crowds of people like another Jedi she knew.

Clearly his time with Master Qui-Gon Jinn had shaped Obi-Wan into the calm and patient Jedi Master she remembered from her own time.

Stepping past a Wookie Jedi Knight, something she hadn’t seen since her days as a youngling, Ahsoka made it to Obi-Wan’s side and he glanced up at her, surprise coloring the Force around him. Ahsoka gaped at the little scamp. “You were trying to lose me!”

Obi-Wan flushed, the color flooding his face and going straight to his ears as he stared at the lift doors. “I… thought that if I could arrive at the class before you I could apologize honestly and… erm. Good afternoon, Master Drallig?”

The door had opened while they were talking and Master Drallig stood there, his arms folded over
his chest, his dark eyes narrowed on Obi-Wan in apparent annoyance at having to leave his class to look for him. He was younger than Ahsoka had ever seen him, his hair barely brushing his shoulders instead of halfway down his back like it had been when she was a Padawan.

His frown was not quite thunderous but it didn’t stop the sudden shiver that went down Ahsoka’s spine. If this was a Force vision it was very powerful and tactile in a way she had never experienced. She could sense the edges of Master Drallig’s shields, a sparkling effervescent thing that reminded her of the glints of blades or the faint colored halos of lightsabers.

“Initiate Kenobi,” Master Drallig sighed. “Are you on your way to your Soresu instructions?”

Obi-Wan was late to Soresu practice? What had he and Master Sinube been discussing that had kept him from his preferred saber form?

“Yes, of course, Master Drallig,” Obi-Wan bowed low. “Please forgive my truancy. I was listening to Master Sinube and I simply lost track of the time. I value your teachings, Master, and I promise it will not happen again.”

Master Drallig let out a deep sigh and rolled his eyes. “Can it with the bantha poodoo, Kenobi. I’ve heard it a hundred times. You have to learn Soresu like every other Jedi out there.”

Grimacing, Obi-Wan nodded. “Then if I may be excused to join the class?”

“Wait!” Ahsoka blurted out, almost blushing herself when Master Drallig turned his intense stare on her. And had he always been so small and slight? Had she grown so tall since the Clone Wars? Why did the Temple seem so much smaller in this vision than it had when she had been a Padawan? Surely if this vision was based on her memories or Master Obi-Wan’s memories now that he was one with the Force then shouldn’t everything feel and look bigger?

“Yes? Can I help you?” Master Drallig asked, giving her a good look from head to toe, his glance briefly catching on her sabers resting on her belt. “Master…?”

“This is Knight Ahsoka Tano,” Obi-Wan jumped in, stepping in front of her. “In my haste to make it to class I…”

“I knocked him over in the hallway,” Ahsoka interrupted Obi-Wan before he could further humiliate himself in front of the Jedi Battlemaster. “So really it’s my fault. I’m sorry?”

Deciding that whatever the two in front of him were up to was not something he wanted to be involved with, Drallig excused Obi-Wan from that day’s lesson but informed him that he would still have to make up his practice the next day or he would be forced to report it to Master Windu.

Once the master was gone, Ahsoka turned back to Obi-Wan, who let out the longest and deepest sigh she had ever heard from the Jedi and watched, bemused, as he collapsed against a wall and slid down to the floor. “Well that could have been worse.”

“No fan of Soresu?” Ahsoka asked, walking over to him and taking a seat on the ground next to the boy, the two of them tucked away from the traffic of the busy hallway behind a large bronzium statue of a grandmaster from the Old Republic days.

No one paid them much heed. The Temple was filled to bursting with younglings, initiates and Jedi, life and light positively shining from every corner. The stone walls almost hummed with peace and contentment, relaxing unknown tensions in her shoulders and neck. Although she had not been a part of the Jedi Order since she left at the age of seventeen, the Temple and its airy corridors and expansive rooms would always be a home to her. There were times when she dreamt of the Temple,
of walking with her Master through the hallways, looking out over the golden afternoon of Coruscant.

He would smile at her and tell her how proud he was of her.

*I could not be prouder of you, Ahsoka. You are the best Padawan I could have ever asked for.*

“Master Ahsoka?” Obi-Wan’s voice broke through her memory and she was startled to find herself tearing up. She rubbed the tears out on the heel of her hand and smiled at Obi-Wan, who still looked like he didn’t quite trust her. “Are you quite alright, Master?”

*That sounds so strange coming from Obi-Wan.*

“Yes, I’m fine, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, nodding to herself almost as if she needed convincing. “I was just… remembering my… old friend.”

He nodded, his gaze fixed on the floor in front of him. “I’m sorry. Master Yoda says that when we die we become one with the Force so in a way, our lost loved ones are always with us. They have never really left us.”

Ahsoka nodded, pondering the wisdom given to her by Obi-Wan’s younger self, by the words of Master Yoda. This seemed to be the answer to the nature of the Force vision. She had been feeling miserable and lonely beforehand, mourning not only the loss of a mentor but of a whole way of life that was gone to the ravages of the Empire.

“There is no death,” Ahsoka said, looking over at Obi-Wan as he nodded. “There is the Force.”

Even if he was dead, Master Obi-Wan and the others would always be with Ahsoka, always there guiding her path through an uncertain future. Padme, Duchess Satine and Stella Gerrera would be there and even Master Yoda one day.

She could reframe how she viewed the Force, how she connected to the eternal Cosmic Force. It was not a cold and distant power that moved people around the galaxy like games pieces on a chessboard. It was love of her friends and family, of the people who she had saved and the lives she had touched. They would be reunited one day and the holes in her heart would be filled.

Maybe one day, even Anakin would join them again.

“Master?”

She had to believe in him.

“Master Ahsoka?”

She had to believe he could come back from the Dark.

“Ahsoka? Are you alright?”

Obi-Wan’s voice broke into her deep and mournful thoughts, his voice too high but the cadence and the concern was identical. Ahsoka realized she started crying again and she rubbed at her eyes, laughing weakly. “I’m so sorry, Obi-Wan. You must think I’m a terrible Jedi, letting my emotions get the better of me like this.”

The boy looked up at her, his blue eyes round as he scanned her face. She could feel his spirit brushing hers in the Force, the same soft warmth of a summer’s day washing over her bruised heart.
It was all she could do to keep from pulling Obi-Wan into a hug and bawling all over him. How he could be so small and yet so full of empathy and wisdom?

“Do not apologize, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan said, scooting closer to her, their shoulders and knees almost touching. “I do not think you are a terrible Jedi. I think... you miss your friend very much. I think it’s good to be sad when they pass into the Force.”

Ahsoka shook her head, with a soft sound of affection. She reached an arm around him and pulled him close, finally giving into the urge. “How did such a young boy gain so much wisdom?”

“I am nearly thirteen,” Obi-Wan mumbled, letting himself be pulled into her half hug. “I am hardly a boy, Master Ahsoka.”

Ahsoka laughed brightly and shook her head. “Of course. My apologies, Senior Initiate Kenobi.”

Obi-Wan grinned, risking a glance up at her. “Why have I never seen you in the Temple before today?”

Ah. Good question. And now that I understand what this whole Force vision is about, why haven’t I come out of it?

“I’ve been on the Outer Rim,” Ahsoka explained, gazing up at the ceiling of the hall they were sitting on. “I’ve been… busy.”

Obi-Wan arched an eyebrow at that but chose not to press any further. Nor did he move away from her hug, seeming content to stay there, the two of them basking in an unspoken connection.

They stayed that way for a while, watching others’ comings and goings, neither saying much but simply basking in the presence of a friend, a new one for Obi-Wan and one thought long lost for Ahsoka.

A few masters and curious younglings spared them a second glance but once they spied Obi-Wan Kenobi next to the strangely dressed Togruta there were a few shakes of the head and they hurried on. Ahsoka frowned at that, wondering what was so strange about Obi-Wan. Maybe they were just jealous? She knew that had been a problem when her master was a Padawan and it stood to reason that Master Obi-Wan could have been a victim of that as well.

But why?

“Don’t you have another class to go to?” Ahsoka asked Obi-Wan, frowning down at the top of his fawn-colored hair. “I’m more than happy to get you out of that one too, if you want, but I don’t want to get you in trouble.”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. I’m supposed to be in the Room of a Thousand Fountains meditating.”

“Late you are, young Kenobi,” a familiar voice chuckled, echoed by the sound of a gimmer stick tapping on the shining polished floor. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan looked up to find Master Yoda standing over them, his hands folded over the top of the gnarled metal handle. He canted his head to the side and smiled at them. “Room of a Thousand Fountains, this is not. Recognize your new friend, I do not.”

Ahsoka swallowed the lump in her throat and reminded herself that this was all just a Force vision and clearly she had more to learn. Perhaps this was the only way Master Yoda could communicate with her via the Force.
Obi-Wan flushed and bowed his head, his blue eyes focused on the floor in front of him. “Forgive me, Master Yoda. I lost track of time. It’s my fault, not Master Tano’s! I’ll go right away.”

“Tano?” Yoda echoed, turning to look at Ahsoka, who sat with her legs folded and her arms crossed over her chest. “Master, you say? Found a master have you, Obi-Wan?”

Ahsoka watched Obi-Wan deflate and curl in on himself as he shook his head “no”, his shields shivering into place as their little corner of the great hall suddenly felt colder for his sunny absence. She frowned and turned to look over at the Grandmaster, who shook his head sadly.

“Come with me. Much to discuss, have we. New tea from Gatalenta, I have and no one to drink it with. Come, come!”

Obi-Wan hung his head and nodded, following after the master with a cloud of dejection and sadness floating after him. Ahsoka watched them go, wondering if this was how her Force vision was going to end, with the sad image of young Obi-Wan Kenobi being led away by Master Yoda to discuss the importance of patience. She knew from her master that Qui-Gon Jinn would eventually take Obi-Wan as his Padawan Learner, which she imagined would be any day now based on how old Obi-Wan was.

Ahsoka took a deep breath and relaxed into the Force, bidding good bye to Obi-Wan and the happy memory of the Temple before the Clone Wars and the Purges. She had come to learn a great deal about herself and the Force and when promised to remember these lessons when she awoke back in the Temple on whatever planet it was she was on.

Any minute now.

Cracking one eye open, Ahsoka saw Master Yoda looking back at her, holding a hand up to Obi-Wan, who came to a confused stop.

Yoda hobbled back to her, his eyes narrowed as cleared his throat. “Master Tano? Join us for tea, will you? Discuss your sudden arrival, we shall.”

Ahsoka nodded, bowing her head to the elder. “Yes, of course, Master Yoda. I… I would be happy to have tea with you and Obi-Wan.”

She stood up and followed after the master and initiate, wondering just what exactly is going on. 

This IS a Force vision, right?

Chapter End Notes

Hello! If you'd like updates on Tano and Kenobi progress you can check it out on my tumblr FireflyFish where I have been known to post a preview or drop a hint every now and then.

Thanks for reading!
Sugar with Your Tea?

Chapter Summary

Master Yoda invites Ahsoka and Obi-Wan to tea and Ahsoka comes to a startling realization.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Master Yoda moved slower than a frozen Hutt, his little green head bobbing side to side as he ambled pleasantly through the halls of the Temple, nodding a greeting to passing Jedi, who all bowed with great respect to the ancient master.

Obi-Wan and Ahsoka followed at a respectful distance, taking small steps and shooting the occasional glance at the people paying obeisance to the Grand Master of the Order.

“How do you think if I offered to give him a lift, he’d take me up on it?” Ahsoka whispered to Obi-Wan, who looked up at her, scandalized.

“You can’t do that, Master Ahsoka!” the Senior Initiate protested, worried that perhaps there might be something wrong with his new friend. “That’s disrespectful! We learn patience by following in the Master’s footsteps.”

Ahsoka just smiled and shook her head as Yoda stopped to hold another conversation with a clutch of wide-eyed younglings. She looked over at Obi-Wan, who was trying so hard to be the perfect Initiate. There were three months left before his thirteenth birthday and he could not afford to step out of line once.

His whole future depended on it.

“What if we just picked him up and carried him off?” Ahsoka teased. “Do you think he’d mind?”

Obi-Wan turned to her slowly, his blue eyes wide horrified as the group shuffled on. “Master Ahsoka!”

She was starting to understand why Anakin had so enjoyed ruffling Master Obi-Wan’s feathers. Obi-Wan’s expression of shock and affront were adorably hilarious. Too bad he never got a chance to see Padawan Obi-Wan. He would have loved him.

“Your offer of assistance and locomotion, I accept,” Yoda chuckled, his eyes twinkling as he hobbled back over to Ahsoka from his latest conversation.

“You… you do?” Ahsoka said, shocked that Yoda had been paying attention to her while he was discussing the finer points of Tellestrian flower arranging with a Charigan Jedi. She had the decency to blush before she knelt and helped Yoda up onto a comfortable perch on her shoulder, surprised to see how light the Grand Master was. “I’m sorry, Master Yoda. I was just… trying to lighten the mood.”

“Rude and impertinent, you were,” Yoda cackled with mischievous glee, pointing to a far hallway.
“Old am I, not deaf. Learned your lesson, have you? Hmmm?”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, his blue-grey eyes wide and his lips pulled into a twisted line that indicated he was trying not to laugh at Master Yoda riding piggyback on Ahsoka. He stepped forward and led them in the direction of Yoda’s meditation room. He had a sneaking suspicion that Master Ahsoka didn’t really know where much of anything in the Temple was and this way he could show her without drawing attention to her lack of knowledge.

How she became a Knight, and a jar’kai wielder at that, was a mystery for another day.

Once they made it to the door of Yoda’s private meditation chamber, Ahsoka knelt down and the aged master hopped off with a cheerful bounce. The door slid open and Obi-Wan patiently waited for the Grand Master and Ahsoka to enter before he stepped in behind them.

“Come, come!” Yoda said, warmth and mirth in his voice. He gestured to the two large circular meditation cushions that were facing each other and a third that was tucked up against a window. Obi-Wan hurried over to the third one, pushing it into a triangle formation with the other two as Ahsoka took a seat, her legs crossed in front of her. He sat down next to her, waiting for the Grandmaster to join them once he was done with the kettle.

“Talked with Master Sinube, did you, Obi-Wan?” Yoda asked as he walked over and hopped up onto a cushion, resting his gimer stick in front of him.

Obi-Wan caught his lower lip under his teeth as he frowned at the floor in front of Yoda. “Yes, Master Yoda. I spoke to him as you instructed and he…”

Obi-Wan took a deep breath and tried to ignore the humiliated flush and the frantic panic another rejection sent through him. He was almost out of knights or masters who could take him on and with his birthday rapidly approaching, Bandomeer and the Agricorps loomed ever larger on the horizon.

“He said he was flattered but that he was too old to take on a Padawan,” Obi-Wan managed to grit out, swallowing his fear and shame, refusing to look over at Master Ahsoka or hear her shocked gasp. She must have been away from the Temple for quite a long time to have not heard about the running joke that was Obi-Wan Kenobi’s search for a master.

He bowed his head and closed his eyes, repeating to himself over and over again. There is no emotion. There is peace. There is no emotion. There is peace.

“You asked Master Sinube?” Ahsoka looked from Obi-Wan to Yoda and back again, confused as to why he would have asked the old Master who spent most of his time asleep at a data terminal in the Archives. “And he turned you down?”

“Unfortunate, this is,” Yoda sighed, shaking his head. “Had hope for you, I did. Try again, we will, Obi-Wan. Lose faith, you must not.”

Obi-Wan nodded, trying to hide his bitterness from the Grand Master and the Knight at his side. “Yes, of course, Master Yoda. Perhaps Master Plo Koon will reconsider.”

“Perhaps,” Yoda nodded before turning to regard Ahsoka, his eyes narrowed. “Another path, perhaps, we should take. Suggestion you have, Master Ahsoka?”

Ahsoka looked from Obi-Wan to Yoda before offering, “Why not Qui-Gon Jinn? I think they’d make a great pair.”

Obi-Wan’s mouth dropped open and he let out a sound of shock before he regained control of
himself. “Master Jinn?”

Yoda let out a bark of laughter, rocking backwards. “Oh! Master Jinn, you say? My Padawan’s Padawan, eh?”

Shrugging, the Togrutan Jedi grinned. “What? You don’t want Obi-Wan in the family?”

Yoda seemed to find this endlessly funny and he stood up as the kettle shrieked to life. Jumping down from the meditation cushion, he ambled over to the shrieking metal vessel, leaving the two alone as he made the tea.

“Why would you suggest Master Jinn?” Obi-Wan hissed at Ahsoka. “He has forsworn ever taking another Padawan! In public! In front of the Council no less! He would never accept me.”

“Why not?” Ahsoka asked, confused. “You’re amazing, Obi-Wan. Master Jinn would be lucky to have you. You’re going to be a truly great Jedi one day.”

Maybe his new friend was suffering from the lingering effects of a head injury she received out on the Outer Rim because the very idea of Obi-Wan Kenobi being a great Jedi one day was so impossible it was laughable. “I thank you for your praise, Master Ahsoka, but I assure you that I only want to be a Jedi Knight and serve the Republic. Greatness is for other Jedi, like Master Windu or Master Dooku.”

“Dooku?” Ahsoka echoed and her face clouded over, her voice suddenly strangled and hard. “He’s still here?”

“Yes, of course,” Obi-Wan replied, his worry growing. “He was Master Yoda’s last Padawan.”

“Oh yeah…” Ahsoka murmured, looking away as she held her hand up to her mouth. “I forgot about that.”

There was an uncomfortable silence between them, Ahsoka’s gaze far away as Obi-Wan frowned at the floor. They were each lost in their thoughts, Obi-Wan furiously running through his list of Jedi he had not yet asked or chances to exhibit his worthiness as a potential Padawan. The list of possible masters grew shorter every day, as time raced faster and faster toward his thirteenth birthday.

The day when he would have to leave his home and take up a life of quiet service to the Force and the Order on distant Bandomeer.

Obi-Wan reminded himself that the Agricorps was not a punishment, that there were many initiates who were more than happy to forgo the dramatic and dangerous life of a Jedi Knight. He knew at least two agemates who had been only too happy to run from the competitive and at times caustic environment of the Temple. They had left early, bidding tearful farewells to Obi-Wan and their creche mates even as a palpable sense of relief swirled around them. They were free from the jockeying, the fighting for the spotlight.

Maybe that was how Obi-Wan should look at it. He would be free. No more crushing disapproval, no more sideways glances when he spoke up in passionate defense of a friend or a people in his history classes. No more snickering behind his back that he was too soft, that he cared too much and fought too hard for losing causes. No one would tell him that his goals were beyond his ability, that he was aiming too high and would never reach the stars he longed for.

If he gave up his dreams, then no one could hurt him for having them.

Was that the price of freedom from the ugly side of the Temple and the Order?
“So quiet, you two,” Yoda commented, walking back to the duo. “Deep in thought, I can tell. Share with me, will you?”

A small table rose up from a circle in the floor and the teapot and three cups floated over to the flat surface. They were shortly joined by something Obi-Wan had never seen before, a sugar bowl and small spoon. He glanced up at Master Yoda, whose eyes were closed as he used the Force to pour out three cups of amber liquid into the identical tea cups.

The tea smelt heavenly, rich and bright with just a hint of flowers. Steam rose up from the cups, swirling and vanishing away into the afternoon light. Each cup was the same simple earthenware creation, lacquered in a pale dove grey with a charcoal grey brush stroke on one side, indicating that it was the front of the cup.

Yoda opened his eyes and smiled. “Sugar, young Obi-Wan, Master Ahsoka?”

“Really?” Obi-Wan blurted out and then immediately regretted it as the old Master started to chuckle. He turned bright red and he secretly cursed his stupid ears that felt like they were going to catch on fire. “I’m sorry, Master Yoda. I do not… require sugar in my tea.”

“He’d like one small spoonful,” Ahsoka said, her eyes warm with affection. “That’s how my Master’s master liked his tea.”

Obi-Wan looked over at Ahsoka and tried to imagine the colorful and exotic Jedi who would have been her grandmaster. He decided that whoever he was, he must have been amazing, as much as she talked about him.

I wonder if he would have liked me.

Most likely not.

One small spoonful of sugar later, Obi-Wan sat with a cup of hot tea and the spreading warmth in his stomach started to slowly unknot all the tension and fear wrought by Master Sinube’s rejection. Yoda discussed other Jedi who might be willing to take on Obi-Wan or other ways they could keep him in the Temple, to wait for young knights out on missions to come back. Yoda promised to work on Plo Koon, which made Ahsoka smile with that same bittersweet expression from before.

“Do you know Master Plo?” Obi-Wan asked, sad to have finished off his cup of tea, knowing that it meant he would have to go soon.

Nodding down at her cup, Ahsoka murmured. “Yes. But I haven’t seen him in… a very long time.”

“Old friends?” Yoda offered.

Ahsoka smiled and looked off to the side. “Well… More like a mentor, really.”

Yoda looked at Ahsoka, his eyes piercing and Obi-Wan had the strangest sense that the Grand Master was looking for something, that he was trying to peel away the layers of the Force around them and make sense of the mysteries around Master Ahsoka Tano.

“Finished, your tea is, Obi-Wan?” Yoda asked, turning to face him.

“Yes, Master Yoda,” he replied, setting the cup down. “Should I wash up?”

“No need. Thank you for your visit, Initiate. Return to your dormitory, you may. Talk later, we will.”
Obi-Wan nodded and slipped off the meditation cushion to bow to first Yoda, and then to Ahsoka. He walked towards the door, looking back over his shoulders at the strange woman who had simply appeared in the middle of the hallway as if conjured there by the Force. He liked her and worried somehow that if he left her alone with Master Yoda, he was never going to see her again.

That it would all be a dream and the sad fact of his destiny would be unaltered and another day closer.

"Obi-Wan?" Master Yoda said, his voice breaking through the sudden anxieties bubbling up in his gut. "See Master Ahsoka later, you will. First talk in private, we must."

"Y-yes, of course, Master Yoda," Obi-Wan mumbled, bowing again and stepping out into the quiet hallway.

Once the door to Master Yoda’s meditation room was shut, Obi-Wan turned on his heel and ran for the Archive, determined to find out everything he could about Ahsoka Tano and just what had been keeping her busy out on the Outer Rim for apparently the whole of Obi-Wan’s life.

Ahsoka watched Obi-Wan go, sad to see him leave.

This must be the end of my Force vision. This has to be it.

Any minute now… right? Please? The Alliance needs me.

"Waiting for something, are you?" Yoda asked, pouring himself another cup of tea and adding two spoonfuls of sugar. "Distant, your eyes are. Twisted and warped, the Force around you, is. New and unusual, this is."

Ahsoka swallowed, a nervous lump forming in her throat. "Master Yoda… I…"

"Know me, you do," Yoda observed, sipping his tea slowly, the curls of steam framing his yellow eyes. "Yet seen you before, I have not. Connection you have with young Obi-Wan, yes? Care for him, you do. But know you, he does not."

A horrible feeling started to twist in Ahsoka’s gut as the Jedi Grand Master carried on, picking up his gimer stick as he hopped down onto the floor, pacing. "Powerful you are in the Force. Yes, very powerful. Trained in the Temple, you were. But know you, I do not. Trained you, I have not."

Ahsoka really wanted the Force vision to end and she took a deep breath, trying to reach out to the Force and use it to wake herself up. She watched Yoda pace, watched him carefully work through whatever it was he could sense in the Force, all the while silently begging to be returned back to the crumbling temple and that strange bracelet.

This has to be a dream. It has to be!

Otherwise I…

Where… no. When am I?

"Master Yoda?" Ahsoka spoke up, her voice soft and respectful. "What year is it?"

Yoda paused and then straightened up. He turned this gaze towards her, his wrinkled brow furrowed as he told her what year it was both by the standard galactic count and the unique time system to the Jedi Order kept, separate from the rise and fall of governments and Sith incursions. There were other
dating systems he could have used: The Naboo counted based on the reigning years of monarchs while on Telladoria they kept to their own system-based time scale.

But no matter how Yoda explained it to her, no matter how she counted or what math she did there was one fact staring her in the face.

If this was not a Force vision then Ahsoka Tano has somehow found herself thrown fifty plus years into the past.

Before the Clone Wars.

Before Dooku and Geonosis and the Crisis on Naboo.

Before Qui-Gon Jinn took Obi-Wan Kenobi as a Padawan Learner.

Before Anakin Skywalker was even born.

“Oh kriff me…” Ahsoka whispered, staring up at Yoda with round, shocked eyes. “What did I do?”

Yoda pursed his lips and shook his head. “Know, I do not, but here you are. For how long and for what purpose, only time will tell.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello! If you'd like updates on Tano and Kenobi progress you can check it out on my tumblr FireflyFish where I have been known to post a preview or drop a hint every now and then.

Thanks for reading!
Ahsoka Tano and Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi sat down to have tea with Grand Master Yoda. Obi-Wan fears he’s running out of time to be chosen as a Padawan Learner and Ahsoka is starting to realize that maybe, just maybe, she’s not having a Force vision after all…

“Discuss your sudden appearance, the Council will. Rest now, I think. Troubled you are and quiet you need.”

Yoda left Ahsoka at the door of an empty apartment with a southern view of Coruscant, promising her that food would be brought to her room and that no one else would bother her that evening.

She had to admit she was thankful for the peace and quiet.

Once the door closed, blocking out the achingly familiar sights and sounds of the old Temple, Ahsoka walked over to a small meditation cushion that faced the window. She sat down with an exhausted sigh, slipping her feet out of her boots and pulling them up onto the round cushion. She gazed out the window, picking familiar landmarks and taking note of buildings that were missing or places where there shouldn’t be any buildings and yet there were.

Ahsoka shook her head. “This doesn’t make any sense! It’s not possible to time travel! This must be a vision! It has to be!”

But what if it’s not?

Ahsoka’s mind whirled with the possibility that she wasn’t experiencing a vision, that this was all real somehow. What did that mean? Could she get back to her future? What happened if she changed the past? Had she already changed the past?

And if she had already changed the past, what would the future look like if she managed to return to it?

“Okay, there’s no reason to panic,” Ahsoka said to the open air. “Master always said the Force works in mysterious ways and this…”

She looked around the quiet apartment and exhaled a long breath. “This is pretty mysterious.”

Ahsoka had forgotten how quiet the Temple could be, how the stillness could seep down into a person’s bones and center them in an island of serenity amidst the swirl and chaos of Coruscant.

She had missed that feeling, that warm blanket of peace and tranquility. Anakin had never felt particularly peaceful, not even when meditating but Ahsoka had been raised in the Temple and she knew how to find her own quiet mental space. She had never needed her master to meditate the way she had needed Master Obi-Wan. For all the gifts her Master was blessed with, the ability to be still.
and quiet was not one of them.

Deciding that meditating might do her some good, Ahsoka sat up straight and unhooked her sabers, laying in them in front of her as she rested hands on her knees. She took a breath and released it, repeating the pattern as her eyes drifted shut.

Once her pulse was slow and steady and the Force flowed around her as if she were a stone in a river bed, Ahsoka was able to step back from herself and dispassionately examine her thoughts. There was fear there, understandable since she had no idea what exactly was going on, and there was worry there, worry for herself, worry for Senior Initiate Obi-Wan and worry for the Alliance back where she came from. This all made logical sense and the Force carried these emotions away, knocking tension out of her body like she was cleaning off a particularly dirty engine part.

Ahsoka was starting to feel more relaxed and centered but there was something still there, something nagging at her, an irritating speck that demanded attention.

Stretching out further with her spirit and the Force, Ahsoka carefully sent out a question to the cosmos, hoping for, but not expecting an answer.

Is this really the past?

For a long moment or two, Ahsoka assumed she would not receive an answer. She wasn’t surprised. The Force rarely worked in such a straightforward manner.

Does it matter if it’s not? Dreams and visions will become your reality if you never leave them.

The question startled Ahsoka, not because she heard it but because there was something about the voice that was familiar, that she knew. She couldn’t place it but she felt like she could trust this voice, or trust whatever the Force was trying to tell her by using this voice, this Presence.

“I don’t understand why I’m here,” Ahsoka spoke, still in the radiant darkness of the place between thoughts and breaths. “If this is not a vision, then why here? Why now? Why not before Order 66 or the Temple bombing or the first Battle of Geonosis? Why? I don’t understand.”

The Presence seemed to give Ahsoka’s questions some thought before answering, perhaps a bit glibly. The Force works in mysterious ways. Do you wish to change the past? Is that why you think you’ve been brought here?

“Can I change the past?” she asked, a strange fragile flutter of hope in her heart. “What if I make it worse? What if it doesn’t make things any better? What then? I don’t want to live through it another time just to lose my Master to the Dark side again!”

Anakin Skywalker has yet to be born and yet you are already afraid for his destiny? The Force seemed to think this was in poor form and Ahsoka resisted the urge to roll her eyes as the Presence continued. You have so little faith in your own ability to change his fate?

“Am I allowed to change his fate?” Ahsoka looked around, hoping maybe to see the Master Yoda she knew or maybe Master Obi-Wan or Plo Koon, but she saw nothing. “Is that what I’m supposed to do? Stop Anakin from becoming Darth Vader? How? I don’t even know why he turned! I… He was fine when he left Mandalore to rescue the Chancellor! He… he told me he was proud of me. He even gave me part of the 501st. He left me with Rex and…”

Ahsoka’s heart seized and she let out a soft moan. “Rex…”

Would she ever see Rex again? What about Kanan, Ezra, Sabine, Zeb, and Hera? What about
Chopper? Would Bail Organa be all right? What about Mon Mothma and her friends in the Alliance?

The Empire was pressing in on all sides and they needed all the help they could get. Could Ahsoka risk whatever this was on the chance that it wouldn’t actually change anything? That Anakin would still fall and the Empire would still rise and Padme and Master Obi-Wan would still end up dead?

*Can you afford not to?* The Presence asked, patient and kind.

Ahsoka looked at her hands. “I’m… I’m afraid. What if I make a mistake? I don’t know anything about this time period. Master Obi-Wan never really spoke of his time as a Padawan and Anakin sure as hell didn’t tell me anything about it. I don’t even know where Anakin’s mother is.”

*Ignorance, yet knowledge. You will know what to do when the time is right.* The Presence seemed to be drifting away and Ahsoka reached out for it, trying to hold on to it, to get one last answer from it.

“Wait! How will I know if I’ve done the right thing? Will I ever make it back to where I came from?”

The Presence seemed to stop and consider her question before answering as contact was lost. *Time flows only one way, Ahsoka. But the Force will be with you, always.*

“Wait! Please!” Ahsoka called out, desperately trying to hold onto the warmth and compassion of the Presence and feeling abandoned and chilled when it slipped through her fingers.

She woke up out of her meditation to the sound of the door chiming and a muffled voice shouting through the door. “Master Ahsoka? Master Ahsoka, are you indisposed? Shall I come back later?”

Ahsoka blinked and shook the confusion of her meditation off before she stood up and padded to the door. “Obi-Wan? Is that you?”

The door slid open to reveal the proud bearing of Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi and a serving droid that was carrying two trays with covered dishes. Ahsoka smiled at the familiar stainless steel-covered plates and bowls but, more than that, she smiled at Obi-Wan’s determined and resolute presence. He stood ramrod straight, his hands behind his back and his blue eyes serious. “Obi-Wan… you didn’t have to bring me dinner. I could have gotten it myself.”

“Master Yoda requested that I bring you your evening meal, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan replied, risking a glance up at her. “But I… I was concerned you might feel lonely so I… I brought mine as well. If that’s not too forward of me, Master. I would never presume to…”

“I would be happy to have your company for dinner, Obi-Wan.” Ahsoka felt a surge of love in her heart for the young boy in front of her and stifled the urge to pull him into a hug. Master Obi-Wan had never been much of a hugger and she had a feeling Senior Initiate Obi-Wan wasn’t one either.

She stepped back and let the boy and the droid pass into the room and stayed out of the way as Obi-Wan set up dinner so that everything was the way he wanted it. Ahsoka could remember Master Obi-Wan complaining about Anakin’s repair work spreading out over the hangar bay so she knew better than to get in the Initiate’s way.

“There, that’s better. Please set down the trays,” Obi-Wan said, pointing to the two sides of the low table he pulled away from a niche in the wall. Once the droid did as it was commanded, it was dismissed and Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, bowing a little. “If you would like to wash up first, Master Ahsoka?”

Ahsoka nodded, a giddy, happy smile on her face. Obi-Wan was so young, so solemn and serious
and yet, she could see the traces of the man he would become, the master he would grow into.

*If this is real and I really can’t go back, I’m going to get to watch Master Obi-Wan grow up. And Anakin, too. Wow. I can’t even imagine what Anakin was like as a Padawan.*

But if she wanted to change things, to prevent the Empire from rising, she was going to have to get used to seeing the adults she had looked up to as, if not equals, then at least near contemporaries.

*If this is real.* Ahsoka reminded herself and walked back out of the refresher. “All done! You’re up.”

Obi-Wan jumped from where he had been peering down at her lightsabers, his blue eyes round with shock and his cheeks red with embarrassment. “I’m sorry! I couldn’t help it! They were right there and… and…”

Ahsoka laughed. “I imagine you don’t get many jar’kai wielders these days, do you?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. Master Drallig says that most Jedi don’t need it. That it’s ostentatious.”

Ahsoka raised an eyebrow at that. “He actually said that?”

“Well… those weren’t his exact words,” Obi-Wan replied as he darted into the refresher and emerged after washing his hands. “But that was his meaning. Please sit down.”

Ahsoka did as she was told and uncovered their dinner, which was a delicious stir fry of vegetables and meat from Mandalore and a large helping of fragrant rice from Gatalenta. Dessert was some kind of fruit sorbet from Naboo and Ahsoka had to admit, it was nice to be back in a place where the food was free and healthy. She could go the rest of her life without eating another ration bar or a freeze-dried meal kit.

They ate in silence for a while before Ahsoka caught Obi-Wan watching her. She sat up and put down her utensils. “Dactari for your thoughts?”

“You are not in the Archives,” Obi-Wan said, his tone almost accusing. “Master Nu insists that you are not real and that I am ill or hallucinating you.”

Ahsoka chuckled at that. “And what do you think?”

“Masters Yoda and Drallig saw you, so you cannot be an illusion,” Obi-Wan reasoned, taking a bite of stir fry. “But Master Nu says the Archives are complete and never wrong.”

“Aaaah yes, of course,” Ahsoka made a great show of nodding in agreement. “So… what do you think I am?”

Frowning, Obi-Wan pondered the meal in front of him before he came to a conclusion. “You must be a Shadow, a spy or an undercover Knight. And that would explain how you simply appeared in the middle of the hallway like that.”

Ahsoka laughed. “There was a doorway, Obi-Wan. I didn’t just ‘appear’ out of thin air.”

Obi-Wan arched an eyebrow at her and she had to resist a giggle at that familiar expression of patient doubt. “That hallway is for storage rooms, Master. What would you be doing in a storage room?”

“Maybe I left something there,” Ahsoka teased. “Maybe I had a secret stash of treasure that I stole from the Hutts.”
Obi-Wan did not look impressed or convinced. “Master Ahsoka, I am not a youngling. You need not
coddle me so. If you are a Shadow there is no need to deny it. I shall not tell a soul.”

Defeated by Obi-Wan’s logic and adorably serious face, Ahsoka decided to borrow his theory for
now. He wasn’t wrong, technically. As Fulcrum, she had been “undercover”, so to speak, and with
the rise of the Empire, she spent most of her time away from the Core, offering help and assistance
where she could. She hadn’t truly been a Jedi since she left the Order and from what she understood
of Shadows, they often masqueraded as ordinary sentients, giving no hint to their true identity or
affiliation.

And some Shadows were supposedly so deeply embedded in their assignments that the Council
would erase their biological data from Republic records in an effort to better hide their Jedi agent. Or
at least, that’s what Anakin had told her about Shadows when the subject came up during one
interminably long hyperspace jump when she was a Padawan.

All in all, Ahsoka had to admit, Obi-Wan had come up with an excellent explanation for her sudden
appearance and her noticeable absence from the Archives.

*Good work, Little Obi-Wan!*

“Okay… you’ve got me,” Ahsoka smiled and nodded. “I finished my mission and now that I’m back
it’s going to take me some time to get reoriented. I don’t suppose you’d be willing to help me with
that, would you, Obi-Wan?”

“I would be honored, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan smiled at her, a wide, toothy grin that made his
eyes light up and revealed that Master Obi-Wan had been hiding an adorable set of dimples behind
his beard. Ahsoka’s heart melted and she could not understand why Master Qui-Gon was taking so
long to adopt Obi-Wan as his Padawan Learner.

*I’ll just have to show him what he’s missing. I can’t change too much. I don’t know how that will
affect the future. But I don’t think there would be anything wrong with helping the course of fate run
a little more smoothly.*

“How about you be my guide to the Temple and the Order and I’ll teach you a little bit of jar’kai?”
Ahsoka offered, knowing that Master Obi-Wan was quite skilled in the style, even if he preferred
Soresu. This would be changing things so much as rearranging when exactly they happened. “What
do you say? Is it a deal?”

That toothy smile widened if possible and Obi-Wan stuck out his hand for them to shake on it. “It is
a deal, Master Ahsoka. I am looking forward to your instructions.”

Ahsoka shook Obi-Wan’s hand, her smile just as bright and excited as his. “Me too, Obi-Wan. Me
too.”

Chapter End Notes

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tumblr FireflyFish where I have been known to post a preview or drop a hint every now
and then.

Thanks for reading!
Neglected

Chapter Summary

Ahsoka Tano’s attempts to seek clarity on her problem lead her into a deep meditation while Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi makes a bargain with Master Tano to get some extra training.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

For Obi-Wan Kenobi the next morning dawned bright and cheerful, in spite of the rainy and grey weather outside the Temple, because he had a job to do that was exciting and most importantly, would keep him far too busy to worry about which new Jedi Knight or master was going to turn him down that day. He leapt out of bed, hurried to the refresher stalls to shower and brush his hair into place before he yanked on his robes, belt, and boots and hurried out of the Initiate dormitories and in the direction of the wing where the Knights lived.

He got more than his fair share of scolding and sharp words as he ran past early rising masters, a few knights who were coming back late, and a few irate cleaning droids. The turbolift ride seemed to take forever and Obi-Wan reminded himself that an excess of positive emotions was just as bad as negative and that he wanted to be on his best behavior for Master Ahsoka.

When the lift doors opened with a ping, Obi-Wan stepped out into the hallway that led to Ahsoka’s room, his posture perfect and his face a mask of serenity. His heart was pounding in his chest but as far as anyone else could see, he was the very model of a perfectly well-behaved Senior Initiate.

Not that it did him any good when Master Ahsoka failed to answer the door, even after his third ring and a very loud shout of “Master Ahsoka?”

Obi-Wan swallowed nervously and looked up and down the hallway, suddenly very worried he had the wrong time, or the wrong room or perhaps he really had imagined the previous day’s activities in some kind of anxiety-induced delirium. He chewed on a thumbnail, trying to drum up the courage necessary to enter into Ahsoka’s room with the emergency override code.

What if she’s still sleeping? Are Togrutas heavy sleepers?

What if she’s already been assigned a new mission and the Council has sent her away?

All of these fears swirled through Obi-Wan as he gazed up at the taupe and silver door, completely oblivious to the cloud of affectionate mischief sneaking up behind him.

“Guess who?” Ahsoka teased as she grabbed Obi-Wan and covered his eyes with her hands. “You get three tries and the first two don’t count.”

The palpable sense of relief radiating out of Obi-Wan almost made Ahsoka feel bad for sneaking up on him but it was gone almost as fast as she sensed it, replaced by such bemused affront she couldn’t help laughing.

“I know it is you, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan harrumphed, turning around to give her a good and
proper glare before his relief and happiness won out. “Have you already eaten breakfast?”

Ahsoka shook her head, looking a bit embarrassed. “No. I couldn’t find the main dining hall.”

Nodding, Obi-Wan started walking down the hallway. “I thought that might happen. The dining hall was recently moved for renovations and the temporary hall is difficult to find.”

Ahsoka fell into step next to Obi-Wan, making sure she kept pace with his shorter legs as he explained that the Temple was undergoing some extensive renovations in certain areas due to the passage of time and if she found herself lost or incapable of navigating her way back to her rooms, Obi-Wan would happily locate her and guide her back to familiar territory.

“What about your classes?” Ahsoka asked, remembering that only the most dire missives from Anakin were able to get her out of classes when she had been a Padawan. “Won’t your teachers be upset if I comm you in the middle of a lesson?”

Obi-Wan frowned at that and looked away for a moment. “No. They believe I will age out before I get a chance to finish this cycle of instruction.”

“What?” Ahsoka gasped, horrified at such nonchalant neglect of a child and his education. “They’re going to ship you off in the middle of a lesson if someone doesn’t take you as a Padawan?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes. You don’t really need to know the intricacies of non-Jedi Force philosophies and heresies if you’re growing plants on Bandomeer.”

“Bandomeer? That’s a planet where the Agricorps work, right?” Ahsoka asked, her voice gentle.

“Yes. That is where the Temple feels I would best serve the Order,” he murmured, frowning at his hands.

“Well, kriff that,” Ahsoka snorted, folding her arms over her chest. “If I get lost I can wait until you’re between classes to rescue me.”

Obi-Wan looked up at her, his brows puzzled at her anger over his situation. “It’s no trouble, Master Ahsoka. I wouldn’t be missing much. I’ve already completed most of my coursework at any rate. I… I wasn’t too keen on idea of giving up in the middle of everything either.”

Bristling at the harsh treatment Obi-Wan was going through, Ahsoka vowed to bring it up to Master Yoda when she met with him before appearing in front of the Council later that afternoon. This was no way to encourage young Initiates!

When she was Obi-Wan’s age the Temple had been desperate for as many Padawans and knights that they could find. She wasn’t assigned to Anakin until she was fourteen and she had a few friends that weren’t really assigned a master until they were fifteen and those apprenticeships had come open for tragic reasons. The Order had done everything it could to get as many Jedi bodies out onto the battlefield but it had never been enough.

She could still remember Anakin joking with the members of Torrent Company about who had taken more stims to get through another 72-hour day. She remembered there had been one siege that threatened to drag on into a fourth full day of fighting and Kix had to actually sedate her master to make sure that he actually slept and did not give himself a toxic dose of stimulants.

Kix had to sedate both of them, actually.

“Well they’re going to be in for a shock when you walk in there with a braid,” Ahsoka smiled as
Obi-Wan pointed to the small door, hidden off around a corner that led through a temporary hallway and into the main dining hall. “Have you thought more about asking Master Jinn?”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes as he took up his tray and stepped into line behind a few Padawans who were a few years older than him. “I appreciate the suggestion, Master Ahsoka, but he has made his feelings on taking another apprentice quite clear.”

Ahsoka shrugged, picking up her tray and standing in line behind Obi-Wan. “He just doesn’t know you like I do. Once he gets to know you, he’ll love you.”

Shaking his head, Obi-Wan politely accepted his breakfast and moved down the line. Clearly Master Ahsoka was still behind the times on the topic of Master Qui-Gon Jinn and while her faith in him was admirable, Obi-Wan knew better.

Qui-Gon Jinn would never take Obi-Wan Kenobi as a Padawan Learner. Not with his strong emotions, short temper and even sharper tongue. A diplomat would never take a scrappy brawler for an apprentice. Qui-Gon was Master Dooku’s former Padawan and everyone knew how important refined manners and proper behavior was to Master Dooku.

Obi-Wan wondered what Master Ahsoka’s line was noted for. If she was a Shadow then whatever it was would involve subterfuge and espionage. That sounded fascinating and so much more interesting than learning about the proper greeting for the second consort of the head of the Lunar House of Nidai II.

Which was the Crane’s bow, now that Obi-Wan thought about it.

“So what classes do you have today?” Ahsoka asked Obi-Wan as they sat down at the end of a long table, each tucking into their breakfast with relish.

Obi-Wan gave her a list of morning classes and then three hours of lightsaber practice in the afternoon. The first hour and a half would cover Ataru and then he had to make up his Soresu practice from the day before. Ahsoka offered to come and watch, but Obi-Wan tried to wave her attendance off as “Not necessary, Master Ahsoka. I’m sure you have much better things to be doing with your time.”

“Well by my chrono I already owe you an hour of jar’kai instruction sooo…” Ahsoka made a great show of looking off to the side as she enjoyed another bite of oatmeal and blueberries. “I’m just letting you know that I’ll be there.”

Obi-Wan looked at his breakfast and tried not to grin. It would not do to wear his emotions on his sleeve so broadly, especially when there were others in the Temple who took far too much pleasure out of beating that smile off his face. “Well… It’s not like I can stop you. You’re a knight and a Shadow.”

Ahsoka grinned. “Damn straight, Obi-Wan. So I’ll see you there at 1600 hours?”

“Northern Solar room,” Obi-Wan mumbled, shyly. “If you cannot find it, please comm me and I will collect you.”

Nodding, Ahsoka took a sip of her caf before changing the subject and they spent the rest of breakfast discussing who was on the council since Ahsoka was “dispatched to the underbelly of the Galaxy.”

“You make it sound like I spent all of my time on Nal Hutta!” Ahsoka laughed. “Involved in organized crime or gambling.”
“Well you are a Shadow,” Obi-Wan pointedly out archly. “Isn’t that what you’re supposed to do? Infiltrate and spy on those who would do the Republic harm?”

Ahsoka smiled. “Among other things. C’mon, Obi-Wan. If you don’t mind skipping a few classes, I need you to help me look up some things in the Archives before I speak with the Council this afternoon.”

“Will I be assisting you on a mission report?” Obi-Wan asked, excited at the idea of being able to sign his name to a real Jedi Knight’s mission report like a true Padawan Learner.

“Something like that,” Ahsoka nodded as they left the dining hall, Obi-Wan redirecting Ahsoka when she turned left when she should have turned right. “Thanks. So… what do you know about ancient Force artifacts?”

Obi-Wan glanced back at Ahsoka with wide eyes. “Only what I’ve learned in my history classes and a few intensive seminars with Masters Sinube and Nu. Why? Is that what your missions involved? The illegal trafficking of underground Jedi artifacts?”

Ahsoka chuckled and reached over to ruffle Obi-Wan’s hair, which got another adorable harrumph out of him. “Lothcats before nexu, Obi-Wan.”

“What is a lothcat?” he asked as they headed towards the Archives.

Two hours later with sore necks and bleary eyesight Ahsoka and Obi-Wan emerged from the Archives with one datapad filled with notes on possible Force artifacts that might have matched the strange, looping silver chain that had torn Ahsoka free from her time period and thrown her back into the past.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t find more for you, Master,” Obi-Wan sighed looking at the floor, dejected and defeated. “Perhaps Master Yoda would be of more assistance in this? He is over eight hundred years old, after all.”

Ahsoka chuckled. “Is he still telling everyone how good he looks for his age?”

Obi-Wan let out a brief snicker before he managed to bring his emotions back under control. “When are you meeting with the Council?”

“After lunch,” Ahsoka sighed, following Obi-Wan to his next class. “They’re not working on the Room of a Thousand Fountains, are they?”

He shook his head, the long fringes of his bangs falling in a disarray over his blue eyes and he looked so young it was heartbreaking to think that the Order was just going to callously send him off to some forgotten planet because no one understood who Obi-Wan was at heart.

“I think Master Yoda would resign before he lets them touch the Gardens again. It is his favorite place to meditate.”

“Well, come find me when you’re done with class and show me back to the dining hall,” Ahsoka said, waving to Obi-Wan as she took the hallway that would lead her to the gardens for an hour or so of contemplation. Obi-Wan watched her go, chewing on his lower lip and brows furrowed as he tried to ignore the worried lump in his stomach. It was silly of him to fear that she wouldn’t be there when his classes were done but he did.
No. that wasn’t what he was really afraid of.

He was afraid that somehow between now and then Master Ahsoka would take a Padawan and Obi-Wan would be well and truly alone.

*That’s nonsense.* Obi-Wan wan told himself as he hurried off to Astronavigation 2. *She just got back. And no one really knows she’s here to ask her.*

Reassured, Obi-Wan Wan hurried off through the light-filled halls of the Jedi Temple.

Ahsoka stepped into the misleadingly named “Room” of a Thousand Fountains, which could be more accurately described as an indoor park, filled to the brim with every type of vegetation and plant life the Agricultural Corps could manage to grow within the confines of the Temple. Streams, waterfalls, and fountains twined their way past trees that were older than Master Yoda, under graceful bridges and around artificial rock faces that a few brave Padawans attempted to climb every year.

The whole room radiated with the Living Force, a soft, humming symphony that almost knocked Ahsoka off her feet as she stepped into the large, paved entrance area. It had been so long since she had visited this quiet, almost sacred place that she had started to believe that her memories of it had been embellished, that it was not possible for one place to radiate so strongly in the Light, that it had to be filtered through the gauzy, hazy memories of a young girl who lost her family and then her whole world in the course of a year when she was seventeen.

But her memories were not wrong or false, created out of a desperate need to have a happy mental place to escape to when the Empire was at its most soul-crushing. The Room of a Thousand Fountains was just as serene, peaceful and welcoming as she remembered it, a faint breeze drifting through the green boughs overhead as she picked out a path and started walking.

She had been seventeen when the Temple was attacked, when the Room of a Thousand Fountains and more were burned and the Jedi slaughtered. She had been on Mandalore, too far away to help and she had her own crisis on her hands when her men, her own men, turned on her.

But Rex… Rex had saved her, helped her to flee, gave her a goodbye that should have come from Anakin, from Obi-Wan, Plo Koon and the rest of her extended Jedi family.

Ahsoka shook her head and pulled herself out of her dark memories and looked for a spot that would be familiar but not heartbreakingly so. She needed to take this time to figure out a plan, to prepare herself to face the Council and the masters who had thrown her out of the Jedi Order all those years ago. Who had looked at a young, frightened girl– She had only been seventeen for Force’s sake!– and been so blinded by the Dark that they could only see what Sidious and Tarken told them to see.

After a few minutes she came to a tall fire oak tree and settled herself in its dappled shade, her legs folded underneath her. Ahsoka took a breath and let her mind sink into the luminous blackness of meditation as she tried to work how best to handle the Council at her upcoming interview.

She started to work through the tangled knot of emotions, fears, and anger. The truth she found inside herself was that she was still heartbroken and angry with the Council even after all of those years away.

In some ways it seemed like a great cosmic joke played on her by the Force. To send her back here back when everything was safe, when the Force was whole and there was no looming shadow
hanging over the Galaxy like a hawkbat waiting to strike.

Or at least it seemed like there wasn’t. Not yet.

Ahsoka knew she couldn’t barge into the Council room like Anakin would, demanding the circle of masters accept her mysterious appearance but at the same time she knew she couldn’t let them discard her and her warnings.

Should she warn them? How would that affect the timeline?

More importantly than that, could she convince them that she was a Jedi Knight even though she had been cast out and then refused to return? Had she not told someone recently that she was not a Jedi?

Would the Council somehow sense that in her?

And would the Council react in the same way it had when she was younger? Masters Plo Koon and Shaak Ti had only recently been promoted and Obi-Wan told her of some masters whose names she was not familiar with. Master Mace Windu was still there, as was Masters Ki-Adi-Mundi and Yoda but none of those names gave her any kind of comfort. They had all sat by while the gears of the Republic tried to grind her to dust, to march her to imprisonment and execution.

Perhaps the easiest thing for Ahsoka to do was tell them the truth, after a manner of speaking. She had been trained by the Order and she had become separated from her Master long ago and she had finally returned home. If they doubted her skill, perhaps she could volunteer for the Trials or maybe some kind of mission to allow them a chance to evaluate her skills.

It wasn’t like she had that many options. She didn’t exist in the galactic records and she had no money. She could have hocked a saber or the crystal but that wouldn’t get her as far as she would have liked and then she would be down a blade. It wasn’t like there were Inquisitors running around who she could mug for their weapon.

Besides, the Temple had the Archives and she was going to need access to them if she was ever going to be able to return to her time or understand just what it was the Force wanted her to do. And the Jedi had access to the Senate in a way that an average citizen did not. How would she be able to keep an eye on Palpatine if she was struggling to make a living as a bounty hunter or a gun for hire in the underworld?

No, Ahsoka needed the Council to accept her back into the fold. She needed them to see her not as a wild Force user who had shown up unannounced but as a Jedi Knight. An unconventionally trained one, but a Knight all the same.

From the depths of Ahsoka’s meditating, she heard the next hourly chime and she began to rise out of her trance, stretching her arms up and grinning at Obi-Wan as he hurried up the path to her. “Hello, Obi-Wan! Is it lunch time already?”

“Actually… The Council sent me. They would like to see you now, if it’s not too much trouble?” Obi-Wan looked up at her, grey shadows in his blue eyes and his lower lip caught under his teeth. “Master Yoda himself came to my class to find you. I don’t think you should keep them waiting, Master Ahsoka.”

Ahsoka took a deep breath and nodded, centering herself before she rose to her feet. “I won’t, Obi-Wan. Would you lead me to the Council room?”

“Of course, Master,” Obi-Wan said, looking up at her with concern on his face. “Are you presenting your mission report?”
Ahsoka looked down at him and smiled. “Yes. Something like that.”

Obi-Wan nodded as they walked out of the Room of a Thousand Fountains and into the bustling masses of life that made up the Jedi Temple.

Chapter End Notes

Hello! If you'd like updates on Tano and Kenobi progress you can check it out on my tumblr FireflyFish where I have been known to post a preview or drop a hint every now and then.

Thanks for reading!
Before the Council

Chapter Summary

Ahsoka learned that Obi-Wan’s time at the Temple is coming to an end while Obi-Wan volunteers to help Ahsoka get her bearings straight while the Temple is being renovated. After some deep thoughts in the Room of a Thousand Fountains, Ahsoka is summoned before the Jedi Council…

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan stood before the doors of the Council room, frowning at the grey-and-silver accented doors emblazoned with the symbol of the Jedi Order. There had been no symbol on the door when Ahsoka had been a Padawan and she wondered about that, if it had simply faded away or something had happened to cause the Council to replace the doors by her time. She didn’t know why the odd detail struck her as meaningful, but there it was.

“Have you ever stood in front of the Council, Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka asked, looking down at the young initiate.

Obi-Wan frowned and looked down at his hands. “Uhm… Well… not recently?”

Ahsoka almost let out a gasp of shock and dismay when she felt the guilt and shame suffusing the boy through the Force and she held it in. Clearly whatever had brought young Obi-Wan before the Council was an act he regretted and he had no doubt already severely castigated himself for it.

She smiled at him and put a hand on his shoulder. “You know… The last time I stood in front of the Council, my Master was with me. This might be one of the first times I’ve faced the Council by myself.”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, his blue eyes round with surprise. “Truly, Master Ahsoka? Even when you received your mission orders?”

Ahsoka chuckled. “That was a bit more discreet than this.”

Wow. Is this how I’m going to spend the rest of my life? Finding clever ways to tell a half truth?

“Knight Tano?” A female Nikto Jedi walked over to the duo, checking her datapad. “And… who are you?”

“This is my escort,” Ahsoka explained, putting a hand on Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi. He’s helping me reacquaint myself with the Temple layout.”

The Nikto Jedi tilted her head to the side, as if she was trying to decide whether or not she was going to say anything about the young boy’s presence. She checked off something before gesturing to the door. “The Council will see you now. Initiate Kenobi, you can return to your dorms if you do not currently have a class to attend.”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured as the doors started to slide open. “I… I will be attending my
saber lessons after lunch, Master Ahsoka. Please comm me if you need me.”

Ahsoka nodded with a smile. “Don’t forget! We’ve got an hour of jar’kai practice today!”

It almost broke Ahsoka’s heart to see the brief flash of Obi-Wan’s excitement and joy before he managed to hide it behind a passable attempt at Master Obi-Wan’s famous Negotiator’s face. She was starting to understand where he had first learned the rules of hiding one’s feelings and she wasn’t sure how she felt about Obi-Wan learning those cold lessons in the bosom of the Jedi Order.

This place was supposed to be their home, the Order was supposed to be their family. This wasn’t how you treated family.

Ahsoka turned to face the doors that had fully opened, straightened her shoulders and held her head high, walking back into the same room she had been dismissed from the Jedi Order in seventeen years ago.

The Council was different than when she had been a Padawan, although Master Yoda, Windu and Ki-Adi-Mundi were in the same places. There was Masters Tiin and Piell and a Thisspiasian Master she did not recognize but there was one face she did and it took every bit of her composure and control not to run straight for him and fling her arms around Master Plo Koon.

The Kel Dor Jedi looked over at Ahsoka and she could tell that he had sensed something from her, her sudden surge of bittersweet joy at seeing him after so long. She wanted to cry and laugh and let the truth spill free from her heart.

You’re alive! You’re alive! I haven’t seen you in so long and it has been so, so hard.

It was almost too much and Ahsoka took a moment, standing towards the back of the circle of Masters, closing her eyes to focus on her breathing. She needed to be in the moment, to be centered on her task, to focus on the Council and her task at hand. She needed their help if she was to defeat the rise of Sidious and his empire.

To say nothing of finding a way back home to her friends and allies in the Rebel Alliance.

No. Focus on the path in front of you. The Force only flows one way. That’s what that… Presence said. It only flows one way.

Her will and determination set, Ahsoka strode into the middle of the Masters’ Circle, her head held tall and proud.

“Good afternoon, honored Masters.”

Yoda looked up at Ahsoka from behind the handle of his gimer stick, his eyes narrowed as he observed her. “Greetings, Knight Tano. Returned to his classes, has your escort?”

Ahsoka nodded with a smile. “Yes, Master Yoda. Please pardon him for his absence. The renovations have me a bit turned around.”

Yoda canted his head to the side as he looked up at Ahsoka, his ears perked. “Agreed, we are. Perhaps escort me, Initiate Kenobi might.”

And then the little green creature chuckled to himself and Ahsoka felt something tight in her shoulders unknit and relax.

“Please state your name for the Council,” Master Mace Windu commanded, leaning on one arm of
his chair heavily.

“My name is Ahsoka Tano,” she said, her head held high. “And I’ve been… away from the Temple for some time.”

“Indeed,” Master Mundi commented, his mellifluous voice higher than she remembered. “It must have been a great length of time, Knight Tano, because we show no record of your existence in our Order and yet here you are.”

Ahsoka kept her smile in place, trying to do her best impersonation of Master Obi-Wan. “Yes. Here I am. A…”

The Presence whispered softly in her ear. A long lost child of the Temple, finally returning home.

I can’t say that! Ahsoka thought angrily at the Presence, wondering how it was making its will known outside of her meditation.

“A child, lost to us, now grown and returned I think,” Yoda chuckled, seemingly very pleased with himself.

Mace raised an eyebrow at Yoda, his lips pulled into a half-frown as he turned his gaze back to Ahsoka. “Tell us about yourself, Knight Tano.”

“Of course, honored Masters,” Ahsoka said, bowing her head. “I was trained for my first years within the Order. My Master… he was… unorthodox in his teaching and we spent many years away from the Temple, training on a variety of worlds.”

That’s kind of true. Ahsoka mentally grimaced, continuing her story.

“My master was killed on… Mustafar,” she continued, her words catching on the name of that horrible planet, the last place she had been able to track Anakin’s movements to. After that he vanished from Republic and Imperial record and now she knew that Darth Vader had risen up to take his place, filling Anakin’s hole in the galaxy with darkness and hatred.

“It was a tragic accident. We were investigating something that looked like industrial sabotage on behalf of the miners there and… there was an explosion.”

Ahsoka bowed her head and looked down at her hands, calmly observing a bubble of fear rising up from the depths of her spirit as she tried not to let the almost oppressive light from the Council’s awareness and concentration break through her shielding. She wondered if the Council had always felt so intimidating or if Anakin had been protecting her every time they faced the esteemed Masters.

“We are sorry for your loss, Knight Tano,” Plo Koon murmured, drawing her attention back to the here and now. “Why did you not return to the Temple after his death?”

“I felt… responsible,” Ahsoka explained. “I was not with him when… when it happened. I felt that I had failed him, failed in my apprenticeship. If I had been there, maybe I could have done something, said something to stop him. To save him.”

The memory of a painful vision lanced through her and she closed her eyes. Ahsoka, why did you leave? Do you know what I’ve become?

That misery and heartbreak she did not have to fake and Ahsoka’s jaw clenched as she reminded herself that this time would be different.
I will save you, Master. I will find you and this time, I won’t leave you.

“I was ashamed,” Ahsoka continued, trying to find the right words to shade the truth, trying to pick over them as carefully as Master Obi-Wan or Padme might have. She had had more than one parental figure and she learned just as much from them as she had from Anakin. “I… I felt that I could not return to the Temple and so I fled to the Outer Rim.”

So far so good.

The Council was watching her, focused on her story and their posture and Force presences told her that they were curious, that they were not dismissing her story outright. Some even believed her, which made her wonder if there were other Jedi Masters, roaming the galaxy with Padawans in tow, teaching in the field instead of within the confines of the Order and its ossifying dogma.

“I tried to do good there,” Ahsoka continued. “I tried to help where I could and save more lives than I harmed. I… I am proud of the work I did there but I knew that one day, I would have to return home, to the Temple and to the Order.”

“And so here I am,” she murmured, bowing to the Council. “I hope the Council is willing to look past my… colorful upbringing and accept me back into the Order. I realize now that the only way I can continue my Master’s work is with the Order’s support.”

Please! I need your help. Anakin needs your help. The whole galaxy needs your help.

“And who is your master?” Master Shaak Ti asked, her voice soft and kind. “He must be a truly great man. You glow in the Force every time you speak of him.”

“Yes,” Master Mundi nodded. “I sense a strong attachment to your former Master.”

Behind her shields Ahsoka wanted to roll her eyes and shout that Master Mundi was missing the point but that would be counterproductive. She elected to ignore his statement and turned to smile in agreement with Master Ti. “Master Skywalker was a great man and I miss him very much. But he always spoke highly of the Temple on Coruscant and the Council.”

Well, he spoke highly of Master Obi-Wan, who was on the Council so technically that wasn’t quite a lie either.

This is exhausting! Are we done yet? How did Padme do this every day for hours on end?

“I don’t know any Master Skywalker,” Mace Windu spoke up, drawing Ahsoka’s attention back to the trio of Mundi, Yoda and Windu. “And this Council has not given any Jedi Master permission to instruct a Padawan completely off-planet in twenty years.”

Ahsoka felt her stomach drop. Blast it.

“How old are you, Knight Tano?” Master Piell asked, his voice almost conversational. “You cannot be more than forty, no?”

“I am thirty-one, Master,” Ahsoka nodded. “I began my training with Master Skywalker when I was eleven.”

That would sound normal to the Council, especially if they were trying to ship Obi-Wan off to Bandomeer when he turned thirteen. Clearly the Clone Wars had changed more about the Jedi Order than they realized. Eleven seemed like a nice age, not too precocious like Anakin at nine, but not too late like her actual age of fourteen.
“That would be twenty years ago,” Plo Koon observed with what almost felt like a chuckle in the Force.

“There is no record of a Master Skywalker in the Archives either!” Master Mundi protested, holding up a datapad. “I, for one, do not trust this… this… imposter.”

Yoda let out a sigh and closed his eyes. The assembled Masters turned to look at him, waiting for him to speak.

“Knight Tano,” Yaddle spoke up, surprising Ahsoka and she turned to face the younger green creature who came from the same planet as Yoda. “Your blades, please. Ignite one for us?”

Nodding, although she was a bit confused, Ahsoka pulled one of her blades off her hip and spun it in one hand before hitting the ignition switch. The blade sprung to life, a bright and vivid blue and Ahsoka had to remind herself that she should not be shocked by this sudden color change. That to the Council her sabers should have always been blue, should have never been red or white or any other color.

“A Jedi’s blade,” Yaddle observed and then settled back into her seat.

Ahsoka told herself that if all of this went well, she owed Master Yaddle a drink.

“A lightsaber does not make someone a Jedi!” A master Ahsoka did not recognize spoke up and she turned to look back at him, noting his strange hairstyle and banded locks of hair that hung over his ears. “We cannot be seriously considering letting this stranger into our Order because she claims to be a Jedi Knight!”

There was a quiet murmur of voices around the room and Ahsoka’s earlier confidence started to ebb away. She bit her lip and extinguished her blade, returning it to her hip, knowing that ultimately, there was little more she could do. She prayed that the Force would be with her, would show the masters the truth of who she was.

“Perhaps we should adjourn for some discussion on this matter,” Master Mundi offered, bowing his head to the room. “Clearly the subject of Ahsoka Tano and this mysterious Master Skywalker require a more thorough evaluation.”

Ahsoka’s heart sunk in her chest and her gaze fell to the floor. This was going par for the course considering the last time she was in the Council room.

She wondered if there was some kind of record for being kicked out of the Jedi Order twice.

“Discuss later, we will, the issue of this… Master Skywalker. For now, spoken the Force has,” Yoda announced to the room, his voice strong and it was clear he would brook no argument from the rest of the Council. “A Jedi you are, Ahsoka Tano. Returned to us at last, you have.”

Ahsoka swallowed, her throat strangled with conflicting emotions, relief, joy and resentment fighting within her spirit. But relief quickly won out as she realized that with Master Yoda’s support behind her, there was little the Council could say against her.

“I still think we should keep a close eye on you,” Mace Windu said, his eyes narrowed. “I sense no ill will or malicious intent but you… the Force swirls around you in a way I am not entirely comfortable with.”

Ahsoka nodded, her mouth pulled into a line as she lowered her gaze in thought. “I am not asking for special treatment. I only ask to be treated as just another knight in the Order.”
Yoda seemed to find that comment funny as he chuckled to himself. Master Mundi looked away, clearly nonplussed to find himself outvoted, essentially by fiat from the green Grand Master. He exchanged a look with the doubting master who had tried to convince the Council to turn Ahsoka away.

Master Windu nodded, finding her reply enough for the moment. “I will be personally keeping an eye on you Knight Tano. Do not forget that.”

“I won’t, Master Windu,” Ahsoka promised, bowing her head in what she hoped came across as honored respect. “I won’t let you down.”

“See that you don’t,” Master Windu murmured, sitting back in his chair as he nodded to Yoda.

The Grand Master of the Jedi Order raised his gimer stick and cracked on the ground with a great, pleased flourish. “Welcome home, Knight Ahsoka Tano. Too long away from the Order, you have been.”

Ahsoka bowed again before rising, tall and proud. “It’s good to be back, Master Yoda.”

*And now it’s time to get to work.*

Chapter End Notes

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Thanks for reading!
May I Present Master Jinn?

Chapter Summary

Ahsoka Tano stood before the Jedi Order and pleaded her case. In spite of suspicion and doubt cast on her by none other that Masters Ki-Adi-Mundi and Sifo Dyas, Grand Master Yoda managed to convince the Council to accept Ahsoka back into the fold. Finally, Ahsoka Tano has become a Jedi Knight and now it’s time for the real work to get started…

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

The Jedi Council broke up for lunch after meeting with Ahsoka as some gave her suspicious looks but a few came over to personally welcome her.

“I am always happy to see a fellow Togruta join our Order,” Shaak Ti smiled, reaching out to touch Ahsoka’s shoulder.

Ahsoka nodded her thanks in return. “It’s good to be back, Master Ti,” she said, surprised at such a warm welcome. “I was gone for far too long.”

“Grief can cloud our judgement,” Shaak Ti agreed, squeezing her shoulder before she took her leave.

Yoda hummed thoughtfully as he stood at Ahsoka’s side. “Wise and kind, Master Ti is. Know her, do you?”

Ahsoka’s expression was wry and amused as she glanced down at Yoda. “Yes. I looked up to her when I was a padawan.”

Chuckling to himself, Yoda gestured for Ahsoka to follow him out of the Council Room. “Come, come! Test your navigation skills, I will. Find the great hall and lunch, we shall.”

“Knight Tano!” a voice filtered through a rebreather called out, and Ahsoka froze, her heart clenched tight in her chest.

Master Plo!

Turning around, Ahsoka tried to control her emotions, to tamp down on her overwhelming joy at seeing one of her favorite Jedi alive again. It had been difficult to hold back the tears before the meeting but now that he was walking towards her, now that she was older and taller than the last time she saw him, all the years apart hit her at once and it took all her control to stay standing.

“Master Plo Koon,” Ahsoka said, bowing and hoping she didn’t sound as emotional as she felt. “My master spoke very highly of you.”

“How unfortunate I was never able to meet this… Master Skywalker,” Plo Koon said, running his finger under his chin. “Forgive me for asking a personal question but, have we met before? I sensed a connection that has surprised me.”
Ahsoka swallowed and shook her head. “No. I don’t believe we have.”

*Well, not yet anyway, Master Plo.*

“How strange,” the Kel Dor Jedi murmured, glancing down at Master Yoda, whose ears perked cheerfully. “The Force was quite insistent. I suppose I must meditate on this further.”

“A good idea, that is, Master Plo,” Yoda commented, clicking his staff on the floor for emphasis. “Your guidance, I sense Knight Tano will need.”

“Of course,” Master Plo nodded to the Grand Master. “If I can be of help in anyway, please do not hesitate to ask, Knight Tano.”

“Th-thank you, Master Plo,” Ahsoka managed to get out without bursting into tears or throwing her arms around the Jedi Master. She watched him depart and then turned back to Yoda. “To the dining hall?”

Yoda chuckled as Ahsoka knelt down and let him clamber up onto her back. “For the ride, thank you. Discuss your path forward we should.”

Ahsoka nodded. “Yes. But I also wanted to ask about Obi-Wan. Is he really going to be sent to Bandomeer if no one takes him as a padawan?”

“Surprised are you?” Yoda replied, his taloned claws gently pressing into Ahsoka’s shoulder. “Know this tradition, you should.”

The Grand Master had a point. Although the Clone Wars had caused the Order to promote almost any initiate that managed to make it through the third level of training, she could still remember her early years when they had gossiped with the younglings about who had been picked and who had grown too old to be chosen. She remembered watching one young Twi’lek boy who was caught crying in the corner of a hallway when he was informed he wasn’t going to move on to an apprenticeship and could either stay in the Temple as a mechanic or could return home to his family that he did not know.

She never found out what happened to that child.

“I know the traditions but maybe they need to be reconsidered,” Ahsoka offered, her voice light and hopeful. “Thirteen seems too young to write off a sentient. And Obi-Wan is so talented! I know if he just had the right master he would flourish under their teachings.”

Yoda canted his head to the side. “Agreed, we are. Powerful in the Force, Obi-Wan is. A great Jedi, he might be. But emotional, rash and reckless, he is. Fear and anger, many sense in him.”

“He’s thirteen!” Ahsoka protested, wincing at her too sharp voice. It wouldn’t do to get on Yoda’s bad side after he had just vouched for her in front of the Council. She couldn’t do this the Skywalker way. She had to negotiate, to reason with the Grand Master and the Order itself. “I’m sorry. I spoke too… harshly. But maybe the fear everyone is sensing is his fear of being cast out of his home?”

“Perhaps,” Yoda mused, pointing to the right. “Another time, we will discuss Obi-Wan. To the right, our meal is.”

*This isn’t over, Master Yoda. Not by a long shot.* Ahsoka let out a sigh and turned around. “Yes, Master.”

“Lose faith, do not,” Yoda said, patting Ahsoka’s shoulder. “Revealed in time, Obi-Wan’s master
will be. Know this, I do.”

“Did you have someone in mind?” she asked, curious and hoping to prod the ancient master in the right direction. “Perhaps a diplomat or someone similar?”

Yoda laughed out loud at this, the swells of humor nearly knocking him off Ahsoka’s shoulder as they stepped into the dining hall. He leapt down from his perch and clacked his way to the line, greeting all Jedi alike with a twinkle in his eyes. He beckoned for Ahsoka to follow after him and she did so, shaking her head, bemused.

After lunch, Ahsoka was whisked away by a padawan working for the Quarter Master’s office. She was officially given the room she was already sleeping in, assigned a personal communicator, an identification code as well as an appointment to return and get fitted for her robes.

After she was done with that bit of housekeeping, another padawan, dressed in healer robes appeared in the doorway and Ahsoka was bundled off to the Halls of Healing for a physical and a series of booster hypos. She was scheduled for a follow-up visit as well as a visit to the dentist, which sent Ahsoka in a fit of laughter, puzzling the poor healer who couldn’t understand why she hadn’t had the time to maintain proper dental hygiene when on the run from the Empire.

Once freed from the clutches of the well-meaning healers, Ahsoka stepped out into the Temple and looked around for a chrono. She had promised Obi-Wan that she was going to catch up with him during his last hour of saber practice and she did not want to be late. Master Obi-Wan was never late and Ahsoka couldn’t help feeling like she had to live up to him, to make sure she didn’t change the young initiate’s destiny too much.

Besides, as much as she loved Anakin, he was notoriously tardy and she got a little tired of having to stare at the ground while another master lectured them both on the importance of being on time.

Of course, Anakin would have retorted that he was on time when it mattered.

“I thought there was a chrono around here somewhere,” Ahsoka muttered to herself as she peered around a corner, searching in vain. “Kriff it! I could have sworn there was one in this hallway.”

She spied a tall, broad, imposing figure walking down the hallway with the sedate pace of a master. Half of his brown hair was pulled up into a tail and the rest left to fall around his wide shoulders like a cape. Ahsoka hurried after him in the vain hopes he knew where the nearest chrono was and if he could point her in the direction of the Northern Solar room.

“Excuse me!” she called out, wondering how someone who seemed to move at a glacial pace could cover so much ground. And Ahsoka thought she was tall.

*I think he might even be taller than Skyguy!*

The Jedi Master in question turned around, a curious expression on his face as he folded his arms over his chest. “Yes? Can I help you, young one?”

Ahsoka came to a stop, chuckling and waving off the Jedi’s comment, because she most certainly didn’t feel young anymore. “Hello! I don’t suppose you know what time it is or how to get to the Northern Solar room? I’ve been out in the field for a while and with all the renovations I’m completely lost.”
The master reached into his robe and pulled a small chrono and read off the time. “It is 1530 hours and if you’re searching for the Northern Solar room you’ll need to turn back around, take a left and go all the way to the end of the hall and take turbolifts on the right to the fifth level from this one.”

Ahsoka mentally walked through the instructions and then nodded. “I think I got it. Thank you for your help.”

“You’re welcome,” the master smiled, kind and inviting. “I don’t believe we’ve met. I’m Qui-Gon Jinn. You said you’ve been out in the field for a long time?”

Ahsoka’s eyes nearly bugged out her head and she managed to cover her shock and delight with a wide grin. “Yes. I was. But I can’t believe it! You're Master Jinn? My master told me all about you!”

Qui-Gon Jinn in the flesh! Here was the answer to Obi-Wan’s prayers and all she had to do was gently nudge the two together.

Fantastic! Maybe I could invite him to our training session.

Qui-Gon seemed politely amused by Ahsoka’s statement. “Oh really? And who might your master be?”

“Master Skywalker but he… passed away,” Ahsoka replied, wondering when and if that would ever be any easier to say. It still felt raw and wrong even in the midst of a happy meeting. “But he was a fan of yours.”

“How unfortunate I never got the chance to meet him in person,” Qui-Gon murmured, his voice low and resonate like a summer thunderstorm. “I am sorry for your loss Knight…?”

“Ahsoka Tano,” she said, bowing to Qui-Gon. “And thank you. Even though it happened years ago it still… it still hurts.”

“Yes, well, that is why we must be mindful of our attachments,” Qui-Gon commented, folding his hands into his sleeves and Ahsoka realized just where Master Obi-Wan had acquired that particular habit. “A Jedi must always keep their mind on the present moment and the living Force, lest our sorrow and grief drag us down a darker path.”

Ahsoka nodded in agreement. “Yes, of course. I’ll have to remember that. Thank you.”

“It was my pleasure, Knight Tano and now if you will excuse me, I must be off,” Qui-Gin seemed to gather himself up and turned towards the other end of the hallway. “I have an appointment in the Senate building and I mustn’t be late.”

“Oh! My apologies Master Jinn,” Ahsoka took a step back and watched the towering man head towards the end of the hall before she remembered. “Oh! Master Jinn? If it’s too much trouble, could you… oh.”

Master Jinn had already turned the corner and moved out of earshot, the fastest-moving glacier Ahsoka had ever seen. She let out a sigh and shook her head, glad that Master Obi-Wan hadn’t developed that habit from his master, before she turned around and headed off back the way she came.

Obi-Wan and her first real teaching awaited.
Obi-Wan hated Soresu practice.

No, that wasn’t true. He didn’t hate Soresu practice so much as he was exhausted, his legs ached, his feet throbbed in his boots and he had run out of electrolyte mix a half hour ago. One or two of the forms made his feet cramp up and Master Drallig seemed driven by the Sith Hells themselves to stay and make sure Obi-Wan put in the time he owed him from yesterday.

“Again, Kenobi,” Drallig called out, his faintly nasal voice somehow reaching over the din of the other class of initiates. “This time keep your stance lower and make your movements faster.”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan huffed, moving back to the head of the golden line that was engraved on the floor of the training salon. He looked up as the chrono chimed for the next hour and he glanced over at the entrance to the hall, hoping against hope that Master Ahsoka would be there to save him from another hour of “Faster and more intense”.

The shadowed doorway was empty.

*She’s probably just lost. She’s really only been here for two days and it took you three to memorize where they moved the Exoflora and Fauna lab to. And besides, she is a knight and you are an initiate and oh thank the Force!*

“Yes Master Ahsoka!” Obi-Wan called out, rushing through the rest of his form before giving Master Drallig a half-bow and darting over to her. “You’re here!”

“Of course I’m here!” Ahsoka laughed, wrapping an arm around him as he walked her over to a row of benches where his towel and empty drink cannister sat as well as a carefully-wrapped training saber he had hidden in his sleeves on his way to class. “And I stopped to get you something to drink, since I stumbled across the commissary.”

Obi-Wan’s eyes grew round as he happily took the ice cold bottle of Pantoran berry-flavored supplement drink and twisted the cap off. “Thank you, Master Ahsoka! I… I ran out only just now.”

Shaking her head, Ahsoka patted the bench next to her. “Did you tell Master Drallig about our arrangement?”

Obi-Wan nodded, guzzling a third of the supplement drink down with relish. “Yes. He didn’t like it and said he would stay and ‘supervise’.”

He made air quotes with his fingers and set the bottle down, beaming up at her. “Can we start now?”

“Did you finish your Soresu?” Ahsoka asked, her brows raised in an expression that made it clear that just because she was going to teach him jar’kai did not mean he was going to get out of his other lessons.

Obi-Wan grinned. “I have one more movement and then I’m done. Here! Hold this!”

He grabbed the concealed training saber, shoved it into Ahsoka’s hands and then hurried back onto the floor, prepared to make this last movement of Soresu picture-perfect.

_Maybe if I can pick up jar’kai quickly, maybe Master Ahsoka will… I mean, she is a knight and even though she’s a Shadow, her cover did get blown, maybe she could… it is possible. And I think there is a connection there? Is this what a connection feels like?_

“Focus, Kenobi!” Master Drallig called from across the room, his arms on his hips as he watched.
Obi-Wan nodded and took a deep breath, focusing his concentration on the Force and trusting that his muscles and bones already knew the steps. He worked on moving with strength, precision and flowing one movement into the other until the whole thing became a dance, the saber sizzling and hissing around him as he spun and lunged through each part. He was one with the blade, could feel the crystal inside humming with joy as he worked. He ticked off each step in the back of his mind with a mechanical satisfaction and then with a twisting kick he landed, the blade in a reverse grip and the blue white plasma hovering just above the arm of his tunic but not close enough to singe.

Ahsoka burst into applause. “Obi-Wan, you were amazing!”

Pride blossomed in his heart and Obi-Wan popped up out of his stance with a grin so big he thought it might split his lips. He bowed to Master Drallig, who smirked in what might have been an approving manner and waved him off to train with Ahsoka.

“I’m all done with Soresu, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan announced, running back over to her. “Can we start jar’kai now?”

“Sure,” Ahsoka smiled, handing over his drink cannister and patting the spot next to her on the bench. “But why don’t you take a little break? You’ve been going for how long now?”

Obi-Wan gulped down another third of his drink, breaking only to inhale a huge lungful of air. “Three and a half hours but I don’t mind! I have been looking forward to your lesson.”

Chuckling softly, Ahsoka shook her head. “Well I’m not going to enjoy it if you pass out in the middle of it. Sit down, Obi-Wan. I’m not going anywhere.”

Resigned to taking a break, Obi-Wan collapsed onto the bench next to Ahsoka. “Did your Master teach you jar’kai when you were a padawan?”

Ahsoka glanced down at Obi-Wan before she turned her gaze elsewhere, a distant, if pleasant expression on her face. “Not at first. At the time he took me on, I was mostly using a reverse grip and he hated it.”

Shocked, Obi-Wan’s mouth dropped open. He couldn’t imagine how devastated Master Ahsoka must have felt. There were times when a harsh word from Master Yoda would make him want to curl up into a ball and pray for the Force to take him away. But to have your master actually tell you they hate your fighting style? To your face?

What a nightmare!

“What did you do?” Obi-Wan asked, taking another sip of his drink. “Did you change it?”

“I tried to,” Ahsoka nodded, drawn back into the room they were sitting in. “But eventually my master realized that I wasn’t going to change and he suggest I study jar’kai and supplement my right hand with a shoto.”

Obi-Wan was stunned silent, marveling at the fact that a master could change their mind, that they could change at all and that a padawan could have that kind of say in their relationship. He had been taught that good padawans dutifully follow their master and always do as instructed. If your master taught you Ataru, that was what you were going to learn. If your master did not see the need in teaching you certain skills, you would simply not learn them. The idea that the relationship between a master and padawan could go both ways, could be collaborative had never occurred to Obi-Wan before.

“What was he like?”
“Who? My master?”

Obi-Wan nodded, his gaze focused on the bottle in his hands. “Yes… I should have liked to meet him, I think.”

Ahsoka let out a soft, muted sound, like a sigh but with more feeling. “He… Master Skywalker was… He was very young, when he took me on. In a lot of ways he was like a big brother, strong, smart, and very brave and kind. He was so very kind. But he… he had a temper. I know he worked hard to control it but it was hard for him.”

Ahsoka looked down at the top of Obi-Wan’s head and remembered their earlier talk about Bandomeer and frowned. She reached out to put a hand on the young boy’s back, between his shoulder blades. “And he hated to see injustice go unpunished. He taught me that it was more important to do what is right, than to blindly follow orders. He… he wasn’t very popular with the Council.”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka. “Now I really wish I could have met him. I am sorry he’s gone, Master Ahsoka. He sounds wonderful. You must miss him very much.”

“Yeah…,” Ahsoka sighed, pulling Obi-Wan a little closer. “I do. But I’m here now and he would want me to take care of you. So c’mon, Obi-Wan! It’s time to for your first jar’kai lesson to start.”

“Yes, Master Ahsoka!” Obi-Wan leapt off the bench and ran onto the training floor, Ahsoka happily following him.

Chapter End Notes

Hello! If you’d like updates on Tano and Kenobi progress you can check it out on my tumblr FireflyFish where I have been known to post a preview or drop a hint every now and then.

Thanks for reading!
The Senator From Naboo

Chapter Summary

Now that she has been re-accepted into the Jedi Order and named a Jedi Knight, Ahsoka Tano has some work to do. Luckily a helpful Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn is there to point her in the right direction. Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi has some training to make up for and a lesson in jar’kai waiting for him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jar’kai was amazing.

Exhausting, but amazing!

Obi-Wan could not remember the last time his arms were so tired and sore after just an hour of lightsaber practice. He happily slumped his way back to the Initiate Dormitory, shedding his robes and boots before taking a long shower in the refresher when he got to his room. After an eternity of muscle-relaxing warm water, he got out, changed into a more comfortable set of robes, and headed back out for dinner.

He was so wrapped up in the happy memories of his lesson with Master Ahsoka that Obi-Wan paid little attention to the older Padawans who were whispering about how he didn’t have a master yet.

“I can’t believe he’s still here!”

“I would have left out of shame by now.”

“My master says no one will take him. They say he’s too emotional. That he might go dark.”

“I heard he tried to ask Master Sinube. Can you believe it? How desperate do you have to be to ask that old fart?”

Holding his head high, Obi-Wan nodded pleasantly to his fellow Jedi. He had a wicked retort on his tongue but he stilled it, knowing deep in his heart that Master Ahsoka would not approve. He was going to make her proud, to show her that he was worthy of her teachings and maybe, if he was lucky, being her padawan.

So that meant Obi-Wan would just have to bite his tongue and ignore the cold-hearted nexus he found himself in line with.

“Hey, Obi-Wan!” a voice called out through the dining hall, belonging to a dark-skinned Kiffar with a golden stripe across his nose.

Who was pushing his way through the dinner crowd and making a beeline towards Obi-Wan. “Thanks for saving me a spot in line.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes. “I did no such thing, Quinlan. The end of the line is back there behind Padawan Rast.”
“You are such a goody-goody!” Quinlan groaned, wrapping an arm around his friend’s shoulders and then pulling him into a headlock where he could give him some proper encouragement with his knuckles. “You were totally saving a spot for me, right?”

“Gah! Ow! Quin! That hurts!” Obi-Wan protested, smacking at his friend’s arm for release before he would have to employ more aggressive measures. “Let me go, you odiferous gundark!”

“Odiferous?” Quinlan laughed, releasing Obi-Wan with a flourish and a firm place in line behind his friend as they shuffled forward to dinner. “I will have you know I took a bath yesterday.”

Obi-Wan gently touched the top of his head and winced. “I know. I can smell.”

“So what’s this I hear about there being a new knight in the Temple?” Quinlan asked, his eyes bright with curiosity and his smile lean and curious. “Master says she’s a Togruta that grew up on the Outer Rim? And her master passed into the Force a while ago.”

The surrounding padawans seemed to inch closer to Obi-Wan and Quinlan, their arch commentaries on Obi-Wan’s presence and Quinlan’s boisterous nature forgotten in the face of news and gossip. Highly observant for an initiate, Obi-Wan chewed on his lip as he carefully thought of what to say that would sate Quin’s voracious curiosity but wouldn’t give too much away about Master Ahsoka. He felt very protective of Ahsoka and didn’t want idle gossip to cause her the kind of trouble it had caused Obi-Wan.

“Knight Tano has recently returned from an extended mission in the field,” Obi-Wan finally concluded, thanking the serving droid as he took his tray and stepped away from the food line, Quinlan right on his heels. “She’s been having trouble finding her way with the renovations and I have offered to assist her around the Temple.”

“Tano?” Quinlan echoed, flopping down opposite Obi-Wan at one of the long tables the initiates and padawans sat at. “I don’t remember a knight by that name. What does she do?”

Obi-Wan frowned off to the side, trying to stay silent.

Quinlan narrowed his eyes, his grin growing wider. “You know what she was doing, don’t you? Tell me! C’mon, Obi-Waaaaan! I swear to Yoda I won’t tell a soul!”

Shaking his head, Obi-Wan folded his arms over his chest and continued his mulish silence.

“Obi-Wan!” the Kiffar pleaded, holding up his dessert, hoping it would loosen his friend’s tongue. “I’ll give you my chocolate sponge cake!”

“No!” Obi-Wan refused, shaking his head. “I can’t. I don’t have authorization to tell you.”

“Authorization?” Quinlan gaped, his excitement growing by the minute as he was starting to imagine Knight Tano taking on whole squadrons of pirates over the misty rings of an exotic Outer Rim planet. “Is she a Shadow? Master didn’t say anything about her being a Shadow!”

“Quinlan!” Obi-Wan hissed, leaning under the table to give his friend a good kick in the shins. “Shut your karking mouth before somebody hears you!”

“Language, Initiate,” a low voice rumbled into the two boys squabble and they both turned their faces skyward to see the tall, imposing presence of Master Qui-Gon Jinn standing over them. His face was impassive, neither a smile nor a frown on his lips and his eyes seemed to see beyond them, as if they were not there. “Brother Jedi do not squabble over petty gossip. You would do well to set a proper example for your friend, Padawan Vos.”
And with that bit of wisdom imparted, Master Jinn moved out of the dining hall and into the shadowed archway that led back into the Temple.

Obi-Wan let out a heavy sigh and turned his eyes back to his food as Quinlan let out a snort once he was absolutely certain the mountain of a master was out of earshot. He proceeded to sit up straighter and sniffed in a poor imitation of Master Jinn, “You would do well to be more of a stick in the mud like Luminara, Obi-Wan. She never has any fun and all the masters love her.”

Rolling his eyes, Obi-Wan tucked into his dinner. “Shut up, Quin. I don’t want to get chewed out by two masters tonight.”

Deciding that his empty stomach could hold out no longer, Quinlan followed Obi-Wan’s suggestion and the two boys began to eat in relative silence.

Quinlan didn’t notice Obi-Wan turning around to gaze out at the doorway Master Jinn departed through. *I know Master Ahsoka thinks Master Jinn might be a good master for me but… I don’t know. I don’t think any Padawan could ever make him happy.*

Obi-Wan bit into his chocolate sponge cake and sighed. *Definitely not me.*

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The next two months passed in a happy blur of activity for Obi-Wan and he almost forgot about his impending birthday. He would eat breakfast with Master Ahsoka, the two of them planning their day around his schedule. Sometimes Master Yoda would join them, sending Obi-Wan off to fetch him a pot of tea while he talked privately with her. He would have given anything to know what the Grand Master and Ahsoka were talking about but he had to accept it was not his place to know.

Once Obi-Wan’s lessons were done for the day, Ahsoka would meet him in the Northern Solar room and they would practice jar’kai, focusing on improving Obi-Wan’s non-dominant hand and foot. At first he felt like a failure, dropping his saber time after time but slowly he started to see improvement. His left arm didn’t shake so much when he worked and the forms were starting to feel more natural on his left side, to flow one into the other, clumsily but it was progress.

Sometimes Obi-Wan would eat dinner with Quinlan, or his other agemates who didn’t mind being seen with an initiate, but more often than not he would eat with Ahsoka. One of the masters even started calling him Ahsoka’s little shadow.

Obi-Wan had liked the idea of being the Shadow’s shadow.

Ahsoka always seemed happy to see him, ruffling his hair and putting a hand on his shoulder whenever they spoke to a fellow knight or master. He felt proud when she did that but he did his best to keep such thoughts and emotions behind his shields. Jedi were supposed to be serene and one with the Force around them and puffing up like a preening kyr falcon was generally frowned upon.

Everything was going very well until he was the last initiate in his dorm room and the calendar changed, revealing that there were only three weeks left before his birthday and…

And his fate, whatever that would be.
Ahsoka was at her wits’ end.

Not only was Obi-Wan turning thirteen in three weeks time but Qui-Gon Jinn was away from Coruscant on a diplomatic mission that should have ended nearly a week ago. On top of that, not a single knight or master she had spoken to would even broach the topic of considering Obi-Wan Wan for an apprenticeship.

Try as she might, Ahsoka could not convince the hidebound idiots at the Temple that Obi-Wan was going to grow into one of the greatest Jedi the Order had ever produced.

“I admire your determination. There aren’t many besides Yoda who would advocate so strongly for Kenobi,” Mace Windu said one day while he and Ahsoka were walking through the hallways of the Temple.

As part of her acceptance back into the Order, Master Windu had suggested that Ahsoka meet with him weekly for a chat on how she was adjusting to life back within the confines of the Temple. She understood what he really meant and proceeded to show up on time, every week, at Master Windu’s door, a pleasant bland expression on her face that she had learned from Padme.

“They just don’t know him like I do,” Ahsoka insisted, glancing over the railing of the walkway to watch the initiate in question defeating his opponent in a hand-to-hand combat class. “He has amazing potential in him. If I could just get someone to listen to me instead of laughing me out of the room…”

Master Windu shook his head slowly as a sound came out of him that might have sounded like a chuckle. But surely Ahsoka was hallucinating because Master Windu never laughed. Ever. Anakin had told her once he came out of the womb frowning.

“Ahsoka, if you’re so convinced of his potential, why don’t you take him as a Padawan?” Windu asked, gesturing to the class going on down below. “The Council is still evaluating where your skills could be best put to use. Maybe that is educating young Kenobi on how to mind his temper.”

As if to illustrate Master Windu’s point, Ahsoka watched as Obi-Wan darted over in front of a younger and smaller initiate that was being bullied by a new Padawan. The two stood toe to toe, hands curled into fists, anger swirling around the pair before the teacher sensed the row in the Force and moved to separate the students.

Ahsoka bowed her head as Obi-Wan got the worst of the teacher’s ire.

Controlling his temper? He wasn’t angry! That wasn’t fear or hatred. He was defending that child like a Jedi is supposed to do. Like my master taught me!

Master Windu looked over at Ahsoka and hummed. “Perhaps not. Master Yoda seemed to think Kenobi and Qui-Gon Jinn would also be a good match.”

Startled out of her brooding, Ahsoka turned back to Master Windu. “He does? Does he know when Qui-Gon Jinn is coming back from his mission on Chandrila?”

“Any day now,” Windu said, moving forward. “But I highly doubt Qui-Gon would take Kenobi after what happened to his last one.”

Ahsoka sighed. “Obi-Wan told me he swore before the Council he would never take another Padawan but he didn’t tell me what caused him to do that.”
“Qui-Gon’s last padawan fell to the Dark Side,” Windu murmured, his gaze distant as they turned a corner, sliding apart so that a clutch of younglings could run past them giggling. “The Temple lost track of his padawan shortly thereafter and when Qui-Gon returned to Coruscant, he made a… dramatic announcement to the Council.”

Ahsoka blinked as she sensed that Master Windu did not think that highly of Master Jinn’s behavior on that matter and wondered if the Korun master had ever approved of anyone.

“So then why does Yoda think Master Jinn and Obi-Wan would be a good fit?” Ahsoka asked, curious herself now that she knew more of Qui-Gon’s backstory. Anakin had never mentioned a brother padawan to Master Obi-Wan and it stood to reason that he hadn’t known. Ahsoka was already gnashing her teeth every night as she struggled to reconstruct what she knew of the past and Master Obi-Wan’s activities as a Padawan, to say nothing of the actions leading up to the Crisis on Naboo, the Clone Wars and the nightmare that came after that. She had already filled two datapads with just her memories alone.

_Stars above, Master. I wish you had been just a bit more curious about Master Obi-Wan’s apprenticeship. Didn’t you know I was going to tumble backwards in time and need a detailed timeline and a complete biography of who’s who?_

“You would have to ask Master Yoda,” Windu shrugged, walking over to a turbolift as Ahsoka followed him. “If you’ll excuse me, we’ll have to finish our talk early today. I’m needed at a Senate committee meeting.”

“Oh? Who called the meeting?” Ahsoka asked, feigning curiosity even as she was planning when she could pin Master Yoda down and ask him about Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan. She had gone to the Tower to get a sachet of particularly expensive tea and wondered if she could bribe the little green master into revealing some details of his plans for the initiate.

“Senator Palpatine from Naboo in the Chommel sector,” Master Windu shrugged, stepping through the turbolift doors that had just sprung open. “Something to do about trade route disputes. Just more routine squabbling with the Trade Federation, no doubt.”

Ahsoka froze mid-nod, her heart nearly stopping in her chest. She looked up at Mace Windu, who arched an eyebrow, sensing the sudden change in her mood in the Force. Working quickly, Ahsoka drew her shields even higher, trying to smile and wave off the Korun master’s suspicions. “That definitely sounds like a job for you, Master Windu! I hope the negotiations are short.”

Windu folded his arms over his chest as the door slid shut. “We’ll talk later, Knight Tano.”

Ahsoka watched the lights on the turbolift click through the floors of the Temple before she was positive Master Windu was on the level that would take him to a transport and then onwards to the Senate building.

Senator Palpatine?

He was here?

He was a Senator already?

How far along was he into his plans? How much time did she have to stop him? Did her mere presence in the past mean he was going to move up the timetable? Could he move up the timetable?

Ahsoka walked over to a small dark corner and backed up against the wall, wrapping her arms around herself as she tried to calm down, tried to steady her breathing and her heart rate. If Palpatine
was already in the Senate, it was too late to block that avenue to power, which meant she would have to find another way to foil his plans, another way to keep him from his ultimate goal.

*I have to be patient. I have to calm down. Anakin hasn’t even been born yet! Obi-Wan is still an initiate and at this rate he’s not even going to make it as a Padawan! There’s still time. I can still prevent the future I came from.*

*I can still save them.*

*I will not let Anakin down.*

“Areh, Knight Tano?” a vaguely familiar low voice asked, intruding into her small panic attack.

Ahsoka glanced up into the concerned face of Qui-Gon Jinn, almost letting out a sob of relief. She swallowed down the fear that was scrabbling at her heart and squeezing all the air out of her lungs, trying to return Qui-Gon’s look of concern with a composed one of her own. “Oh, Master Jinn, hello! I didn’t realize you were back.”

Judging by the frown on his face and the knit of his brows, she had failed.

“What troubles you, young one?” he asked, his arms folded into the sleeves of his robe. “I sense a great deal of fear and anxiety in the Force around you, Ahsoka.”

Touched that he remembered his name, Ahsoka tried to come up with a way to explain her fears without letting the truth tumble out of her like spilt blue milk. “I… I had a vision, of the future. It was horrible, Master Jinn. I saw my master and my friends, dead and dying. And my master… he… he was begging me to help him but… I didn’t. I couldn’t. It was a terrible nightmare and I… I’m having trouble letting it go.”

Qui-Gon nodded at Ahsoka’s story, his gaze shifting from her face to a distant spot down the hallway, stroking his beard in a way that almost painfully paralleled Master Obi-Wan. She watched him think, felt the Force settling around him like a well-worn and comfortable robe, warm and insulating against the ice-cold of her panic. For a moment, Ahsoka could relax and let someone else shoulder a small fraction of her burden. In that way, it was nice to be back in the Temple with wise elders she could seek out for advice.

“This vision you had, you believe it is of the future?” Qui-Gon finally spoke, turning back to observe her with a thoughtful detachment. He was a distant mountain, large and imposing but unreachable and try as she might, Ahsoka could not get a feel for Master Jinn in the Force.

Nodding, she answered. “Yes. I’m positive it is the future. It’s… a warning. I believe.”

“The future is always in motion, Ahsoka,” Qui-Gon murmured, reaching out to squeeze her shoulder. “And by neglecting your focus on the here and now, on the Living Force, you risk fixating on something that may never happen. Keep your mind on the Living Force and all will be well.”

Ahsoka recognized the wisdom in Qui-Gon’s words and slowly nodded. She couldn’t let her fears of one possible future derail her efforts in the here and now. Too much was riding on her. “Thank you. I… It’s hard sometimes, not having my master to go to in times like these.”

“I’m sure he would agree that your fears are unfounded,” Qui-Gon smiled, a muted one but a smile all the same. “Visions and dreams, these things pass in time, Ahsoka. It is only with great wisdom
and experience that a Jedi can learn to interpret a true vision from a collection of fears and worries.”

“Yes, of course,” Ahsoka agreed, already feeling better as panic lifted from her shoulders. “You’re right. He would have told me to focus on what was right in front of me.”

_And to kick its ass._ Ahsoka thought wryly.

“A wise man, your late master,” Master Jinn pronounced. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I must make my report to the Council while the details are fresh in my mind.”

Ahsoka was about to let him go when she remembered Obi-Wan. “Master Jinn? I’m working with an initiate on jar’kai and I wanted to show him how it works in saber combat. If it’s not too much trouble, would you be willing to spar with me? My master spoke highly of your skills.”

_Master Obi-Wan was technically going to be my original master so… Force, this is exhausting!_

Qui-Gon paused and canted his head to the side, considering Ahsoka’s request for a long, silent moment. When he came to a decision he stood up to his full height, tall and strong like the _wroshyr_ trees of Kashyyyk. “Yes. I believe I could find the time for you, Knight Tano. Good day.”

Ahsoka watched as the master strode off down the hallway, a mirage of a mountain range, fading into the soft grey shadows of the Temple.

“Yes!” Ahsoka cheered to herself, pumping her fists in the air. “Just you wait, Obi-Wan. Qui-Gon will be giving you that braid by the end of the week!”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for your lovely comments and support! I am always so thrilled to see them and I promise I will respond to you all after my house guests have left.

I would also like to draw some attention to some amazing fan art of my fic and _TheMikeyMonster's GLORIOUS Viridescent Skies_ drawn by the talented _Rainglazed._

_LOOK AT HOW ADORABLE BB OBI-WAN IS._

If you would like to enjoy some silly memes with me on tumblr you can find me at _FireflyFish._
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi have grown close over the past two months. Ahsoka is determined to see that her disruptive arrival in the past does not alter Obi-Wan’s destiny, to see that he become’s Qui-Gon Jinn’s. But that may not be what young Kenobi has in mind and no one has really asked for Master Jinn’s opinion on this matter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A week came and went and Obi-Wan still did not have a padawan’s braid or a master.

With only two weeks left before he was to be shipped off to Bandomeer, breakfast between Ahsoka and Obi-Wan had turned into a somber affair. Obi-Wan frowned at his Gatalenta porridge and Ahsoka picked at her steamed bun.

She glanced over at Obi-Wan, at his slumped shoulders and downcast blue eyes and felt like even more of a failure than she already was. All of her best efforts had been for naught and now it seemed like Ahsoka’s sudden appearance had upset the balance of the past and had knocked Obi-Wan off the path of his rightful destiny.

She didn’t know how she could make it up to him, short of taking him on as her own Padawan and Ahsoka felt she was nowhere near ready for that kind of responsibility.

But Skyguy was barely 21 when he took you on, and Master Obi-Wan was 23 when he took Skyguy on. You’ve got at least seven years on both of them. You could make this work. You know better than anyone what is ahead of him and what he needs to learn in order to be successful.

Ahsoka ignored the selfish voice in her spirit that had already taken to the young Obi-Wan like a mother gundark to its child. Just because she missed Master Obi-Wan and Anakin did not mean she had the right to rob the young boy in front of her from his rightful apprenticeship with Master Qui-Gon.

Even as the idea of sending her faithful little shadow off into the Galaxy without her was getting harder and harder to stomach. Especially when he would gaze up at her, those familiar blue-grey eyes asking silently, Why do you keep sending me away? Why don’t you want to keep me?

Ahsoka let out a groan and rested her head on the table.

“Master Ahsoka?” Obi-Wan murmured, his spirit soft and gentle in the Force. “Would it be alright if we skipped jar’kai this afternoon?”

Ahsoka looked up from her crumpled position, brows raised in puzzlement. “You want to skip your lesson today?”
Obi-Wan’s gaze was focused on his hands as he spoke and she could tell he was trying hard to say something very painful. “I… I will be… if it's not too much trouble, I would like to go to the Parks before… I would like to go to the Parks, if you would be willing to escort me.”

Obi-Wan glanced up at her, his eyes round and begging for this, for this one last bit of fun and time together before everything started rolling downhill and he was sent off to Bandomeer. One last happy memory, please? For me?

The Parks was a sprawling artificial wilderness that served as a source of amusement and wonder for the residents of Coruscant. It was a favorite field trip destination for younglings and Initiates who so rarely had a chance to simply be the children that they were. Ahsoka remembered several such trips fondly.

Ahsoka smiled sadly at Obi-Wan and nodded, reaching out to squeeze his hand. “Sure. We can go to the Parks. On one condition.”

“What's that?” He asked, perking up considerably.

The words that came out of Ahsoka’s mouth were not what she had planned on saying but out they came all the same. “You have to ask Master Qui-Gon Jinn if he will take you on as his Padawan.”

Ahsoka watched Obi-Wan’s face and her heart broke, watched his tempered excitement and curiosity curdle into first disappointment and then ice over into a paper-thin facade of mature acceptance.

“Yes, of course, Master Tano,” he said, withdrawing his hand from hers and sitting up a bit straighter in his seat. “If you feel that is a valuable use of my time today, I shall endeavor to reconnoiter Master Jinn’s whereabouts and… present my candidacy as his Padawan for his perusal and contemplation.”

With each four-syllable word Obi-Wan flung at her, Ahsoka felt more and more miserable, more and more alone in this strange parody of her childhood. She had seen this before, when her master had done something or said something to infuriate Master Obi-Wan but he had never turned that sharp, mean streak on her. He had only ever been kind and caring with Ahsoka.

“Are you angry with me, Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka asked, her voice barely more than a whisper. “Are you angry that I asked you to talk to Master Jinn?”

Obi-Wan folded his arms over his chest, staring over at the exit. “Of course not, Master Tano. Jedi do not get angry. They release their negative emotions into the Force and proceed forth in harmony.”

Ahsoka sighed and sat up in her chair. “Obi-Wan… please, talk to me. If you keep it bottled up inside, all it will do is fester and bleed. It won't help you, or anyone else for that matter.”

Obi-Wan scowled, actually scowled at the far wall before he turned his head sharply and glared at Ahsoka. “Why won't you take me as your Padawan? What is the point of all of this? Why are you teaching me anything if you don’t want me around? What's wrong with me? What aren't I doing,
saying, feeling right?”

His vitriol and anger struck Ahsoka like a smack in the face and she took a moment to breathe and collect her thoughts. How could she explain to Obi-Wan that a part of her wanted him to be her Padawan, to say the hell with what had happened and to chart a new course. To run so hard and so far off the path of destiny that there was no possible way for Palpatine to reach them, to reach Anakin.

But the ghost of Master Obi-Wan was real and solid in Ahsoka’s mind. She could hear his caution, could almost picture his frown of doubt and hesitation. The part of her that was Anakin Skywalker’s padawan practically begged for her to give in to what they both wanted but the parts of her that were Master Obi-Wan’s grand-padawan and Padme’s friend, and that had looked up to Plo Koon, urged patience.

_Trust in the Force_, she could almost hear them whisper. _Obi-Wan will be a Jedi Knight. You know this is foreordained. You just don’t know how._

But none of those whisperings, from the Force or her imagination, would ease her mind or soothe Obi-Wan’s broken heart.

“There’s nothing wrong with you, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, finally. “Master Yoda and I have a good feeling about Master Jinn. Please do this for me and I won’t ask it again. We can spend a whole day in the Parks if that’s what you’d like.”

Obi-Wan gazed up at her and Ahsoka nearly lost her nerve at the hurt on his face. He gave her a long, steady look, as if he were trying to decide how best to handle the situation, to carefully parse together the words necessary to get him out of the conversation. Ahsoka had started to realize that part of the reason Master Obi-Wan was so quiet during her master’s tantrums (and she was also old enough now to realize Anakin had in fact been throwing tantrums) was that he was carefully crafting a reply that would soothe her master’s short temper.

The idea that he felt it necessary to plot, to negotiate his way out of a painful situation with her stabbed Ahsoka in the gut.

“If you want me to, I will do it, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan finally sighed, giving into truth and his own sorrow. “I will try to find him during lunch, if that’s all right.”

“You eat around 1230 hours right?” she recalled, careful to keep her voice neutral. “I’ll be there with bells on if you need help.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and picked up his tray to take it to the trash receptacle. “I need a miracle, Master Ahsoka. Do you have one of those in your pockets?”

And with that stinging rebuke, Obi-Wan walked off, shoulders slumped and gaze focused on the ground in front of him.
The Room of a Thousand Fountains offered no comfort as Ahsoka sat under a fireoak and tried to remind herself that taking Obi-Wan as a padawan would be tantamount to kidnapping him from Master Jinn and his pre-ordained destiny. She tried to close her eyes and find her way into a deeper meditation but she couldn’t stop seeing his crumpled smile and those furrowed brows as he looked away, and called her Master Tano.

This wasn’t how it was supposed to go. She could still remember the delight she felt when Master Yoda told her she was going to be a padawan before she found out who her master was. Becoming a padawan was the first step to becoming a Jedi knight and that had been her only desire at the time.

And here she was, refusing to take him on and acknowledge the potential of one of the greatest Jedi knights in history because he was supposed to go off with Master Jinn.

Who showed zero interest in anything that wasn’t the Living Force or his many plants, according to some of the other knights she had sparred with in the practice salons. Ahsoka had always assumed that Master Obi-Wan and Master Qui-Gon had bonded, that the Force had somehow brought them together, unlike her and Anakin. That had been the Force too, but that had also been Master Yoda so she assumed their pairing wasn’t typical.

“Nothing we did was typical,” Ahsoka let out a breath and opened her eyes, surprised to find herself confronted with Master Yoda and beyond that, the boots of Master Windu. “Oh! Master Yoda! Master Windu! What a pleasant surprise!”

“You asked me last week what Master Yoda saw in the pairing of Qui-Gon Jinn and Initiate Kenobi and I thought he should tell you himself,” Master Windu said, his voice low and definitive. “If you’ll excuse me, I have a lesson with Depa in fifteen minutes.”

His mission completed, Master Windu strode off into the distance and Ahsoka got the feeling that Master Yoda had been dropped into her hands like a particularly ornery toddler.

“Troubled, are you, Knight Tano?” Yoda questioned, hobbling over to her and settling into a seated position with the soles of his feet touching. “Pain, I sense from you, yes?”

Ahsoka bowed her head, frowning and worrying at the hem of the brown knight’s robes she had been given. Even after two months, it still seemed strange to be dressed like most every other Jedi in the Temple, to let go of her armor and her bracers and the idea that she was one of the only Jedi left in the galaxy.

“Do you think Qui-Gon Jinn is a good match for Obi-Wan, Master Yoda?” Ahsoka spit out, deciding that directness was the best way to bring up the topic. “Really?”

Yoda tilted his head to the side, his ears settling low, a sign that he was truly thinking about something. “Confident in the pairing, I was, before your arrival. Gifted, Kenobi is, but troubled by strong emotions and anger. Too easily attached, he is. But clever and patient, he can be. A good diplomat I sensed in him.”

Ahsoka nodded, agreeing with the ancient master’s assessment of young Obi-Wan.

“Difficult, mastery has been, for Qui-Gon,” Yoda shook his head, curling his hands together in his lap. “Raised one, he has. Lost another, he did. Deep sorrow, I sensed, and regret. Regret for himself and his former padawan. Hope, I had for the union of the two.”

“How so?” she asked, curious. Perhaps there was something there Ahsoka had missed. Someone to bridge the divide between the well-meaning but distant Qui-Gon and the intense and devoted Obi-
“Light the way, Kenobi would,” the Grand Master said, peering at a far distant waterfall quietly pushing along a stream that flowed through the massive room. “Guide the boy, Qui-Gon would. Find a balance between them, I believed. Now, I do not.”

“What changed?” Ahsoka looked at Yoda’s hands and wondered how many more times in his life would he worry over the wrinkled knuckles. How many times would he run his hand through hair he had lost decades, perhaps centuries ago? How many times would he reflect back at his decisions and wonder if he made the right one?

Was Master Yoda even capable of questioning himself in that manner?

Was he even listening to her?


Yoda turned back to her and smiled, a twinkling in his eyes. “Know this, you do. Meditate on the choice before you, you should. Trust in the Force, young Ahsoka. Much time you have, yes, but for Obi-Wan, not so much.”

Yoda slowly pushed himself upright and collected his gimer stick. He raised it to Ahsoka and began to hobble off, leaving her wide-eyed and opened mouth in shock. Crossing paths with a senior padawan who knelt down as instructed, with a dry rasp of a laugh Yoda climbed up his arm and was off.

Stunned and more than a bit confused by Yoda’s cryptic visit, Ahsoka decided to return to her meditations in earnest, hoping to find a way forward, to understand the will of the Force and what it wanted of her and of Obi-Wan.

Ahsoka closed her eyes and fell into a breathing pattern, letting her conscious thoughts drift past her mind’s eye as she slowly sank into the dark peace of the Force. With each inhale she fell further down into the gentle, rocking waves of the life around her. She could not pick out the individual life forms but she could feel the strength of the tree behind her, the firmness of the ground and the distant warmth of sunlight on her skin. The breeze tickled across her montrals and she shivered.

When she sensed she could go no deeper, when she seemed to have reached her destination, Ahsoka took out her thoughts and her worries and let them unspool and unravel before her. Questions and pleas bounced free out of her hands and heart as she reached out into the infinite space around and within her, desperate for an answer.

*What should I do?*

There was no answer, only the muffled sound of a distant surf and the faintest whistle of wind through the leaves overhead. Ahsoka waited, reaching out, stretching her awareness as far and as deep as it could go. Even if it was a wordless plea into the void of the Force, she called and called again.

*What should I do? Please… Please help me.*

*I know you’re out there.* She tried one last time, desperate.

*Walk.* A voice, the Presence from before, answered and Ahsoka found herself on a beach at night, beneath a sky filled with so many stars it seemed almost as if she could reach up and gather them into her hand like sand from Tatooine. The ocean washed in and out, a soothing rhythm to one who was
so confused and lost.

Walk. The Presence spoke again and Ahsoka started to make her way down the shore, torn between the beauty of the ocean at night and the star-filled sky overhead. There was something mesmerizing and she couldn’t look away, try as she might, to focus on her question.

Please… I don’t know what to do. Why am I here, now? I know Master Qui-Gon took Obi-Wan as his padawan when he was younger but… but I don’t… I don’t think I want to let him. Ahsoka pleaded her case, hoping for another bit of understanding from whatever concentration in the Force was helping her. I’m wrong, aren’t I? This is attachment, isn’t it? I’m being selfish and robbing Obi-Wan of his true future.

The Presence seemed to stop and Ahsoka mirrored it, even if she didn’t really understand how she knew that a disembodied Force voice could “stop”.

Do you know why you are where you are? the Presence queried.

Ahsoka nodded. To change the future. To save Anakin, the Jedi Order, and the Galaxy.

And you think that you cannot do that as Obi-Wan Kenobi’s master? The question seemed simple enough but she could sense that her disembodied advisor wanted more than a simple “I don’t know.”

But Master Obi-Wan is supposed to be Qui-Gon Jinn’s padawan, Ahsoka insisted, gesturing to the infinite field of stars overhead. If I choose Obi-Wan, if I take him as my padawan, I will change the future. What if that means Anakin is never born? What if that means the Trade Federation invades Naboo and Padme can’t save her people? What if I fail as a master and Obi-Wan doesn’t grow up to be anything at all like Master Obi-Wan?

Ahsoka bowed her head. What if I fail and something happens to him? What if he dies?

And what if you don’t try? came the reply.

Master Qui-Gon will take care of him. He’ll raise him and train him and he’ll become a wonderful knight and a Jedi Master to Anakin, Ahsoka said, wrapping her arms around her as the air turned cold. I already know what’s going to happen if I don’t take him as a padawan.

There was silence again and just when she started to wonder if the Presence had left her, it surged back in with the tide. Why do you think you have been returned to this particular time?

Puzzled, Ahsoka shrugged. I… I don’t know. I’m not sure I understand.

Why not before you left the Order? Why not before Obi-Wan’s false assassination? Why not Mustafar or on Naboo in the plasma refinery? Of all the times and places for you to travel to, to be sent to, why did the Force bring you to this time and place?

Ahsoka went silent at that.

Why had the Force brought her back to Obi-Wan’s childhood and not Anakin’s? Why had it returned her to the Temple? Why three months before Obi-Wan was scheduled to age out?

If you want to save your master, to save your friends and family, you must start at the root of the problem, the Presence continued and she got the faintest sense of an exhausted sigh in the Force. Had you arrived at another time, you might have been able to prevent Order 66 and the Purges. You might not. You may have stopped the horror of Mustafar or maybe even some of the more tragic deaths of the Clone Wars.
You might not.

But only by acting here and now can you prevent all of that. You can save your master and the Jedi Order. You can graft a new branch to an aging tree and give it new life, little one.

Ahsoka frowned, her arms folded over her chest a flicker of anger and offense in her gut. Are you saying Master Obi-Wan is the problem?

No. Anakin Skywalker is the bitter fruit of a poisoned tree.

She ran a hand over her face. I don’t suppose it’s too much to ask you to make some sense?

Yes. It is. And for a moment, Ahsoka could almost swear she heard the damn being laugh. There are things you cannot change, little one. Obi-Wan Kenobi will be Anakin Skywalker’s master. As for who is Obi-Wan Kenobi’s master, well, that is up for negotiation. Time only flows one way, Ahsoka. Make the most of this time you find yourself in.

And with another soft susurration of the waves, the Presence was gone and the stars started to wink out, one by one. It would have struck Ahsoka as a rather ominous thing if she had been aware to notice it, but she had already passed into unconsciousness.

Ahsoka awoke to find a well-meaning knight gently prodding her shoulder. She sat up slowly, a little confused and surprised to have fallen asleep during her meditation. The knight, a smiling Zabrak with her hair pulled into a complicated braid, offered her hand to Ahsoka and helped to pull her up.

“You must have been really out of it,” the knight said as Ahsoka got her bearings and waited for the last bits of sleep to blow out of her mind. “The midday chime for lunch went off and you didn’t budge.”

“Thanks for waking me,” Ahsoka replied, bowing her head. “I have to be somewhere at 1230 and I can’t be late.”

The knight stepped out of her way and sent her off with a pleasant “Good luck!”

I’m not so sure what that would mean anymore. Ahsoka mused as she hurried to the lunchroom and Obi-Wan. I guess we’ll wait and see if Qui-Gon accepts his offer.

Ahsoka’s heart ached in her chest and she hurried faster through the hallways.
“Don’t do it,” Quinlan hissed at Obi-Wan as he and Luminara Unduli watched Qui-Gon Jinn eat his lunch at a table in the main dining hall, tucked back in a corner with a few other masters. “Master Ahsoka is going to choose you, Obi-Wan! She has to! She’s teaching you jar’kai and why would she teach you her style of fighting if she wasn’t going to take you as a padawan?”

“You shouldn’t disobey an order by any master,” Luminara observed quietly, although she did peek over at Qui-Gon with trepidation on her face. “But… maybe you could wait until Master Ahsoka arrives?”

Obi-Wan frowned at his plate and tried to ignore the pounding of his heart in his chest. His mind flickered from moment to moment, trying to find something to distract his panic with. He had tied a long stem of a vine fruit into a knot and then molded his mashed Alderaanian tubers into a spiky volcanic mountain range. Then there was the tapping and the compulsive desire to look anywhere but over at the immobile bulk of Master Qui-Gon Jinn, well-known diplomat and peerless swordsman, the former padawan of Master Yahn Dooku, considered the master of Makashi.

And Obi-Wan was supposed to just walk up to him and politely beg him to be his master.

I don’t understand why it can’t be you, Master Ahsoka, he thought, stabbing at his nerf steak listlessly. What’s wrong with me? Why don’t you want me to be your padawan? I know there is a connection there! I can feel it!

So… why do I have to do this?

“Master Tiin just left!” Quinlan announced as he turned back to Obi-Wan. “That just leaves Masters Fua and Ando.”

“And the entire dining hall,” Luminara observed coldly. “It doesn’t seem right.”

“Well it’s this or Bandomeer,” Obi-Wan sighed, pushing himself upright. “And I am not going to Bandomeer.”

Grabbing ahold of a flicker of resolve, Obi-Wan stepped away from his table and slowly marched over to Master Qui-Gon, his hands curled into fists that somehow vanished into his sleeves the closer and closer he got to the master’s table. He tried to run through the short, brief speech he had prepared for this moment. He had shown it to Luminara, who agreed that it was a good one, giving Obi-Wan a bit more confidence.

Obi-Wan came within five feet of the table and caught Master Fua’s eyes first, the dark-skinned man smiling at him and beckoning him closer. “It’s Kenobi, right? Come, come! We don’t bite.”

Master Ando turned to gaze down at Obi-Wan, a tall, thin Munn whose presence was neither warm nor cold. He simply sat and watched, making Obi-Wan feel somehow even smaller and more nervous than he already was.

“M-Master Jinn?” Obi-Wan stammered, glancing up at the broad-shouldered man who was in the middle of taking a long sip of his tea. “Might I have a moment of your time?”

Master Qui-Gon finished his drink and set it down with an exhalation, turning just enough in his chair to face Obi-Wan. “I wondered when you were going to search me out. You’re getting quite the reputation, Initiate Kenobi.”

Obi-Wan went cold then hot and then he froze, his words dying on his tongue, and the speech he had prepared flew right out of his head. He couldn’t think. His mind was stuffed full of wool and the suddenly pressing noise of the dining hall.
“I am, Master Jinn?”

“You are,” Qui-Gon nodded, resting one large arm and hand on the table in front of him. “I have heard you are searching for a master.”

“You have?” Obi-Wan echoed, his eyes falling away to Qui-Gon’s large right hand, resting on his leg. A strange, detached part of Obi-Wan’s mind wondered at how much larger his hand was than Master Ahsoka’s, at how Qui-Gon’s looked like it had been carved out of veined marble and Ahsoka’s from warm, smooth sandstone.

“Yes,” Qui-Gon nodded, his eyebrows raised. “I have chosen to be flattered that I am on your list, even if you have placed me at the bottom.”

‘List, master?’ Obi-Wan looked up at the master’s face, horrified to see the harsh edges hidden behind his kind words. “There was no list, Master Jinn. I thought that… with you not having a padawan…”

“You are mistaken, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon said, his body language saying nothing polite. “You did not think, for if you had thought, you would have realized the foolishness of your actions, no?”

Obi-Wan’s blood started to pound in his veins and his ears. He dropped his head again, his eyes locked on the floor as he waited for the next barrage of politely destructive words.

“Have I not made it abundantly clear that I will never take another padawan?” Qui-Gon sniffed, taking a long sip of his tea.

Don’t cry. Don’t cry. Don’t cry. Master Ahsoka wouldn’t cry. She would be strong. Like Master Skywalker. Don’t cry. Don’t cry.

Obi-Wan swallowed and nodded, blinking furiously to keep the tears at bay. He started to breathe through his mouth lest his nose give him away. He couldn’t cry, not in front of Qui-Gon Jinn, not in front of the whole dining hall, which had gotten suddenly and noticeably quieter.

Just one more week and I never have to see any of these people ever again. Obi-Wan vowed, digging his fingers into the palms of his hands to keep from wiping at his eyes or his nose.

“This kind of behavior is beneath a Jedi, Initiate Kenobi,” Qui-Gon finished with a sigh, turning away from the boy. “Jedi do not grovel for scraps. Nor do they go begging for a foolish reprieve from their destiny. A true Jedi accepts what he cannot change and embraces the will of the Force. Perhaps that is something you should meditate on in your next position. Learning to accept the will of the Living Force and not seeking to defy its teachings.”

Obi-Wan wondered if he were going to faint, if it were possible to simply faint away dead. Was Qui-Gon done? Could he leave? Was everyone laughing at him? Is that what he heard coming from a not-so-distant table filled with upper-level Padawans?

“Oh, there you are!” Ahsoka’s voice rang out over the dining hall, bright and cheerful and just as warm as Qui-Gon’s had been cold. “I am so sorry I’m late, Obi-Wan. Did you already speak to Master Jinn like I asked?”

A large swath of brown wool and cream linen appeared in Obi-Wan’s vision. He felt his body being moved away from Master Jinn and tucked up against Ahsoka’s side, her hand warm on his shoulder. He didn’t know what was going on, only that Master Ahsoka was there and that she had situated herself in such a way that she was between him and Master Jinn.
Obi-Wan closed his eyes and inhaled a tight, watery gasp of air. “Yes, Master Ahsoka.”

“Good!” she beamed and Obi-Wan felt her shields wrap around him like a warm, soft blanket, muffling the sights and sounds of the room, the prying presences and the growing cacophony of curiosity, mocking superiority and horrible, terrible pity. “Then it’s time for us to be leaving. Oh! Master Jinn?”

Qui-Gon’s voice was pleasant, if a bit strained. “Yes, Knight Tano? How can I be of assistance?”

“If you have some free time next week, could I still interest you in some sparring?” Ahsoka breezed, her voice sparkling like sunlight on the water but her spirit burning against Obi-Wan’s behind her shields. “Just a few rounds or so?”

Obi-Wan could hear the large man shifting in his seat, hear him clearing his throat. “Ah… yes, I believe so. If you will comm with the time and place, I will meet you there.”

“Excellent!” Ahsoka said, bowing over her left hand as she firmly guided Obi-Wan around and away from Master Jinn. She kept him under her arm as she marched them both out of the main dining hall and didn’t let go of him until they had left the Temple and arrived at the Parks.

It was only once they were out of the speeder and tucked away in a small clearing beneath a sprawling and gnarled smoke tree that Ahsoka turned to examine Obi-Wan’s numbed and humiliated face.

How had this happened? How could Master Jinn have done that to Obi-Wan in front of half the Jedi Order? What was she going to do now? How could she make this up to poor Obi-Wan, who looked like he was going to shatter at any moment? What was she going to do?

For now she would focus on the task in front of her, comforting Obi-Wan from Qui-Gon’s brutal rejection. She would work through what had to happen after that later, when Obi-Wan was feeling a little better and she had a moment to plan.

“I am so sorry, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka murmured, reaching up to wipe away the tears that were spilling over his cheeks as feeling and emotions started to return to his frozen body. “I am so, so sorry. Come here.”

Obi-Wan found himself too distraught to argue and promptly curled into Ahsoka’s arms and sobbed until there was nothing left but a cold finality in the pit of his stomach.

Obi-Wan Kenobi would never be a Jedi knight.

And next week, he was going to Bandomeer.

Chapter End Notes

So... that happened. Qui-Gon Jinn, the Galaxy's Fastest Glacier, did not acquit himself very well in this chapter. He was... less than stellar today. I'm sure it was an off day, the dining hall didn't have his tea or one of his plants was doing poorly or the barometric pressure was giving him a headache....

____.
Anyway! Please, please stay tuned for the NEXT chapter which will be SO MUCH MORE FUN and ten million times way less depressing and angsty because it's Obi-Wan's birthday and birthdays are awesome! Right?

^_^;

If you would like to come yell at me for putting poor BB! Obi-Wan through all this grief you can find me at FireflyFish on Tumblr.

Thank you all for reading and commenting! I promise I will get to them just as soon as *I* get done yelling at Qui-Gon for being a colossal a$$hole to Obi-Wan.
Previously on Tano and Kenobi…

After his attempt to ask Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn to mentor him in the ways of the Force is coldly and brutally rebuffed, Obi-Wan Kenobi is faced with the grim reality that he will soon be forced to leave the Jedi Order to take up the quite life of a member of the Agricorp on the farming planet of Bandomeer. Meanwhile, Ahsoka Tano must come to decision that will change everything…

After the debacle with Qui-Gon in the dining hall, Ahsoka had to do some thinking. And some planning.

She took the advice of the Presence and, early the next morning, set out for a long walk. Her walk carried her from Temple District to the Senate District and from there to the Tower and its manicured parks around the base of the Eferite marble spire. Ahsoka found a spot under a tangle of maidens-tear vines and sat down, gazing out at the vast expanse of the city, of the eternal ecumenopolis.

How had she been so wrong? How had Anakin been so wrong?

Anakin had told Ahsoka that Master Jinn had been a wonderful man: kind, patient and generous. He had told her Jinn had been strong and good and if it weren’t for Darth Maul essentially orphaning both Master Obi-Wan and Anakin on Naboo, Anakin would have become Qui-Gon Jinn’s padawan.

She remembered the look on his face as Anakin had told her that, the two of them on a long hyperspace jump from Corellia to an Outer Rim planet under siege.

“So… Master Obi-Wan wasn’t supposed to be your master?” she asked Anakin, glancing up from a datapad full of information on the planet they were traveling to.

Anakin shook his head, a faint smile on his face. “No. He was going to take the trials and become a Jedi Knight. I… I think Master Qui-Gon might have hurt Obi-Wan’s feelings but he was right. Obi-Wan was ready to become a knight.”

“That must have been painful for both of you,” Ahsoka said, her voice quiet and soft. “You both lost a master.”

“Yeah…” Anakin agreed, nodding his head a little as he worked through a little cubed logic puzzle that floated in the air in front of him. “The first few weeks were rough but after that, Obi-Wan never talked about it again. He doesn’t talk about himself much.”

“Do you miss him?” She watched her master, at the way his hands moved through the puzzle, at his sense of calm in the Force. It was always easier to get Anakin to talk about himself when he had something to do with his hands and his mind and Ahsoka intended to take advantage of the moment.
“Master Jinn, I mean.”

“Yeah…” Anakin’s eyes went soft. “He… he had such faith in me. He believed in me when I was nothing. And he… he wasn’t afraid of me. Obi-Wan… I don’t think we got off to the best start. I kept expecting him to be like Qui-Gon and he… just wasn’t.”

“General Skywalker?” Rex’s voice broke through their quiet moment and they both looked up at the Clone Captain. “General Kenobi is on the horn for you. He has some intel you might need for the next engagement.”

Ahsoka frowned out at the jagged horizon of the city and wondered if it wasn’t a good thing that Master Obi-Wan had been nothing like Qui-Gon because the Master Jinn Ahsoka had just met was not exactly a shining example of a Jedi Master.

True, he was powerful in the Force, which uncurled around the man like a cool, heavy fog on a sunny day. He was wise and his advice had helped Ahsoka when she was mid-panic attack but that didn’t excuse his behavior yesterday.

Nothing excused that. Humiliating a child in public was barbaric and beneath someone of Qui-Gon Jinn’s reputation and position.

Perhaps, she thought, it was time to acknowledge that Anakin’s view of the Jedi had been influenced by his dramatic rescue from Tatooine and the tragedy of Qui-Gon Jinn’s death. Clearly there had been a part of him that had idolized Master Jinn as a long-lost father figure who could do no wrong.

Ahsoka let out a sigh and gazed at the distant haze of air traffic, individual speeders zipping and dashing across the blue-white sky like the stinging mites on Geonosis.

*I’m sorry, Master. But I’m going to do what I think is right. I hope… I hope you can forgive me. Wherever you are.*

Her mind made up, Ahsoka stood up and walked to the elevator. Obi-Wan had mentioned there was a particular type of snack he liked that could only be purchased at the Tower. It was sold in a Tellestrian souvenir shop and she went on a mission to find it.

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*Three days later…*

Obi-Wan woke up with the sun streaming in through a window he had forgotten to cover with a curtain the night before. He let out a groan and turned his face back into his pillow, hating the sun and each new horrible day that came with it.

In three days he was going to ship out to Bandomeer, to leave behind Master Ahsoka and his friends and the only home he had ever known.

He would never see any of them ever again.

Some birthday present.

*I don’t want to get up. I just want to go back to sleep and never wake up again.* Obi-Wan thought morosely, sniffing into his pillow. *It’s not fair. I want to stay here with Master Ahsoka. I don’t know why she won’t take me as her Padawan Learner. What did I do wrong? Am I not good at jar’kai? Is it my temper?*
Obi-Wan could have berated himself for the rest of the day and there was a very large part of him that wanted to sit and wallow in his misery but the rest of him knew he needed to get up and face the day. Master Ahsoka promised she was going to have breakfast with him after being too busy with Council work for the past few days. She had taken him out to eat for dinner every night but it wasn’t the same.

It felt like pity and he hated pity.

With a great groaning sigh, Obi-Wan pushed himself up out of his bed and into a hunched-over sitting position, blinking sleepily and in confusion at the carefully wrapped package on the bedside table next to his bunk.

Puzzled at the bundle wrapped up in the crisp white linens that was usually reserved for gifts given by the Jedi Order to visiting dignitaries or Senators, Obi-Wan slid bonelessly off his bed and padded over to it. He frowned at the flat, blue braided tie that was arranged around the package in a style that symbolized spring and eternity. There was a small silver charm that held the complicated knot in place and when he pulled the loose end of the tie out he realized that the silver charm was actually a small decorative belt buckle.

It reminded him of Quinlan’s buckle now that he thought about it.

Holding the belt buckle close to his chest, Obi-Wan carried the package back to his bed and set it down before flopping down next to it. Placing the buckle on his pillow, he turned his attention back to the blue tie, slowly and carefully following the ends through an elegant series of twists and knots before he finally found the blue raw silk material sliding free from his hands and the white linen.

He peeled back the corners of the formal wrapping and let out a gasp.

Sitting on a primly folded set of tan and cream Jedi robes was a small note, written in a dynamic hand. It read…

Happy early birthday, Padawan Kenobi!

Get changed and come meet your new master in the Northern Solar Room at 0800 hours.

Don’t be late!

-A

Obi-Wan picked up the notecard, his hands shaking as he turned it over and over again. He read the writing there at least eight or nine times before he could comprehend what it said and what it meant.

Does… Does this mean? Is this what I think it is? Is this from Master Ahsoka? Is she serious?

Slowly, almost as if his hands and body understood before his brain or his heart did, he reached for the first layer of folded clothing, raw hemp tabards that were woven with a geometric pattern that represented good luck and “proper development”. The traditional design was supposed to encourage Padawans to grow into their knighthood in a moral and upright manner.

He ran his hands over the fabric, trembling with a growing sense of delight and joy instead of shock for once. The tabards unspooled from his hand, soft and brown, and he couldn’t help the wide grin that unfurled to match.

Next was the cotton gauze undershirt, left undyed to symbolize a Jedi’s inner purity, and then the outer robe made of rough spun silk as an ode to the humility all Jedi were to display before the Force
and the Republic they served.

Obi-Wan had sat through enough classes detailing the history and symbolism behind the Jedi habit he could practically give the speeches himself but that didn’t stop the teacher’s words from dancing around in his mind as he marveled over his new sienna brown leather belt, complete with two hovertech clips for lightsabers and the place where he could attach the belt buckle. There was even a new pair of socks and boots that he noticed resting at the foot of his bed.

“Obi-Wan?” The dorm master popped her head into the room, her voice curious. “Are you alright? I can sense you from the office.”

He looked up at the dorm master and shyly, hesitantly held up his new Padawan robes. “These were left for me?”

*Please don’t let this be a dream or a horrible prank. Please let this be real. Please! I don’t think I could survive it if this were a prank.*

But the dorm master’s smile told him everything he needed to know.

“I believe they were left there this morning before the first chime,” the dark-haired woman said, nodding at the wall pointedly. “I believe they might have even left you a robe.”

Obi-Wan whipped his head around to said robe hanging from a hook on the wall behind his bed and let out a gasp. “Is that mine?”

“Well, it’s certainly not mine,” the dorm master replied, her voice warm. “You had better hurry up and get dressed, Padawan Kenobi. It’s already a quarter past seven.”

And with that, she left Obi-Wan alone with his new robes and the best birthday present he had ever received.

Once he’d reassured himself several times that his layers were on in the proper order and his collars were neat, Obi-Wan stepped out of the Initiates dorm with his head held high and his brown woolen robe draped impeccably from his shoulders.

Bidding a “good morning” to the dorm master, who returned his greeting with a grin and an amused wave, Obi-Wan walked out into the Temple and made a beeline to the nearest turbolift that would carry him to the room where his master waited.

Where Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano was waiting for him.

Almost giddy with excitement, relief, and joy, Obi-Wan took careful steps as he marched through the hallway, not wanting to step on the hems of his robe and trip or rip the fabric before he even got there. He wanted everything to be perfect for his new master and showing up with a tattered hem before he was officially a Padawan would not be a good start to their partnership.

*Oh sweet Force! A partnership! I’m… I’m going to be a padawan! I was right! There was, is a connection between us! I knew it! I knew! I’m going to be Master Ahsoka’s padawan!*

It really was the best birthday present he could ever get and he couldn’t wait to tell Quinlan.

After an overly stately march up some steps that got him a strange look from Master Ki-Adi-Mundi
as he passed by, Obi-Wan found the turbolift that would take him up to the floor where the Norther Solar Room was. He stood in front of the curved doors, his heart drumming in his chest and his hands cold and clammy. He tried to take a deep breath but found he was too anxious and decided to settle for a few more shallow breaths before reaching out to push the button to call the lift.

When he stepped out of the carriage, habit took over as Obi-Wan’s feet carried him to the appointed room.

He could already feel Ahsoka waiting there, her presence in the Force bright and effervescent.

She was stretching on the far side of the room when he came in, her robe and sabers resting on a long row of benches that marked where the students sat during a lecture from an instructor. Working at her shoulders, rolling her arms forwards and backwards in an attempt to loosen up the joint, Ahsoka hadn’t seemed to notice Obi-Wan standing there, gazing in rapt adoration at his new master.

“Well, don’t just stand there like a newborn nerf colt,” Ahsoka said to the wall before turning to grin at him over her shoulder. “Come over here and let me see how you look, Padawan Kenobi.”

An electric thrill of joy shivered through Obi-Wan and he stepped into the sunny room with a face-splitting grin and his hands firmly placed at his sides as he bowed formally to his new master. “I am here and ready for your instruction, Master.”

Laughing, she nodded, her eyes shining with a happiness that almost equaled Obi-Wan’s. “Good. Now get over here!”

Needing no further encouragement, Obi-Wan darted across the room, happily flinging himself into Ahsoka’s arms for the warmest and strongest hug he had ever experienced in his short life. He clung tight to her, his eyes closed, basking in the way the Force seemed to sing around them, the way the light seemed brighter and the shadows paler. He felt almost buoyant, as if he could just float away on a sunbeam like a very large dust mote.

“Thank you thank you thank you!” Obi-Wan mumbled into her shoulder, his eyes closed as emotions welled up inside of him, threatening to swamp his balance. “I didn’t want to go. I didn’t want to leave you.”

Ahsoka let out a soft and happy sound as she stroked Obi-Wan’s hair and held him close, her own heart filling with joy. “I know. I’m sorry I made you wait so long. I… I wasn’t sure what the Force wanted of me. But now I know.”

Obi-Wan pulled away, rubbing at his eyes and nose because he was not crying. This was a wonderful day and he refused to cry. Padawans did not cry. They were calm and centered like Master Ahsoka. “W-what does the Force want of you?”

Brushing the thick fringe of his bangs off his face, Ahsoka gazed deep into Obi-Wan’s blue-grey eyes and smiled. “It wants me to take you as my Padawan Learner. Will you accept me as your teacher, Obi-Wan Kenobi?”

“Yes! Yes!” Obi-Wan almost shouted, tears forgotten and excitement pounding through his veins again. “I do! I accept you! Let’s go tell the Council right now! Jar’kai can wait! Let’s go right now!”

Ahsoka burst out laughing at this, a sound that filled the room with so much elation and light that Obi-Wan wondered if they were going to burn the hovering candle lights overhead. When Luminara had been accepted as a padawan it was a very solemn affair and Quinlan had simply shown up one day with a padawan braid and a wry grin. As far as Obi-Wan was concerned, though, he didn’t
particularly care how it was formalized so long as it was.

“We’ll go to the Council. I promise.” Ahsoka sat them both down on the bench, smiling down at Obi-Wan almost as if she couldn’t quite believe he was there. “But there’s something I have to do first. Something I have to prove to myself. I want to be the best master possible for you. You are so, so special.”

Obi-Wan had nothing to say to that.

Well, that wasn’t quite true. Obi-Wan had a great many things to say about that, about how ferociously he disagreed with his master’s belief that he was somehow more special than Bant or Luminara or even Quinlan. He refused to believe that she was in any way lacking as a Jedi Knight or as a Master and he absolutely knew in the depths of his soul that Master Ahsoka did not need to prove a thing to the Force.

Ahsoka had more than proven herself to him in all the ways that mattered. She was kind, compassionate, and patient. She didn’t yell at him when he made a mistake but gently corrected. She laughed at his jokes and smiled at him with a twinkle in her eyes that reminded him of Master Yoda in all the best ways. She shared her wisdom freely and her faith in herself, in her master, and the Force was unyielding.

Ahsoka Tano was the perfect Jedi Knight in Obi-Wan’s eyes and as far as he was concerned, and since he was now her padawan, his concern was all that mattered.

“Master…” Obi-Wan carefully martialed his thoughts to explain that whatever test of character Ahsoka was preparing to undergo was completely unnecessary. “You don’t have to do this. I know you are the best possible Jedi Master for me. I am certain Master Skywalker would agree.”

“Oh, don’t you bring him into this!” Ahsoka teased, needling Obi-Wan in the ribs, which managed to tickle him just enough to fluster him. “And besides… He would agree with me. I need to do this.”

“Do what?” Obi-Wan protested, realizing that there was a part of him that felt a rising sense of uneasiness. The radiant Force of only a few minutes ago was now choppy and disturbed, like a shore being buffeted by the oncoming winds of a hurricane. He did not like it. “Master… please, I don’t want you to do this. Please can’t we just go to the Council?”

“Do forgive my tardiness, Knight Tano,” Qui-Gon Jinn’s voice pierced the early morning peace of the training room like the low throbbing hum of a laser cannon. “I was waylaid by Master Yoda on my way here.”

Obi-Wan turned slowly to gaze in shock and perhaps a bit of fear at the sight of Master Jinn, of the way he emerged from the gauzy sunbeams filtering down through the chamber’s high stained-glass windows. For a moment there was something dangerous in Master Jinn’s eyes, in the sharp way they flicked from Ahsoka to Obi-Wan and back again.

Obi-Wan slid closer to his master and watched the Jedi master with round eyes.

_I don’t want him here. He’s not supposed to be here._ Obi-Wan thought behind his shields, throwing them up as high and as fast as he could.

He didn’t know what his own master had planned, but he already didn’t like it.
“There’s no need to apologize,” Ahsoka said, standing up and stepping between Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon in a casual but subtle move of defense and separation. There was no need for this early morning session to be contentious. Ahsoka had asked for Qui-Gon’s assistance and he had accepted. Obi-Wan’s presence was ancillary.

It was absolutely not a silent rebuke and a taunting of the older Jedi, she tried to tell herself. That was not how Obi-Wan and Padme had raised Ahsoka to behave and Anakin wouldn’t have thought that far ahead.

“Thank you again for agreeing to spar with me,” Ahsoka continued when the silence got too awkward. “My padawan has been very curious to see jar’kai in action.”

“Your… padawan?” Qui-Gon echoed, looking past Ahsoka to Obi-Wan sitting on the bench with his arms folded over his chest. “I was under the impression that Initiate Kenobi was going to be transferring to the Agricorps shortly.”

Ahsoka could feel Obi-Wan bristling in the Force and wondered when Master Obi-Wan had learned his impeccable shielding because if her padawan was going to turn into a bundle of spines every time he was offended or hurt, they were going to have their work cut out for them. She hesitantly reached out along the newly discovered bright copper thread that tied them together, sending a tendril of peace and serenity to Obi-Wan, who took a deep breath and tried to retract his spines.

Well, that’s something at least, Ahsoka thought as she mentally turned back to Qui-Gon. “He was but I have discussed it with Master Windu and he feels that Obi-Wan and I would be a good match. After our sparring demonstration, he and I are going to the Council to make it official.”

“I see,” Qui-Gon rumbled, folding his arms over his chest as he fiddled with his beard. “How fortunate for Initiate Kenobi to be taken under the wing of such a compassionate Jedi Knight.”

And Obi-Wan’s spines were back with an added dose of projected curse words she was didn’t expect someone his age to know.

“Yes, well, I’m the lucky one, really. Obi-Wan is an amazing student,” Ahsoka continued, breezing through the conversation as best she could, given that Qui-Gon Jinn seemed to be doing everything in his power to be just annoying enough to raise her hackles but not so terrible that she could storm off with Obi-Wan in a huff. “I am really looking forward to teaching him.”

But first, Ahsoka thought, she needed to prove to herself that she was the best choice for Obi-Wan, that she could best this looming shadow of a man and cast out the treacherous “what ifs” from her mind. As close as Ahsoka and Obi-Wan had become, she knew it wasn’t quite enough. She needed something to show herself, to prove to her heart, if not her mind, that she was the right person for the job.

If she was going to be Obi-Wan’s master, then it only made sense that she would have to defeat his “old” master.

Qui-Gon Jinn was not impressed by what he saw before him.

A scruffy, small initiate who radiated spite and possessive attachment in the Force and a seemingly calm and placid Jedi Knight who was in actuality about two heartbeats away from pulling her sabers out and starting a fight.
If Qui-Gon was the kind of man given to eyeball rolling, if Dooku hadn’t beaten that out of him, he might done it just for the novelty of their reactions.

But the situation before him was far too serious to be handled so glibly and so he realized he would have turn this contentious “sparring session” into a teaching moment; one that would focus on attachment and the importance of following the will of the Living Force.

Which had clearly decreed that Obi-Wan Kenobi was to go to Bandomeer.

No.

Momentarily confused, Qui-Gon asked for a moment to “compose himself for our sparring” and walked over to a far corner, stepping out of a piercing ray of sunlight into the cooler shadows at the edges of the training room.

No? No? What exactly did that mean? The Living Force so rarely spoke to Qui-Gon in such a clear and easily understood way. Its guidance was often couched in visions and feelings, like an external intuition that he could tap into when he needed it. It always took a bit of meditating to understand what he saw or experienced but his faith in the Force was absolute.

And the Living Force had clearly spoken just now.

But if Obi-Wan Kenobi were destined to have a master, the fated pairing would have happened before now, Qui-Gon told himself. Indeed, most future Master-Padawan pairings were starting to coalesce around the beginning of the second year of Initiate training. That way the potential master could follow the development of their intended padawan.

Obi-Wan and his temper and riotous sea of emotions had found no favor in any of the masters or unattached knights at the Temple and so he had been left alone to quietly age out.

Until Ahsoka Tano appeared.

And now that Qui-Gon was thinking about it, there was something strange about Knight Tano, about the way she carried herself and the way she stood between Obi-Wan and anyone she deemed to be a threat. She walked with the fluid grace of a warrior, someone who had seen more than their fair share of battle and she gazed out at the world with intense, watchful eyes.

Even in the Force she seemed different and threatening to Qui-Gon. With every glance his impression of Tano seemed to change, from a simple Jedi with more than average gifts to a crowned being escorted by a large and ferocious beast of light and sacrifice to a final vision that was so bizarre and confusing as to be little more than nonsense.

All it did was confirm to Qui-Gon that Ahsoka’s mentoring of Obi-Wan was wrong. The boy was to go to Bandomeer and the Council could decide what to do with Ahsoka Tano.

No. Obi-Wan Kenobi will be a Jedi.

The Living Force swirled up around Qui-Gon, blinding him for a moment as image after image burnt themselves into his retinas.

Well, I could always blow myself up, Master. Obi-Wan smiled with patently fake cheer as he politely offered to commit suicide to save Qui-Gon and the rest of the slaves on some kind of ship. There was something so hollow in his voice, in his presence in the Force, and it called out to Qui-Gon, begged him to take the oncoming burden from too-small shoulders.
I cannot leave them, Master! I cannot abandon them in the middle of this war! Defiance flashed in those blue-grey eyes as a slightly older Obi-Wan stood in front of Qui-Gon, his master, and refused to return to the Temple. Qui-Gon’s patience was at its end and he saw himself turn away, to abandon the boy on the war-torn planet, to leave him in that hellhole to find his own way out. His own way through heartbreak.

I will have you know, Master, that I carried the Duchess all the way across that field of venom-mites! Qui-Gon did not understand why he found Obi-Wan’s sniff of wounded pride so endearing but it warmed his heart and told him all would be well one day. Once the Duchess was safe and they returned to the Temple.

If Obi-Wan didn’t leave him for the pretty little blonde daydreamer.

Why are we going to Naboo? Obi-Wan was taller now, almost fully grown and his eyes burned like blue-white fire with a need to prove himself, to become his own man and take the Trials. There was distance there, something Qui-Gon couldn’t bridge, couldn’t stop from happening. They moved further and further apart, as surely as two continents separated by a divergent fault.

He had held onto Obi-Wan for too long and now it was tearing their bond apart.

Anakin Skywalker, meet Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Hello! Are you a Jedi, too?

And everything sundered, shattered, and crashed to the ground, a light rain made of broken dreams. The Force hissed and the fog of images faded away, leaving Qui-Gon with the uncomfortable realization that he had just seen the future.

A future where he was Obi-Wan Kenobi’s Jedi master.

The Force had spoken with great clarity and Qui-Gon had to obey its will.

“Knight Tano, a moment if you please?”

Chapter End Notes

AHSOKA TOOK OBI-WAN AS HER PADAWAN!!!! YAAAAAAAAAAAAAY!!!!! Where is my Kermit Flail Gif??

Anyway, thank you for reading, for commenting and I promise I will get to all of you somehow, someway.

I’ve written an update about Tano and Kenobi going forward that you can read HERE and if you have any questions, please let me know.

Again, thank you for reading, commenting and I will see you next week when $hit will GO. DOWN.
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi…

Ahsoka Tano has offered to take Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi as her Padawan Learner, an outcome all are happy with until Qui-Gon Jinn has a vision of a future that Ahsoka has already seen come to pass…

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Knight Tano, a moment if you please?”

The Force exploded with whispers, warnings that Obi-Wan could not understand or process at such a young age. His stomach twisted into knots as the hairs on the back of his neck stood up begging the boy to pay attention, to heed the call of the Unifying Force.

“Obi-Wan, are you all right?” Ahsoka asked, confused.

“Please!” Obi-Wan pleaded with a rising sense of dread, his heart pounding in his throat. The Force was chiming now, an insistent high pitched ringing that never meant anything good. “Let’s just go to the Council right now!”

“Obi-Wan, there’s nothing to be worried about. I’m just going to spar with Master Jinn and then when we’re done, you and I will go see the Council.”

“Knigh Tano?” Qui-Gon repeated more firmly, silencing them both. “I would like to discuss Obi-Wan’s apprenticeship with you.”

Puzzled, Ahsoka nodded and squeezed Obi-Wan’s shoulder before she walked to Qui-Gon’s side as he turned and moved away to the other side of the room. “Yes, Master Jinn? What would you like to discuss?”

“I have received a vision from the Living Force,” Qui-Gon said as he folded his arms over his chest. “It has shown me the path it wishes me to take and I must follow its instruction.”

“Oh?” Ahsoka murmured, her head canted and brows raised, something cold shivering down her spine at the certainty in his words. “And what is you feel the Living Force is asking you to do?”

Qui-Gon drew himself up to his full height, his shoulders broad and strong. “To take Obi-Wan Kenobi as my Padawan Learner.”

It was to Ahsoka’s credit that she did not roll her eyes and make a dismissive snort about “timing” or any of the other things that rose and died behind her clenched teeth. She managed to find the mental restraint necessary to plaster a polite expression on her face, one that was stolen shamelessly from Padme. “Is that so? And when did you experience this… vision?”

_I am not letting you train him. I’m here for a reason and I believe this is it. To teach Obi-Wan what_
he needs to know to win the Clone Wars and to guide Anakin to a better path. This isn’t about you, Qui-Gon.

“Just now,” Qui-Gon informed her with a firm nod and an opaque expression on his face as he stood there like a mountain that had just sprung up in her path. “I understand you may believe you feel a connection with the boy but I cannot ignore what the Force has shown me. I will be Kenobi’s Jedi Master.”

Ahsoka inhaled and exhaled slowly and tried to remember that she was not a teenager anymore and that she had absolutely no reason to bow in deference to an older human male with a beard. She kept her mask of polite cheerfulness on her face as she turned to Obi-Wan, who was watching them both with round, wary eyes.

Her eyes met Obi-Wan’s and the bond between them pulsed with worry and a simmering dislike and Ahsoka could almost hear her padawan’s thoughts across the first fledgling bridge between them.

*I don’t want him here. I want him to leave.*

For a brief moment, Ahsoka wondered what Master Obi-Wan or Padme would say, if they would have some witty retort that would manage to silence Qui-Gon and his new grand idea that he was destined to be Obi-Wan’s master. Padme would no doubt charm him with kind, polite words and subtly steer the conversation off to another topic, but there was no other topic they could discuss as Qui-Gon’s blue eyes bored into hers.

Master Obi-Wan would have simply waved it away with a funny but biting sarcastic comment that would have shamed Qui-Gon into giving up his supposed claim on the initiate. However, Ahsoka couldn’t think of anything that wouldn’t give away the fact she had come from the future and so she settled for biting her tongue.

Which was not something that came easily to the padawan of Anakin Skywalker.

“I want to thank you for the time and effort you have expended on Kenobi’s behalf,” Qui-Gon continued when Ahsoka didn’t say anything. “But I will take over his instruction from today. I am a Jedi Master and I have more experience in this matter. If we have the time, perhaps we could arrange some lessons in jar’kai. To allow your… attachment to dissipate naturally.”

“Master?” Obi-Wan spoke up, taking a few brave steps toward them. “Master, what is Master Jinn talking about?”

Qui-Gon moved to address Obi-Wan and found himself cut off, Ahsoka’s blue eyes steely with purpose and anger. She took a step backward and another until she was at the boy’s side, her hand on his shoulder. “Master Jinn seems to think he should be your master instead of me, Obi-Wan. He says he’s had a *vision* just now.”

“What?!” Obi-Wan cried, looking up at Ahsoka horrified. “No! I don’t want him to be my master. I choose you, Master Ahsoka. Please! Can’t we just go to the Council now?”

Qui-Gon seemed startled at that, as if he had never even considered how Obi-Wan would feel about the pairing. He shot a glance from Obi-Wan to Ahsoka, his eyes narrowing in thought as he peered at her. Ahsoka could feel him working through what he was going to say to convince the pair in front of him to see the wisdom of his decision.

“Obi-Wan, you are letting your attachment to Knight Tano blind you to the will of the Living Force,” Qui-Gon said, his voice warm and gentle, designed to convince a child to heed the wisdom
of the adults. “We are destined to be Master and Padawan, little one. I understand this now.”

“Pity you didn’t understand it a few days ago in the dining hall,” Ahsoka spat out before she could think better of it.

Qui-Gon flinched and turned his attention back to Ahsoka, his chin raised. “I spoke… poorly.”

“Poorly? Poorly?! You humiliated him,” Ahsoka bristled. “In front of half the Order! Was that the will of the Living Force? To hurt and shame a young boy because he dared to ask you for a bit of kindness?”

No words of denial or explanation came from Qui-Gon and Ahsoka continued on, her temper rising and all thoughts of handling the situation like Master Obi-Wan or Padme flew from her mind. Qui-Gon had insulted her padawan, her family, and she was not going to stand idly by while he tried to rip Obi-Wan away from her.

“I have worked with Obi-Wan every day since I returned to the Temple and I have never seen him as distraught as he was after your… your… bitter lesson about the uncaring will of the Living Force,” Ahsoka continued. “I have asked Obi-Wan to be my padawan and he has accepted. I’m sorry, Master Jinn, but you’ll just have to find another initiate to bully.”

As soon as the words slipped out of Ahsoka’s mouth she regretted them but they were true, no matter how rude and disrespectful she was. It was a little strange to be in Anakin’s shoes, letting her heart run away with her mouth as she faced down a higher ranking member of the Order.

*Master Windu is going to kill me!*

Finally, Qui-Gon spoke, a short and clipped sniff. “I see we must seek the wisdom of the Council on this matter.”

“No need,” Mace Windu’s voice called out across the training room as he and Master Yoda stepped into the shifting morning light. “What seems to be the problem?”

“I have just been explaining to Knight Tano that I will be taking Initiate Kenobi as my Padawan Learner,” Qui-Gon stated, his manner confident as if he knew that Masters Windu and Yoda would bow to his plans. “I have received a vision from the Living Force, instructing me to take the boy as my apprentice.”

“Oh?” Yoda seemed to croak as he hobbled over to Obi-Wan and gently motioned the boy to follow him. “A vision, you say? Hmmm… dangerous visions are. Hard to interpret, they can be.”

Mace frowned, his arms folded over his chest. As he spoke, his voice was low and sedate, like a river that hid sharp rocks within its murky depths. “Knight Tano has already expressed great interest in teaching young Kenobi and the Council is inclined to let her. Besides, I thought you had forsworn ever taking another padawan after what happened on Telos.”

Ahsoka watched, careful to keep her expression neutral but she did feel a sudden burst of gratefulness to Master Windu. She turned to quietly regard Qui-Gon and was surprised at what she sensed radiating from him.

**Anger.**

Qui-Gon was furious and the emotions flickered and curled around the edges of his shield, tongues of flames hungry for an open field to burn through. His brows were furrowed and his mouth pulled into a sharp, thin line.
“I spoke from a place of anger and pain,” Qui-Gon said, head tall and proud. “I acted out of self-pity and spite. Time and the Force have taught me that I still have much to learn and much I can teach young Kenobi. While my second padawan fell, is not my first, Knight Feemor, a testament to my skills as a mentor?”

Ahsoka glanced back at Yoda confused. Who was Knight Feemor and what did he have to do with anything?

“Disavowed all your padawans, you did, after the second’s fall,” Yoda pointed out, settling onto one of the viewing benches. “Hurt, Feemor was. Great your devotion to the Force is Qui-Gon. Perhaps too great. Blind you, it can.”

“I… I have no excuse for my behavior,” Qui-Gon sighed, for a moment properly chastised by the Grand Master. “But I stand firm in my belief that I am the best possible master for this boy.”

Master Windu snorted and turned to Master Yoda. “Have you asked Initiate Kenobi how he feels about this?”

“No, he hasn’t,” Ahsoka spoke up, unwilling to let Qui-Gon steamroll her and Obi-Wan.

Qui-Gon shot her a look and she refused to quail under his glare. She had stared down monsters and walking nightmares. She had fought Darth Maul to a standstill and lived to tell the tale.

She had seen her beloved mentor vow to kill her and survived.

It would take more than Qui-Gon Jinn to scare Ahsoka Tano.

“Don’t you think the boy should be consulted?” Mace Windu said, his voice casual, offering the stubborn master a way out that would save face.

“His tutelage is too important,” Qui-Gon insisted, disregarding the Korun Master. “You must understand what is at stake! Kenobi will be a great Jedi. I have foreseen it.”

“Have you?” Master Windu pursed his lips. “Knight Tano? Will you yield to Master Jinn’s… vision and allow him to take Obi-Wan as his Padawan Learner?”

“No, I will not,” Ahsoka stated, her voice firm and clear and the grim smile on her face all Anakin Skywalker. She turned to Qui-Gon, hands on her hips and her chin raised.

Master Windu shrugged and let out a puff of air. “Well then there’s nothing I can do. You two will have to work this out between each other.”

The Korun master proceeded to stroll over and sit down on the other side of Obi-Wan, the young boy now flanked by the two highest ranking members of the Jedi Order. For a moment, Ahsoka almost wondered if Yoda was going to try to lay claim to Obi-Wan just bring the matter to a close.

Turning back to Qui-Gon, Ahsoka tried to think of a way through that would keep Obi-Wan with her and not endanger their position in the Order. It would be one thing for Ahsoka to attempt to find her way through the galaxy alone but with Obi-Wan with her that was going to make things infinitely more difficult.

“Perhaps we should meditate on the will of the Force in this matter, Knight Tano,” Qui-Gon offered in an attempt to be magnanimous. “I’m sure you will come to understand that it is better for me to train Obi-Wan than a brand new knight who has spent her life in the field under the tutelage of an… unconventional Jedi Master.”
“An unconventional Jedi Master?” Ahsoka echoed, her own hackles rising at the damning of Anakin with faint praise. “My master was a great man and everything I am I owe to him. Master Skywalker would have snapped Obi-Wan up the minute he saw him.”

Obi-Wan tried not to preen at Ahsoka’s comment and Mace Windu gave him a sideways glance, one eyebrow raised. Obi-Wan looked away, but the warmth of his master’s praise was still there in his heart.

“Forgive me,” Qui-Gon huffed, his patience fraying. “I did not mean to insult the memory of your master. I am only attempting to draw attention to your lack of experience in these matters.”

“I’m well aware of my personal failings, Master Jinn,” Ahsoka replied in what she hoped was an airy, dismissive tone. “Can you say the same?”

Ahsoka realized she had crossed a line when Qui-Gon turned a thunderous scowl towards Masters Yoda and Windu. “Surely you can both see that Knight Tano is incapable of controlling her anger. We cannot risk Initiate Kenobi learning from her example. He is too talented to be left with a half-taught Knight.”

“I am not half-taught!” Ahsoka protested, wishing she didn’t sound quite so petulant and childish.

“Masters,” Obi-Wan softly spoke up. “Surely there is something in the Archives that might help settle the dispute?”

“Not that I can recall,” Master Windu mused, stroking his chin as he closed his eyes in concentration. “Perhaps Master Yoda would remember something?”

“Young was I, when last this problem occurred,” Yoda sighed, shaking his head. “A talented initiate rose up, strong in the Force and very powerful. Two knights fought, dueled for the chance to train the child. Became the master, the winner did.”

“An excellent idea,” Qui-Gon nodded, turning to give Ahsoka a bland expression. “Don’t you agree, Knight Tano?”

“No!” Ahsoka gasped at the same time as Obi-Wan. “Why are you being so stubborn about this? You were perfectly willing to throw Obi-Wan away like a piece of trash but now that you’ve claimed to have a Force vision he’s yours? He is not a thing! Obi-Wan is a person and he’s made his thoughts clear on the subject.”

Obi-Wan clenched his hands into fists and nodded. Yes, Master! You tell him!

“I claim nothing,” Qui-Gon rumbled, taking a step towards Ahsoka, a volcano ready to blow. “The Force is very clear to me on this. To throw out the will of the Living Force is to break faith with our whole Order and way of life!”

Illustrating his point with a jab of one long finger in her direction, Qui-Gon finished his tirade. “Obi-Wan Kenobi will be my padawan. You are only delaying the inevitable and causing him more pain with your selfish attachment.”

“You’re wrong!” Ahsoka spat back, her heart pounding and the blood rushing through her montrals so loud she almost couldn’t hear what it was she was saying. “And I’ll prove it to you. I accept your challenge, Master Qui-Gon Jinn. Whoever wins our duel will have the honor and the privilege of taking Obi-Wan Kenobi as their Padawan Learner.”

“I accept, Knight Tano.” Qui-Gon bowed and walked over to the far end of the benches to give
himself some space in an attempt to regain control over his emotions.

“NO!” Obi-Wan shouted, bolting out of his seat and running over to Ahsoka. “No! Please! I don’t want you to do this, Master!”

Dazed at what she had just agreed to, Ahsoka knelt down in front of Obi-Wan and put her hands on his shoulder. She made herself focus on the boy in front of her, on his sandy copper hair. His blue eyes were round with fear and she felt horrible for putting him in this situation.

Ahsoka had done that. She had put that fear in him. When she had told herself she needed to prove that she was the best possible master for Obi-Wan, this was not what she had meant. A master should never cause their Padawan this kind of pain.

She didn’t even intend for Qui-Gon to know about her personal test of skill but now everything had gone wrong, had tumbled out and crashed onto the floor and shattered like a priceless vase. This wasn’t how any of this was supposed to be going but she had opened her mouth and the words of her master had popped out like she was sixteen again and itching to prove her worth to whoever wanted to test her.

In the end, it was Anakin’s teachings that won out.

“Obi-Wan, please, listen to me,” she said, her voice low and calm, a hopeful expression on her face. “I need you to have faith in me, to believe in me. I won’t let you down. I need to do this, to prove to myself and to everyone else that I’m your Master. Okay? Do you understand?”

Ahsoka could feel Obi-Wan’s anger and misery. He had been so close to getting what he wanted, to getting a master who cared for him and valued him, who would be a partner and would walk with him, hand in hand to knighthood. He didn’t really understand how he knew this but Obi-Wan knew in his bones that Ahsoka was the superior choice of master.

And she was asking him to trust her, to trust in her skills, and the Force to see them both through this trial.

His first true test as a Padawan. Trusting his master’s wisdom.

Obi-Wan inhaled a sharp snifflle and nodded. “Yes, Master. I understand. I don’t like it but I understand.”

Ahsoka wanted to pull Obi-Wan in for a tight hug but she was far too conscious of Yoda and Mace Windu’s watchful eyes. She settled for brushing his hair out of his eyes and giving him a long, solemn look. “Trust the Force, Obi-Wan.”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured, stepping back and watching her move away to begin limbering up for the duel.

Ahsoka watched Master Windu guide Obi-Wan back to the bench and caught Windu’s eye as they went. His face was expressionless but in spite of that, his intense gaze seemed to be supportive. He nodded once to her before sitting down with Obi-Wan, who was staring at her with anxious blue eyes.

She couldn’t fail him.

Not like she had failed Anakin.

The rules for a duel between Jedi was simple. The duel was limited to a training room or a sparring
salon. Overt uses of the Force, such as throwing benches or other loose items, was forbidden and lightsabers were always set to a low level that may or may not leave a mark but would clearly indicate if a wound was taken. Full-powered bare blades were also forbidden.

The dueling Jedi were to meet in the middle of the sparring area and salute each other and the central Temple spire. While most Jedi preferred timed matches to bring a neat and neutral end to something that could become heated at times, it was not a required portion of a duel. Any saber style was allowed, save Vapaad since only Master Windu had truly managed to master it. The duel could also be ended at any moment should a Council member choose to intervene.

Ahsoka highly doubted that happening.

After a short series of warm-up movements, she stepped into the wide square marked on the floor that indicated the sparring area. It was demarcated by beautifully inlaid tilework of rich blues and vibrant greens and in the center was a stylized symbol for the Jedi Order. She pulled her sabers from her hips, rolling them back and forth in her hands, grounding herself in their familiar presence, in the memories of the future she was seeking to prevent.

_You can do this, Ahsoka. Obi-Wan is counting on you. Anakin is counting on you. You’ve beaten bigger men than this without your lightsabers. Just breathe and follow your instincts._

Qui-Gon strode into the sparring area and the tiled edge of the square flickered to life. If either of them wished to yield, all they had to do was to step outside of the dueling area. From where Obi-Wan was watching, the square seemed impossibly small even though it was roughly 40 meters squared and there was more than enough room for both of them.

The two stepped to the ordained positions, Ahsoka standing at the base of the Temple Spire and Qui-Gon standing at the top, on the star that represented the Force as a guiding light. She couldn’t help notice the symbolism and wondered if he had gone to the star first as a silent rebuke of her defiance.

Ahsoka grit her teeth and flipped her sabers into position for the salute.

“Before we begin,” Qui-Gon intoned, gazing over at Ahsoka with a serious face, “I want you to know that I wish you only good fortune in your future endeavors. I’m sure some day you will make an excellent master to a very worthy padawan."

Did this man ever stop talking to people like they were beneath him? How had Master Obi-Wan put up with him for so long? “Good luck, Master Jinn,” Ahsoka managed to get out. “May the Force be with you.”

“And with you, Knight Tano,” Qui-Gon nodded and raised his blade to salute her.

Ahsoka raised her left blade and they both turned in the direction of the Temple spire before returning their attention to each other and the duel.

“Begin,” Yoda called out from the far side of the room and the Force leapt to life around them.

Ahsoka and Qui-Gon began to circle each other, their gaze locked as they tried to pick out weaknesses in each other’s defensive posture. Ahsoka’s was loose and almost sloppy, a casual stance she had learned from Anakin, hiding a firm grasp of Djem Sho.

Qui-Gon was a master of Ataru, a form designed to overpower an opponent with a Force-assisted series of strikes coming from all directions. Ahsoka had seen it a few times when she was in battles with other Jedi but it was not a form she had a great deal of experience with.
Maybe I should just take the fight to him.

Before Ahsoka could consider the wisdom of an early attack, Qui-Gon was moving, far faster than anyone that big had any right to. She moved to an overhead block, letting his attack slide off her sabers as Qui-Gon spun around for another sweep at her flank. She fended that off with a backhanded block and darted away, putting space between the two of them.

The Force crackled and surged around them, a choppy sea of emotions and power, giving her a distinct feeling of being off balance. Ahsoka took a breath and threw all thoughts of the Force’s unstable nature out of her mind.

She didn’t have time to worry about that. Qui-Gon was going to take all of her concentration.

Qui-Gon attacked again, a series of strong, calculated strikes designed to unbalance or disarm her: the advantage of having a second saber was that if one was lost in battle there was always a back-up. It made good sense for him to go after Ahsoka’s other saber right away.

As she deflected his strikes he continued to press his attack, striking again and again at Ahsoka’s left hand, thinking it was weaker. She fell back and back until her montrals picked up the faintest hum of the barrier tiles embedded in the floor.

Spinning away from Qui-Gon’s assault, she whipped around to strike him from behind and hopefully push him over the line and end the duel that way.

Kriff it! Ahsoka cursed as Qui-Gon used his momentum to turn into a flip and landed just on this side of safe. He looked back over his shoulder at Ahsoka and nodded his head just a little to her.

Well done, Knight Tano, he seemed to say.

Ahsoka’s only response was to bring her sabers up and prepare for another assault, still hoping to push him over the line. She chased Qui-Gon along the edge of the training area, their sabers clashing and sparking, hissing with their unvoiced emotions that trailed after them in shades of orange and red.

They were more alike than either wanted to admit, both driven by a desire to save the future they had seen. While Ahsoka strove to prevent it, Qui-Gon desired to preserve it.

There was a danger in Ahsoka, Qui-Gon knew, a danger he could not allow her to infect Obi-Wan with and, through him, the nebulous future of the Order. There is something wrong about her and she must be stopped lest something even worse befall us all.

As for Ahsoka, she was sure she had already lived through the worst and was adamant that this time it would not happen.

They danced back and forth across the floor, trading glancing blows like polite conversation. At first Qui-Gon would be ahead, pushing Ahsoka into a corner with his superior might and strength and then Ahsoka would slip past or flip agilely out of the way. She would inevitably end up breathless but safe, and the fight would go on.

Obi-Wan sat anxiously between the two masters as the fight wore on, his hands curled into fists and his whole body tight and strained with nervous tension. Every time Ahsoka seemed to be ahead he would shake his fists, doing his best to silently cheer his chosen master on.

Whenever Qui-Gon was ahead, Obi-Wan would go pale and hold his hands to his stomach as if he could contain his worry.
Yoda and Mace Windu exchanged glances but said nothing, waiting to see how the Force was going to dictate the fight.

After a series of back flips to the other side of the sparring area, Ahsoka came up into a defensive position only to let out a yelp as Qui-Gon was somehow, impossibly, already there and attacking her, trying to pin her to the ground.

“Master!” Obi-Wan cried out.

Ahsoka stumbled and turned it into a roll that flowed into a crouch and a dash to freedom. She made it upright only to discover she had lost one of her sabers in the desperate scuffle. Switching her left blade to her right hand, Ahsoka brought her blade up into a guard as Qui-Gon charged.

Ahsoka’s mind was empty save for the echoed memories of her training and her battles. Each strike and defense had a countermove and a proper retaliation.

An Overhead strike was met with a Reverse Wing that turned into a Waning Crescent blow. Ataru’s Torrent of Falling Leaves was deflected narrowly by Soresu’s Divergent River. Their entire fight was a textbook example of a classically trained warrior doing his best to control and dominate an opponent who knew far more about how to kill and destroy than dueling to a polite finish.

And there was no end in sight.

Perhaps, she thought, it was time to show Qui-Gon just who he was dealing with.

Ahsoka called for her lost saber but somehow the Jedi Master batted it away with the Force, sending the hilt skittering over to a far corner. She charged at him before he could push it over the line, launching into the Falling Avalanche attack Anakin preferred. She didn’t have his strength but she had speed and the element of surprise.

Pushing Qui-Gon back across the floor, Ahsoka pressed her attack, opening herself to the Force, letting the swells of energy power her on. Qui-Gon was on the defensive and if she could just wear him out, if she could just break through his defenses, she knew she could win.

And Obi-Wan would be free.

The Force was flowing through her so powerfully that she didn’t notice Qui-Gon’s subtle shift, the way he pivoted and then sent her flying with a hard kick to the stomach. Ahsoka crashed to the ground with a groan, coughing and gasping for air as the Jedi Master hurried over to her, eager to put an end to the duel once and for all.

“You have been a worthy adversary but it is time you yield, Knight Tano,” Qui-Gon grunted as he moved for the killing blow, ignoring Ahsoka curling to her feet, one hand wrapped around her stomach. “I swear to you that I shall ensure the future I have seen is protected. Obi-Wan will be a Jedi Knight of my lineage.”

“No!” Ahsoka shouted and Qui-Gon found himself knocked back a meter by the strength of her push in the Force. She swayed to stand back up and let out a puff of angry air. “You’re wrong!”

Qui-Gon grunted, bringing his saber into a guard position. “What do you really know of the Force? It clings to you like a miasma of ash and fire. There is something wrong about you, something dark. I can sense it.”

“You have no idea what you’re talking about,” Ahsoka quickly scanned her mind for anything left in her arsenal of saberwork that could take Qui-Gon Jinn down. Short of some kind of lucky shot, the
best she could hope for now was trying to outlast him. She could already tell that Ataru was taking a lot out of him, sweat staining his collar and chest. It took a lot of energy to heft all that bulk into the air for complicated acrobatics and it was difficult to maintain the focus necessary to remain open to Force while fighting at the same time.

Ahsoka raised her blade to her temples and pointed at Qui-Gon with two fingers. “Ready when you are, Qui-Gon.”

The charge came bold and powerful, almost too powerful. Soresu’s strength was in the warrior’s endurance, in their ability to keep going. It was designed for blasters, for holding off an army of battle droids.

It wasn’t a form that came naturally to Anakin and so Anakin had neglected to work with Ahsoka on it during their short time together, but Master Obi-Wan had noticed some weakness in her forms and had quietly offered to tutor her when they could find a free moment between missions when the 501st and the 212 had been assigned together.

She would never claim to be the greatest Soresu swordsman in the galaxy but that wasn’t the point. She had been trained by the great Master of Soresu and that was all that mattered.

Again and again they fought, an exhausted stalemate going back and forth, Ahsoka giving ground and Qui-Gon chasing after it only to lose her and have to start again. The duel had taken so long the sun had moved in the sky, twisting the shadows and forcing the two warriors to take different angles of attack to keep the sun out of their faces.

Mace Windu looked over at Yoda and cleared his throat, waiting for the Grand Master to come to some sort of a decision. The ancient master had closed his eyes and Mace had the feeling he was watching the fight in the Force, following the swirling eddies and currents of fate and portent that were caught up in the storm that was the Force in this moment. Shatterpoints sprung to life and then vanished, and for a moment Mace wanted to stop the duel, to take a moment to think through whatever was going on beyond his awareness, beyond even his keen senses.

But then Qui-Gon struck, a twisting upper strike that slashed through Ahsoka’s arm and she let out a scream of pain as he jerked the saber out of her hand with the Force and flung it across the boundary line.

“Master!” Obi-Wan cried, already trying to hop off the bench and run to her before Mace forcibly returned him to his seat. “No! My master’s hurt! Master Ahsoka!”

Mace frowned as the shatterpoints grew rampant, exploding across his vision like an infection of darkness and pain.

He did not like this at all.

Ahsoka’s right arm seized in pain, contracting into a horrible claw at her side and trembling as she backed away from Qui-Gon, searching for some way to beat him, for some kind of ray of hope.

“I can’t lose like this! I can’t lose Obi-Wan to him! He has no idea what he’s doing! Master, help me please! What do I do?”

But Anakin wasn’t there. No one was.

Ahsoka would have to end this herself.
“Do you yield, Knight Tano?” Qui-Gon asked, stepping forward and holding out an arm. “I do not wish to cause you or Obi-Wan any further pain.”

Should she yield?

*It will be a cold day on Mustafar when I yield to the likes of you.* Ahsoka grunted and shook her head, sending the Force through her limbs to still the shaking and block away the pain. “No. I don’t.”

Qui-Gon shook his head and he charged at half speed. “Your arm is useless and your weapon gone. Do not let your pride cause you and my Padawan further grief, Knight Tano.”

“He’s not your padawan!” Ahsoka shouted back, dancing backwards, leaping, vaulting and flipping out of the way of his saber before she found an opening and scampered around to the back of the Jedi Master. She risked a glance at Obi-Wan, at his round, scared eyes and the pain radiating out of him like a black halo.

“Enough, Knight Tano!” Qui-Gon growled, turning to pursue her across the sparring area. “You have dragged this farce on long enough!”

Obi-Wan locked eyes with Ahsoka and pointedly looked down and to his left, beyond where Ahsoka was carefully backing away from Qui-Gon’s imminent attack. Ahsoka danced out of the way of an attack and put her back to Obi-Wan, Masters Yoda and Windu when she spotted it.

Her first saber, forgotten on the floor.

Qui-Gon hadn’t managed to launch it out of the sparring area.

And unlike Qui-Gon, Ahsoka could fight with her left hand.

Backflipping away from another swing, Ahsoka reached out with the Force, trying to hide her intentions behind a mask of anger and desperation, shoving every last furious and hurtful thought to the front of her mind.

*Anakin trusted you!*

*You humiliated Obi-Wan in front of everyone!*

*I believed you! I believed in your wisdom!*

*You’re just a selfish old man who doesn’t care about anybody but himself!*

*Obi-Wan is my padawan! I won’t let you have him!*

Qui-Gon paid Ahsoka no mind as he continued his assault, his own anger turning to bile in his throat, growing bitter and poisonous as he struggled to bring an end to this farce, to this desecration of the will of the Living Force.

He was certain that the next blow would end it. A glancing blow across her left arm followed by a twin strike to the leg would take her down for good and end this charade once and for all. Obi-Wan Kenobi would be his and then he would make a strong recommendation to the Council that Knight Tano was censured for at least two months to meditate on letting her personal attachments blind her to the will of the Force.

But then there was a metallic skittering sound and empty air where Knight Tano was supposed to be and the faint hum of a saber.
Then there was pain and fire as Ahsoka’s saber cut through his right arm above the elbow and his hand spasmed open, dropping his saber which Ahsoka kicked out of bounds with a grunt.

That’s not possible!

Qui-Gon found himself neck to blade with Ahsoka’s lightsaber, the weapon hissing and crackling in his ears.

“Do you yield?” Ahsoka asked, her blue eyes laser-sharp on his, her mouth pulled into a grim frown.

His mind reeled.

How could he have lost? How could this young woman, this slip of a Jedi, have beaten him? Who taught her how to fight like that, like the fate of the galaxy was on her shoulders? Why did she know so many forms?

How could the Force allow this to happen? He had always followed the Living Force however it dictated and he could not comprehend that it would lead him to humiliating defeat.

But his saber arm screamed in agony and there were no other blades to call and even if he could, he would be no match against a jar’kai master with his off hand.

As he stared at her, Qui-Gon had to acknowledge Ahsoka was a masterful fighter. Her style was distinct and perhaps not teachable, but it was effective, devastatingly so. He had underestimated her and paid the price.

Whoever this mysterious Master Skywalker was, he had taught her well.

“Master Jinn?” Mace Windu murmured, intruding on Qui-Gon’s dark thoughts. “Do you yield this duel to Knight Tano and all that it entails?”

Qui-Gon glanced at Obi-Wan, at the furrowed, angry brows, at the way his lips were quirked into not quite a scowl but close enough that he would have scolded him for such an open display of emotion. But he realized something at that moment.

Obi-Wan’s angry scowl was a twin of Ahsoka’s, both of them glaring at him as if he was an uninvited guest, a persona non grata.

You are not wanted here, the boy and his Master’s Force presences whispered to Qui-Gon. You are beaten. Accept it and move on.

Qui-Gon exhaled slowly and stepped backwards, holding up his left arm. “I yield. Knight Tano shall be Obi-Wan Kenobi’s master.”

For now, Qui-Gon found himself thinking as he stepped away into the shadows to ease the stinging fire of his “mild injury” from Ahsoka’s blade.

This is not finished, Knight Tano. The Force has shown me the path forward and I cannot allow you to deviate us from the course for long. Too much is at stake.

Chapter End Notes
WOOOHOOOOO!

YOU GO AHSOKA! YOU SHOW THAT PROBLEMATIC GLACIER WHO DA REAL MVP IS! WOOOOHOOOOOO!

^____^;;;;

Well... I hope you liked it! Next chapter is the last chapter for this season of Tano and Kenobi, which will return on April 2! Thanks for reading and if you want to fight me with gifs you can find me at my tumblr FireflyFish.
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After his vision of a possible future, Qui-Gon Jinn insists that he be allowed to train Obi-Wan Kenobi, in spite of Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan’s protests. When Masters Windu and Yoda are unable to find a solution to the problem, Qui-Gon and Ahsoka agree to duel for the privilege of training the young Initiate. Fortunately for Obi-Wan, Ahsoka is the superior duelist that day...

As soon as the duel was decided in Ahsoka’s favor Obi-Wan jumped up and ran over to his master, immediately fretting over the tortured claw her hand was frozen in. “Master, we have to get you to the healers!”

Ahsoka let out a soft, exhausted laugh and shook her head, taking her left hand and slowly, carefully, with a great deal more skill than Master Yoda or Windu expected of her, sent the Force running down her arm. The cool electricity soothed her agitated nerves, inflamed muscles and ligaments: it hurt like a blaster bolt to bare skin but it was much easier to use the Force like this in the Temple than when she was on the run from the Empire.

Everything seemed easier here.

With a relieved sigh, Ahsoka relaxed her hand and stretched it out, glad to see there was no serious damage done. Then she dropped down to one knee in front of Obi-Wan and beamed up at him. “See? I told you to trust me.”

“I did, Master. I knew you would win.” Obi-Wan’s eyes shone with such radiant joy and relief that Ahsoka couldn’t resist and she pulled him in for a good, long hug. He happily submitted to her, his arms wrapped tight around her shoulders as Masters Yoda and Windu walked over to quietly speak with Qui-Gon, who was watching the two with a mixture of suspicion and a touch of regret.

“So… do you still want to be my Padawan?” Ahsoka teased, reaching out to ruffle Obi-Wan’s thick hair. “Or have you changed your mind?”

Obi-Wan shook his head, his eyes bright. “Never. Can we go to the Council now?”

Ahsoka chuckled at that, nodding. “Yes. I think we can go to the Council now.”

“Yes!” He took a step back, thrilled, as Ahsoka stood up. She held out her hand, called her other saber to her, and returned both to her belt as she asked Obi-Wan to bring her cloak and Qui-Gon’s from the benches.

The Force exploded with spines but a single arch of her brow immediately quelled Obi-Wan’s churlish reaction and he nodded silently as he trotted back to them. Ahsoka knew she may have won the battle with Qui-Gon and claimed Obi-Wan as her Padawan but that didn't give her or Obi-Wan
the right to gloat about it or to rub it the Jedi Master’s face.

Yes, Qui-Gon had behaved abominably towards Obi-Wan and yes, he had continued that trend in the lead-up to the duel, but he had yielded and it wouldn’t do to rub his nose in his loss. They couldn’t afford to make an enemy of Qui-Gon Jinn, especially when their only friends seemed to consist of Masters Windu, Yoda and Padawan Quinlan Vos.

Ahsoka had no way of knowing how much she had changed the course of the future and it made sense to proceed forward with an abundance of caution. She just hoped she would be able to live up to the examples set by Masters Obi-Wan and Plo Koon if not Anakin.

Obi-Wan shuffled back over to Ahsoka’s side, nearly drowning in heavy robes. “These weigh as much as a gundark.”

“And how would you know what a gundark weighs?” Ahsoka teased, taking her robe from Obi-Wan and pulling it on, although she did agree that the robe was perhaps heavier than she would have liked. “Thank you, Padawan Kenobi. Now let’s make our goodbyes and then we will go to the Council.”

Obi-Wan visibly brightened at being called “Padawan” and he grinned up at Ahsoka. As much as he wanted to drop Qui-Gon’s robes on the floor and march out of the training room with Master Ahsoka at his side, he had to grudgingly admit that she was right.

And hearing Ahsoka call him “Padawan”? That made it all worthwhile.

“What happens at the Council?” Obi-Wan asked as they walked slowly towards the cluster of Masters Windu, Yoda, and Jinn. “Is that when I get my braid?”

Ahsoka pursed her lips. “You know… I don’t know. My apprenticeship was a little… unconventional. I guess we’ll find out together.”

Nodding, Obi-Wan followed after Ahsoka, trying not to trip on the yards and yards of fabric that made up Qui-Gon Jinn’s robes.

“We will discuss that later,” Windu said as Ahsoka and Obi-Wan came within earshot of the masters’ conversation. The three men turned to the new master and her padawan, who both bowed respectfully to their elders.

“Obi-Wan and I would like to thank Master Jinn for his time and effort today,” Ahsoka began, putting a hand on her padawan’s back. “And we would like to thank you, too, Master Windu and Master Yoda. I hope we can count on your wisdom and guidance in the future?”

Mace Windu quirked his lips into an almost pleasant expression as he bowed his head in response. “Of course, Knight Tano, Padawan Kenobi.”

“Strong, your bond is already,” Yoda commented, both hands folded over the knob of his gimer stick. “A good pair, you will make. Agree, do you not, Master Jinn?”

Qui-Gon peered down at the pair before him, his eyes narrowed in thought before he took a deep breath and nodded. “Yes. Perhaps they will. You fought very well, Knight Tano. Obi-Wan will learn much from you.”

“Thank you, Master Jinn,” Ahsoka replied with another small bow before she caught Obi-Wan’s eye and gestured a little with her head.
“Oh! Yes!” Obi-Wan stepped forward and held up Qui-Gon’s robe, his eyes respectfully downcast. “Here is your robe, Master Jinn.”

Ahsoka coughed. Annnd?

Obi-Wan waited for Qui-Gon to take the heavy garment from his hands before he stepped back into the safety of Ahsoka’s presence before he gave a deep bow at the waist. “Thank you for your time and concern, Master Jinn. I… uhm… Thank you. Very much.”

With another short bow, Obi-Wan stepped behind Ahsoka, safe in his master’s shadow.

Qui-Gon managed a small smile and returned Obi-Wan’s bow with a shorter one of his own. “You’re welcome, Obi-Wan. I’m sure you will become a great Jedi Knight someday.”

“Yes, he will,” Ahsoka beamed proudly, glancing back over her shoulder at the blue-eyed boy who was turning an uncomfortable shade of red. “If you will excuse us, I need to clean up before our meeting with the Council.”

“Of course,” Master Windu nodded, dismissing the pair. “Make sure you visit the Quartermaster’s office. Kenobi’s dorm is going to be given to a new age group today.”

“Yes, Master Windu,” Ahsoka replied and with that, she and Obi-Wan took their leave of the masters, neither giving Qui-Gon Jinn a backwards glance as they quietly made their way to the turbolift that would take them down to the floor where the Quartermaster’s office was located.

Once the door closed on the turbolift, Ahsoka shot a sideways look at Obi-Wan, who was already looking up at her, an impish tilt to his head.

“Yes?” Ahsoka grinned, her heart full of joy and happiness. She was hard pressed to remember the last time she felt so light and joyous. It seemed that so much of her life had been tainted by loss and grief that it took some serious reminiscing to remember pure, unfettered joy.

Maybe when Anakin said he was going to take her as his Padawan after all. Maybe that was the last time she felt truly happy.

Permission to enthuse granted, Obi-Wan hands curled into fists as he punched the air. “That was amazing! You’re amazing! You beat Master Jinn and he’s huge! Did you learn to fight like that from Master Skywalker? Did he do Soresu? I saw a Soresu stance! And Djem Sho!”

Drawn into Obi-Wan’s buoyant delight, Ahsoka laughed. “Yes. There was some Soresu but I learned that from my grandmaster. Master Skywalker prefereed Djem Sho and the rest I just… picked up.”

Obi-Wan nodded, absolutely enraptured by his master. “Will you teach me? I want to be able to do that too!”

Ahsoka chuckled as their elevator can to a stop. “I promise I’ll teach you everything I know. But first, I need you to take us to the Quartermaster’s office.”

“Oh yes! This way, Master!” Obi-Wan nodded, marching out of the turbolift like he was leading a grand procession, Ahsoka cheerfully following him.
After receiving the directions to their new suite of rooms, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan swung by his former dorm to gather up his few possessions, even as he kept insisting that he was a Padawan now and had no need for personal attachments.

“Obi-Wan…” Ahsoka sighed, sitting down on the bed opposite her Padawan, a solemn expression on her face. “There is nothing wrong with having mementos of happy times or a favorite pair of boots. It’s the fear of losing those things that leads to the dark side.”

Obi-Wan frowned, holding a particularly dear piece holo to his chest as he tried to understand the nuance of Ahsoka’s teachings. “Yes, Master. I’m sorry. I… I thought a Jedi had no possessions. That all attachments are bad.”

“Am I bad, Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka asked softly, holding her hands open. “I had an attachment to my master, a very strong one, and I haven’t fallen. I had very dear friends that I loved deeply and… I’m still here, right?”

Images of Anakin, of Rex and his brothers, of Bail Organa and Hera, Kanan and the rest of the Ghost’s crew flashed through her mind. She knew now she would never see any of them again. They would strangers, polite and distant, with no idea of how deeply Ahsoka had cared for them in another life, another time.

Obi-Wan looked at Ahsoka puzzled, sensing the darker shadows in her words, feeling the ghost of pain at the loss of those dear friends even though they had really only just formed a true bond together. He put down his holo cube and turned to face his master with a serious face. “I do not think you could ever fall, Master Ahsoka. And… I am sorry. I am sorry that coming here means that you will not see your friends again, that your master is lost. I… I am so honored and happy to be your Padawan but… I know this is not how you wanted it to be.”

Ahsoka gaped at Obi-Wan, baffled. “What… Obi-Wan! Don’t be ridiculous! This is what I wanted! What the Force told me to do! Just because I miss my friends does not mean I am not just as honored and happy to be your Master!”

Obi-Wan found himself pulled in tight for another hug and the Force hummed quietly around them, whispering of peace, of stillness and the promise of light. It promised its children that this was right, this was good.

They would mend what was broken and make it newer, better.

They would heal the tree that bore the horrible bounty of Darth Vader and the Empire.

All will be well, children of Light, the Force seemed to say.

“Master?” Obi-Wan mumbled into Ahsoka’s shoulder.

“Yeah?”

“I like these.”

Ahsoka smiled and finished off their hug with an extra strong squeeze. “Me too, Padawan. Me too.”

“So… I can keep my holos and my old boots?” Obi-Wan peeked up Ahsoka, all round blue eyes and
nervous fingers. He knew Qui-Gon Jinn would have made him leave his things behind, to cast off the old in favor of the now.

Grinning, Ahsoka picked up Obi-Wan’s small pack and headed towards the door. “Of course. Now let’s get going! We have a date with the Council and I don’t know about you but I do not want to be late.”

“I try very hard not to be late, Master,” Obi-Wan informed Ahsoka, reaching out to grab his favorite pillow before he scampered after her. “But it’s always so difficult with Padawan Vos distracting me!”

“You can always tell him ‘No’, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka chuckled as they signed out of the Initiate dorm, much to the dorm master’s delight. She bid Padawan Kenobi a successful apprenticeship and waved as they both walked off in the direction of the shared living suites, where their new suite was located.

“Have you ever tried to tell Quinlan Vos ‘No’?” Obi-Wan snorted in a manner so reminiscent of Master Obi-Wan that Ahsoka spent the rest of the turbolift ride trying to control her laughter. “What? What did I say that was so funny? Master! Tell me!”

“I’ll tell you when you’re older,” Ahsoka finally managed to gasp out only to lose her control again when Obi-Wan folded his arms over his chest in a picture-perfect copy of an irritated General Kenobi upon hearing of another one of Anakin’s antics.

“Oh honestly!” Obi-Wan huffed, starting to feel embarrassed. “You are just as bad as Quinlan!”

“I’m sorry!” Ahsoka said as she took a deep breath and keyed them into their new apartments. “You just… You reminded me of my grandmaster. The… the resemblance is uncanny sometimes.”

Obi-Wan perked up at being compared to Master Skywalker’s master. “He was human? Do I look like him?”

Ahsoka nodded, checking to make sure the lights worked and the water in the refresher and the sink ran before she let Obi-Wan run into his room and start laying out his small assortment of personal effects. “You do, although Master Ob… oh look! We have a view!”

_Whew! That was a close one._

“What is it of?” Obi-Wan asked from his room, not willing to leave his task for any old landscape.

“The… wow. The Senate building,” Ahsoka replied, as she realized just what is was she was gazing at. “I didn’t think the Temple had any rooms with a view out onto the Senate district.”

Obi-Wan stuck his head out of the door. “The Temple is built on top of a mountain. We have excellent views of a great section of central Coruscant.”

“Why thank you, Padawan Travel Guide,” Ahsoka replied with a bow of her head and twinkle in her eye. “Now let me hop into the refresher and then…?”

Obi-Wan’s eyes sparkled with glee. “The Council?”

“The Council,” Ahsoka winked and hurried off to get clean, the distant blue dome of the Senate building forgotten.

For now.
It turned out there were two steps to officially sealing a Master-Padawan pair. There was the Presentation to the Council of Masters, where the Jedi Knight brought forth their intended Initiate to the approval or disapproval of the Masters. Almost all Jedi Knights spent weeks, if not months, consulting with friendly masters on the Council to ensure their choices were pre-approved and that the Presentation was little more than a rubber stamp.

Ahsoka had already taken steps on that front: she had filled out the paperwork necessary for claiming Obi-Wan as her Padawan the day after Qui-Gon’s tantrum and then spent the next few days quietly conferring with as many friendly masters as she could find which, surprisingly, was quite a few.

It seemed everyone in the Temple heard about Qui-Gon’s brutal rejection of Initiate Kenobi and when Ahsoka broached the subject with Master Windu, he seemed almost pleased at the idea. Master Yoda had assured her of his vote and Masters Plo Koon and Shaak Ti also quickly agreed to the pairing. With Master Yaddle’s support as well, Ahsoka really only needed one more master on the Council to agree to her claim on Obi-Wan and that last “yes” came from a surprising place.

“I have heard you intend to take Senior Initiate Kenobi as your Padawan,” Master Sifo Dyas announced, nearly scaring Ahsoka out of her skin from where she was reading a datapad on recent political actions in the Senate, searching for traces of Senator Palpatine. “I have been told you have sought the approval of several masters and yet, we have not spoken on this topic, Knight Tano.”

Ahsoka paled and gave Master Dyas a weak smile. “I’m sorry, Master Dyas. I thought that given your… doubts about my fitness for knighthood, I thought you would object to me… influencing Initiate Kenobi.”

Master Dyas took a seat opposite Ahsoka, resting his elbows on the arms of his chair and steepling his hands together. “While I still have my doubts about the… complete veracity of your history, I cannot deny that you are an excellent influence on Kenobi.”

Ahsoka was a bit surprised at that, unaware that anyone besides Masters Yoda and Windu had been paying any real attention to her and Obi-Wan. And now that Ahsoka was thinking about it, there was something familiar about Master Dyas, something she couldn’t quite place. She would have to check her notes when she retired for the night but if nothing else, his name sounded very familiar.

“Thank you, Master Dyas,” Ahsoka finally said, bowing her head. “I know Obi-Wan will be a great Jedi someday and I just want to help him reach his full potential.”

“Don’t we all?” the master returned, gesturing with one hand. “Be cautious, Knight Tano. Initiate Kenobi has a gift of foresight, a burden I, too, carry. The Force tells me I should trust you but I have been wrong in the past.”

Ahsoka nodded, folding her hands in her lap as she wondered just what it was that Master Dyas was seeing. Perhaps he would be able to help her change the course of the future they seemed to be set on. “Thank you, Master Dyas. I will try to keep that in mind.”

“Good,” the master said and stood up, gazing down at her with distant eyes narrowed, as if he were looking through her to something just beyond her gaze. “I want to have faith in you, Knight Tano. I will support your request. Good luck in your duel tomorrow.”
At the time, Ahsoka had wanted to protest that she was just going to spar, that there was no official duel intended and yet Master Dyas had been correct. Ahsoka and Qui-Gon had dueled and now the whole Temple was abuzz with the news.

As Obi-Wan and Ahsoka walked to the Council room, they did their best to ignore the whispers and gossip swirling around them.

“Did you hear? Knight Tano bested Master Jinn in a duel!”

“No way!”

“Over a padawan I heard!”

“Liar! No padawan is worth dueling over. Not with Master Jinn! He’s Dooku’s old padawan.”

“They fought over that Kenobi kid that nobody wanted.”

“You mean that poor kid Jinn humiliated in the dining hall?”

“Serves him right. I heard what he said and it was brutal.”

Ahsoka took a deep breath and kept her head held high, used to ignoring Temple gossip from her years as the Chosen One’s padawan. She understood it was going to be difficult for Obi-Wan to pay it no mind at first but the faster he got used to ignoring the hissing whispers of the Temple, the better things would be for the both of them.

She could feel Obi-Wan’s discomfort in the Force, could sense him hurrying to catch up with her and avoid the loudest of the whispers. It seemed that Master Obi-Wan’s uneasiness with his own popularity and fame in the Temple was just a natural part of his personality and not a byproduct of being the master of Anakin Skywalker, who drew attention and gossip just by breathing.

Sending a wave of calm and soothing energy to Obi-Wan, Ahsoka waited with him for the door to open and allow them inside for the Presentation.

“If there is no further objections,” Master Windu spoke, his voice cutting off the quiet conversation amongst the masters, “I move to officially approve Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano to take Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi as her Padawan Learner. All in favor?”

There was a warm and cheerful chorus of “Aye” and “Yes” from the assembled circle of elders and Obi-Wan tried not to twist his hands in the sleeves of his robe as he stood at Master Ahsoka’s side. He had dreamt about this moment for so long and now to have it over in just a blink of the eye, with a casual round of agreement and his signature on a data pad seemed almost anti-climactic.

He glanced up at Ahsoka, his official master now, and watched her give the necessary thanks and acknowledgements to the Council. He could tell through their new fragile but surprisingly strong bond that this didn’t come easy to her. His master had been raised in an unstable world, that much he could tell. She wasn’t a classically trained Jedi in any sense of the word but he knew with certainty that if his life was on the line, Master Ahsoka would move heaven and earth to save him, to save
anyone under her protection.

Master Ahsoka was a warrior for light and while Obi-Wan might never be a truly awe-inspiring as his master, or the mythical Master Skywalker, he vowed there and then to be the best padawan that had ever lived, to learn as much as he could from Master Ahsoka and to do her and his grandmaster proud.

He couldn’t make up for what his master had lost, but he hoped to be just as worthy in his own simple way.

“We will see you both at the binding ceremony tomorrow morning.” Master Plo Koon rumbled through his rebreather as the masters dispersed, pulling Obi-Wan out of his solemn imaginings with start. Or rather, Ahsoka’s surprise sparked across the bond to him and he turned his attention back to the conversation.

“The binding ceremony?” Ahsoka repeated as she accepted a datapad from knight that served as a Council attache. She looked down at her padawan for an explanation. “I… I don’t think I went through that.”

“That is unfortunate,” Plo Koon sighed with a shake of his head. “It seems Master Skywalker was very busy on the Outer Rim.”

Ahsoka shrugged. “Yeah… Always on the move. That’s Master Skywalker, alright.”

“The binding ceremony, Masters?” Obi-Wan spoke up, his voice soft and respectful. “Is that where I get my braid and hair cut?”

“Yes,” The Kel Dor master nodded, his voice warm with affection. “I have agreed to stand for you and Knight Tano, Padawan Kenobi. As will Masters Shaak Ti, Yaddle, Windu and Dyas.”

“Oh!” Obi-Wan let out a gasp of surprise and looked up at his master. “When is the ceremony?”

Ahsoka frantically scanned her datapad, where someone had helpfully uploaded instructions on the ceremony as well as the time. “Ah… tomorrow at dawn?”

Plo Koon nodded and Ahsoka and Obi-Wan got the distinct impression he found their confusion amusing. “Yes. In the Room of First Light. I trust we will see you there?”

“Yes! Of course!” Ahsoka replied as Obi-Wan agreed with a bow to the departing master. “Thank you, Master Plo Koon!”

Once they were alone back out in the hall, Ahsoka turned to Obi-Wan who beamed up at her. “Yes, master?”

Master. Am I ever going to get used to that coming from Obi-Wan Kenobi of all people?

“I think we deserve a treat,” Ahsoka grinned, pulling her, now official, padawan under her arm. “Where do you want to go? We can get anything!”

Obi-Wan’s brows furrowed in thought before he nodded. “I would like some ice cream, perhaps a sundae from that Corellian waffle place?”

Ahsoka’s stomach growled in approval and they were off. “You have excellent taste in desserts, my Padawan.”
“If it were not for your recommendations, my Master,” Obi-Wan replied, cheefully, “I wouldn’t know such a place existed.”

“Padawan, I’m going to have to teach you how to take a compliment. Aren’t I?” Ahsoka laughed as they made their way to the speeder bay.

Obi-Wan and Ahsoka both found it hard to sleep that night and they quietly met for tea in their shared living area about an hour and a half before sunrise. The kitchenette was stocked with a few essentials and Ahsoka carefully measured out a small spoon of honey for Obi-Wan before adding milk and sugar to hers.

The two sat together on the sofa, wordlessly watching the relentless pace of Coruscanti traffic out their window as the Senate building dozed in the distance and sparkling lights of transports moved past them.

Ahsoka sipped her tea and wondered what Anakin would think of this moment, if he would approve of the pomp and circumstance or if he would find it all ridiculous that his padawan, that Snips was going to be someone’s master.

That she was going to be Obi-Wan Kenobi’s master.

Ahsoka bowed her head and prayed to the Force that wherever Anakin was, if there was still some trace of him somewhere in the darkness of Darth Vader, that he understood why she left him. She prayed that he would understand now why she was changing not only Obi-Wan’s history but his as well.

_I won’t let you down, Master. I promise. I will teach Obi-Wan everything that you taught me. He’ll be ready for you and the Sith. I swear it._

For a moment, Ahsoka thought she felt a warm hand on her shoulder and almost turned around to see if her Skyguy was standing behind her.

Almost.

“I won’t fail you, Master,” Obi-Wan spoke up at her sudden solemnity in the Force, his voice meek and shy. “I promise. I know… I know I’m not as talented as some of the other padawans but… I promise I won’t fail you. I will be the best padawan the Jedi Order has ever seen. I swear it, Master.”

Ahsoka’s heart ached at Obi-Wan’s harsh assessment of himself and she set her teacup aside to pull him close for another hug, something she had come to realize he had rarely experienced. “Obi-Wan, I just want you to be the best Obi-Wan Kenobi you can be. If you do that, I promise everything else will take care of itself.”

Obi-Wan sniffled up at her. “Can’t I do both?”

Brushing her hand through his hair, Ahsoka smiled. “I have no doubt that you can, Obi-Wan but… be kinder to yourself. You are already perfect the way you are.”
There was a watery laugh from somewhere below the thick shock of pale copper hair. “Thank you, Master. I’ll… I’ll try.”

“That’s all I will ever ask of you, Obi-Wan.”

A half hour before dawn, Obi-Wan and Ahsoka stood in the doorway of the Room of First Light, a wide circular space within the central spire of the Temple. The sky was still dark indigo, studded with the glittering jewels of passing ships and framed with distant clouds that managed to hold onto the dying radiance of the last of Coruscant’s moons sinking below the horizon.

The whole Council was assembled for the ceremony, six in front and six in the back, forming a half circle with their backs to the windows. Glowing candle-lamps hovered overhead, throwing the room into a flickering warm glow as the masters that had chosen to stand for Ahsoka and Obi-Wan stepped forward to take their chosen positions that were indicated on the floor by beautiful inlaid tile symbols.

The overall pattern on the floor resembled a starburst with twelve rays emerging from a central star where the new Master and Padawan were to stand. It meant that through each new pairing the Order was reinvigorated. Each new generation brought into the teachings and wisdom of the Jedi brought new life and a stronger Order that stood against the dark.

Master Shaak Ti stood on the symbol that represented Ahsoka’s past and heritage, as a Togruta and a Jedi. To her right was Master Yaddle, who informed Obi-Wan that she was honored to stand in Master Yoda’s place to represent his childhood and youth in the Temple. Master Windu stood to the right of Master Yoda in the middle, symbolizing the firm commitment between the two and Master Dyas took position on the mark at the end which represented the Council, the faith they had for their future, and for the faith the Order was placing in Jedi Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi.

And Master Plo Koon stood behind Ahsoka where Anakin would have, taking the place of the line of masters lost to her through time and space and she could think of no better person to stand in Anakin or Master Obi-Wan’s stead. Master Plo squeezed her shoulder gently, offering his support without words but the message was understood all the same.

I am here for you. You are not alone in this.

Once everyone was in their proper place, Yoda stepped forward and beckoned Ahsoka to the star in the center of the room. “Come before the Council and speak.”

Ahsoka walked into the room, her head held high. “I am Ahsoka Tano, a Knight of the Jedi Order.”

“Why have you come here?” Yoda asked, his voice somehow ancient and full of life at the same time.

“I wish to take Obi-Wan Kenobi as my Padawan Learner,” Ahsoka answered. “To teach him the ways of the Force and to guide him on his path to knighthood, like my master before me.”

“And who speaks for you?” the Grand Master continued, his hands resting on the head of his gimer stick.
“I do,” the five masters in line chorused at once and Ahsoka couldn’t help the shiver that ran down her spine. She wondered if Anakin and Master Obi-Wan had gone through this ceremony, or if they had just been thrown together in the chaos of Naboo after Maul’s assault.

“Speak and the Force will listen,” Yoda said, his voice somehow grand in spite of the familiar croak. “A child of the Force, is she?”

“Yes,” Shaak Ti intoned, igniting her blade. “A child of Shili and of the Temple.”

Yoda nodded with a twinkle in his eye. “Claim her, do you, in Master Skywalker’s stead?”

Plo Koon nodded, igniting his blade. “In place of those lost, I claim Ahsoka Tano as a knight of my lineage.”

Even though she knew it was coming, Ahsoka still inhaled sharply and told herself not to cry at his words. Anakin...

“A Knight of the Order, is she?” Yoda turned to Master Windu, a smile on his face.

Mace gazed at Ahsoka and nodded, igniting his violet blade. “Yes, she is.”

Yoda nodded, gently tapping his gimer stick on the floor. “Good. And before us, who do you bring, Knight Tano?”

“I bring Obi-Wan Kenobi, Honored Masters,” Ahsoka stated, gesturing back to the boy waiting anxiously in the doorway. “I chose him to be my Padawan Learner, if the Force wills it.”

“Speak and the Force will listen,” Yoda chuckled. “A child of the Force, is he?”

Master Yaddle’s grin was nearly as bright as her saber. “A child of the Temple, he is.”

Nodding, Yoda turned to Ahsoka. “Claim him, do you Knight Tano, as heir to your line?”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, his blue eyes shining in the flickering light of the sabers and the growing dawn outside. She nodded down at him, her eyes warm. “Yes, I do.”

Her own saber lit up, bright blue and humming with the Force.

“Against this bonding, does anyone speak?” Yoda turned toward Master Dyas, who shook his head. “Against this bonding, none shall speak,” Master Dyas intoned with a flourish of his blade.

“Agree to this, do you, Obi-Wan Kenobi?” Yoda asked the boy standing before him, his eyes narrowed in thought.

Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes, Masters. I pledge myself to Knight Tano and her teachings. I pledge myself to the Jedi Order and the Force, to which we are all a servant of.”

“Woven together, the two must be,” Yoda said and Ahsoka handed her saber to Plo Koon before she stepped behind Obi-Wan and pulled out a lock of hair thick enough to make a proper Padawan’s tail and then a braid. A droid emerged from a darkened corner, helpfully shearing Obi-Wan of the thick coppery locks that until now had hung down over his blue-grey eyes like a curtain hiding the boy from the world.

“Master,” Obi-Wan whispered as Ahsoka worked at his little braid. “I… I have these. I… I thought you might have worn some like them.”
Ahsoka glanced down at the silka beads in Obi-Wan’s grasp, small pale things that seemed out of place in his trembling hands. She felt a warm rush of love wash over her and she took them from Obi-Wan’s hand. “Thank you, my Padawan.”

As the droid made quick work of Obi-Wan’s hair, Ahsoka carefully threaded the three beads onto the end of his braid before tying them off with a small blue thread. His braid barely brushed the tops of his shoulder but it was there and as the sun began to climb over the horizon, Ahsoka stepped back to her position and reclaimed her saber from Plo Koon.

The sky turned from lavender to pink and gold as Yoda finished the ceremony, the room glowing brighter with each word. “Luminous beings are we, bound together in the Force. Follow its will, you must. Teach each other, you will. Together you walk, on the path the Force has chosen. Master and Padawan you are, Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

And with that the rest of the Council ignited their blades and held them up to salute the new pair, who stood side by side as a new dawn arose over Coruscant, bright and golden, chasing away the last dark clouds and shadows of the night that had gone before it.

To be continued...

Chapter End Notes

WOOHOOO! Welcome to the Season Finale of Tano and Kenobi! Did everybody have a good time??

Tano and Kenobi will return for Season Two starting April 2nd where our adorable and intrepid Master and Padawan will have a training montage, eat more ice cream and go on a field trip!

I want to thank everyone again for all of their kind words, kudos and lovely shrieky comments! This has been a very difficult stretch of the calendar for me with an important work event and I cannot tell you how much your kind words and comments have meant to me. If I could find you all and give you a big-a$$-Ahsoka Hug I would.

I recommend listening to Guardian of the Whills Suite and the Force Theme for the ceremony at the end of the chapter since that's what I wrote this chapter to.

If you want to stay updated on what's going on in Tano and Kenobi-verse and all the rest of my poor orphaned fics, pop over to my tumblr at FireflyFish where Auntie Fishy kindly doles out spoilers and on occasion fan art!

Thank you again and see you next season!
A New Assignment

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi…

After a tense duel between Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn and Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano for the right to train Senior Initiate Obi-Wan Kenobi, Ahsoka Tano emerges victorious. After their apprenticeship is approved by the Jedi Council, the two take part in the ancient Jedi ceremony that binds a Master and a Padawan Learner together in the guiding light of the Force.

We rejoin our heroes, two years into their partnership, Obi-Wan determined to become the best Padawan Learner in the Order and Ahsoka determined to prevent the cruel future that threatens to destroy the galaxy once more…

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“When you are ready, please begin, Padawan Kenobi.”

The Northern Solar training room was filled with the brilliant light of midday sun filtered through the high, arched stained glass windows that looked out onto Coruscant and the speeder bay three levels below. A group of padawans, none older than fifteen standard years, were assembled in the far left corner of the room, milling about as they each waited their turn to tackle the complicated obstacle course set up by Master Ki-Adi-Mundi. Three padawans had already made their way through the course with decent times and only a few falls and one face plant but that had been because Quinlan Vos had been showing off again.

Obi-Wan Kenobi, Padawan Learner to temporally displaced Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano, was next in line and he had every intention of blasting through the obstacle course with a perfect score and the fastest time of the day. He shot a glance over at his master, who was sitting on the benches that lined the side of the room, her legs crossed and her posture relaxed and confident. She gave him a bright smile and two thumbs up as pride and faith flowed across their training bond.

You’ve got this, Obi-Wan. I know you do.

Obi-Wan took a deep, full-body breath, practically levitating up onto his toes with excitement and nerves. He exhaled and relaxed down into a starter’s crouch, waiting for the Force to sing.

Ki-Adi-Mundi watched the boy with an arched brow but said nothing, trusting Kenobi to know when the time was right.

The Force swirled and let out a note of cheerful harmony and Obi-Wan was off like a shot, his gait smooth and even as he sprinted up an incline and into the obstacle course, adrenaline flowing through him as he vaulted both legs over a low obstacle and moved on to a complicated piece of machinery that was supposed to swing him over a chasm that could have played host to a river, a congested skyway or vein of red hot lava on a volcanic planet somewhere.
Ahsoka watched Obi-Wan breeze through the first two obstacles, cheering him on from the sidelines. There were a few other masters there, observing their own padawans and gossiping about the latest rumors floating around the temple. Apparently Qui-Gon Jinn had managed to improvise his way to a diplomatic solution on a Mid-Rim planet that had been plagued by infighting between powerful dynastic houses. He would be heading back to the Temple after he officiated a few royal weddings and was made a minor deity in the local state religion.

Ahsoka shook her head, her lips quirked. It seemed the Old Glacier was up to his usual antics and she was glad Obi-Wan hadn’t been forced to tag along, especially given his tendencies to rush blindly ahead into danger in his drive to help others and bring peace to the Galaxy. Knowing Obi-Wan, he would have gotten himself betrothed on accident and Qui-Gon would have made things even worse trying to extricate the boy from the unwanted union.

The combination of Jinn and Kenobi might have worked before but Ahsoka was confident that she and Obi-Wan were a much better team this time around. Obi-Wan was already more confident and less critical than when she met him and nearly two years into their pairing as Jedi Master and Padawan Learner their time together had brought a new kind of stability to them both. Ahsoka’s nightmares of Vader, the Empire, and her lost friends were fewer and farther between and Obi-Wan’s outbursts of righteous anger and destructive self-criticism were slowly coming under control. No one in the Temple could really say they were the model of a perfect master-padawan pair but they were a fiercely devoted team working together to become better than what they were.

To be ready for the darkness when it rose up and threatened the peace of the galaxy yet again.

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan had been training on this particular obstacle course for two weeks now. His padawan class was starting to move into Force-assisted movement within a larger tactical engagement and while that came easily to Ahsoka, she had learned everything under the life and death knife-edge of the battlefield. Learning in a classroom was safer but it allowed Obi-Wan’s perfectionist tendencies to come out and he practiced and practiced, obsessing over fine details that Ahsoka felt didn’t matter in the grand scheme of things.

It was a discussion they had had many times and she smiled ruefully at the thought that it might never really end.

*Force knows Master Obi-Wan and Anakin were always arguing about the “right way” to do things. Now I see why.*

Now past the floating hoverboards and after a Force-assisted leap up a three-meter sheer wall, Obi-Wan had to cross a dangerously narrow stretch of bridge that had knocked off two other padawans before him. Ahsoka watched him stand at the end of the beam and held her breath, her hands clenched in her lap. They had practiced this particular bridge over and over and no matter what they tried the bridge would always buck or sway, simulating weather or the cruel vagaries of a skirmish. Obi-Wan had fallen off the bridge more times than not and while his success rate had been improving in the last few days, Ahsoka was still worried about him.

“C’mon, Obi-Wan!” Quinlan cheered from the sidelines, holding an ice pack to his face. “Kriff or get off the ‘fresher!”

“Padawan Vos!” Master Mundi sniffed, turning a baleful eye on the boy. “That kind of language will not be tolerated in this Order. I shall have to have a word with your master. Again.”

Obi-Wan took a deep breath and ran toward the beam. He had tried every way of crossing the shivering bridge and found that it was best to scamper across as fast as he could.
Ahsoka watched as Obi-Wan’s momentum seemed to be fast enough to keep him upright, to shake off the wobbling structure. He was nearly halfway there when the bridge started to truly buck under his feet and Obi-Wan seemed to slow down.

_No! Keep going! If you slow down now you’ll fall over!_ Ahsoka grit her teeth, her gut twisting with worry. If Obi-Wan failed to meet whatever self-imposed criteria for his time run-through for today he was going to be despondent at dinner and it was hard to coax Obi-Wan out of a sulk. It was an area she had very little experience in since Master Obi-Wan apparently didn’t have sulking fits or had them somewhere behind closed doors.

Just when things seemed to be heading towards a grumpy evening, Obi-Wan vaulted into a forward flip that carried him forward along the beam, the Force singing as he landed on the other side of the synthetic obstacle. Ahsoka let out a cheer and punched the air, ignoring the looks from the other masters, who were far too composed to holler on the sidelines like they were watching a game of smashball.

Ahsoka didn’t care and she gave them a broad, proud grin. “He worked really hard on that.”

“I can tell,” came a low, filtered voice from behind Ahsoka, who spun around, delighted to see Master Plo Koon standing there. “Hello, Knight Tano. Is this seat taken?”

“Of course not!” Ahsoka moved over, giving the Kel Dor master plenty of room to make himself comfortable as Obi-Wan scampered up a rope wall, his foot getting caught a few times in his haste. “Welcome back! You’re just in time to see Obi-Wan beat his own personal record.”

“How exciting,” Plo Koon replied with a warmth that Ahsoka knew meant the master was smiling behind his rebreather and masked eyes. “He did quite well on the unstable bridge. You must be very proud of him.”

“I am,” Ahsoka nodded, her eyes drifting back to her padawan, swinging himself across a complicated web of ropes and hand holds. “We’ve been working on this course for almost two weeks and I think he’s finally starting to get the hang of it.”

“Oh, yes,” Plo Koon agreed, observing the padawan as Obi-Wan dropped down onto another landing, blowing cool air on his roughed-up palms. “Obi-Wan is persistent in his pursuit of perfection.”

“He thinks he has to live up to Master Skywalker,” Ahsoka confessed, feeling a bit guilty at the long shadow her master cast over her padawan. “I keep telling him that there’s no need but he doesn’t listen to me. But then again, if I were in his shoes, I probably wouldn’t listen to me either.”

Laughing, Plo Koon reached over to squeeze Ahsoka’s shoulder. “He will understand in time, Ahsoka. In the meanwhile, all of that practice will serve him well when he is knighted and on his own.”

Ahsoka gasped as Obi-Wan took a tumble, tripping over his own feet into an ungainly sprawl. “Oh… C’mon, Padawan! Get up!”

Ahsoka and Plo Koon watched the rest of Obi-Wan’s run together, the Jedi master as serene and silent in his support as she was noisy and enthusiastic.

By the time Obi-Wan finished, muscle exhaustion and fatigue had set in and he fell off a relatively simple obstacle, landing with a soft whump into the safety pillows around and under the course. He made his way over to a ladder and climbed up out of the pit and up to the final obstacle, a pole slide...
that had been added because Ki-Adi-Mundi felt they needed an example of “the small mercies of the Force.”

It was every Padawan’s favorite part.

Obi-Wan landed as the ending chime went off and his time flashed up on the holoscreen. At nine minutes and forty seconds, he had the new fastest score of the day and Obi-Wan turned around, searching the audience for Ahsoka who stood up and waved until he saw her. She held gave him another thumbs up and even Master Plo Koon held up a hand to Obi-Wan, who gave them a happy, red-faced grin.

“He’s done very well today,” Plo Koon observed with a pleased tone. “Please convey my congratulations to Obi-Wan for me. I have a Council meeting soon and I must take my leave of you.”

“Of course,” Ahsoka said, standing up as the Jedi Master did, bowing to him and receiving one in return. “Thank you for stopping by, Master Plo.”

“It is always a pleasure to watch the future come into being,” Plo Koon replied with his usual low, rumbling warmth before he walked off toward the exit.

Letting out a happy sigh, Ahsoka sat back down and glanced over at the knights and masters sitting next to her. One of them, a dark-haired woman from Akitan III named Master Lia, nodded to her.

“Congratulations on Padawan Kenobi’s improved time.”

“Thank you,” Ahsoka answered with pride. “I’m sure Padawan Rast will improve his time as well.”

“Yes, I think so too,” Master Lia replied. They both turned their attention back the course and poor Kit Fisto who had gotten his head tails caught up in the climbing rope and had to be untangled by Master Mundi. Ahsoka was thankful her montrals and lekku were too substantial to be caught up in traps like that when she was younger. She felt bad for poor Kit, who was turning a very embarrassed shade of purple as he waited for freedom.

“Hang in there, Kit!” Obi-Wan called from the side of the room as he walked over to Ahsoka, chugging water from a glass bottle like a man dying of thirst. He flopped down next to his master, all smiles and radiant pride. “Hello, Master! Did you see? I’ve got the fastest time by ten whole seconds!”

“Impressive,” Ahsoka agreed, rubbing Obi-Wan’s back. “Master Plo sends his congratulations.”

Obi-Wan tried not to puff up, reminding himself that a proper Jedi was humble and did not brag about his accomplishments but it was so hard, especially after all the hard work he had been putting in with his master during his independent study time. And he had beat his time! What harm would come from being excited about that?

Ahsoka leaned over and nudged Obi-Wan with her shoulder and whispered conspiratorially. “Later. I promise. We’ll celebrate at your favorite noodle shop.”

Obi-Wan tried, he really did, but the Force erupted with delight all around him and he couldn’t quite smother his happiness. Ahsoka chuckled softly and rolled her eyes. “You are terrible. Honestly, you are just like Master Skywalker sometimes.”

“Do you really think so?” her padawan asked, delighted by this praise.

Nodding, Ahsoka wrapped an arm around Obi-Wan. “Yes. I really think so. Now my grand master? He had the best sabaac face in the galaxy.”
“Do you know how to play sabaac, Master?” Obi-Wan asked, finishing off his water bottle and cheering on the next padawan up, Padawan Yuen Rast.

Ahsoka shook her head. “No. But I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to learn just in case.”

Obi-Wan agreed and then took his leave to fill up his water bottle and rejoin his classmates until the end of class.

“It must be wonderful to have such a tight bond with your padawan at such an early stage,” Master Lia murmured, her brows drawn into a slight frown as Padawan Rast stumbled through an obstacle, still on his way to beating Obi-Wan’s time on the course despite the slip. “Yuen and I are still feeling our way through things. I envy your relationship.”

Ahsoka looked at her hands for a moment, thinking of how she had an advantage on the Jedi at her side, of how she knew what Obi-Wan was capable of because she had seen it with her own two eyes when she was younger. Master Obi-Wan was clear and distinct in her mind’s eye and Ahsoka had faith that they would make it through somehow as long as they both worked together.

“Just give it time,” Ahsoka finally said, glancing up at Lia beside her. “I know you and Rast will find your way together. Me and my master didn’t get along right away either. It took us about six months to really gel as a pair.”

“Based on stories Yuen shares about his classes with Obi-Wan it rather sounds like you two spent most of your time on the field chasing after pirates and ne’er do wells,” Lia smiled as she stood up. “We should have dinner some time. I would love to hear more about your training methods with Obi-Wan and Yuen needs to spend more time with his age mates and less time with his books.”

“That sounds great!” Ahsoka grinned and bowed to Master Lia as she walked over to where her padawan was recovering from his dash through the obstacle course.

After another ten padawans made their way through the course with various stages of success, Master Mundi dismissed the class and Obi-Wan happily loped back over to Ahsoka, his face bright. “I got fourth place, Master! I took off a whole fifteen seconds!”

“I know!” Ahsoka said, pulling Obi-Wan under her arm for a good and proper hug and possibly a noogie. *Yes, definitely a noogie.* Yelping in protest, Obi-Wan tried and failed to defend his head from his master’s cheerful assault.

“Master, please! I am fifteen years old and far too old for this!”

“What was that? I should do it again?”

“Master?” Obi-Wan melodramatically complained as they walked off down the hallway and back to their rooms.

As promised, dinner was in a charming little cafe that served a variety of noodle dishes from several different Mid-Rim systems. The cafe was in the Senate District on the corner of a level that was high enough it gave the outside tables an excellent view of the Senate Building. Sometimes Ahsoka would come to the cafe by herself and watch the traffic, tapping notes into her datapad as she ate, trying to piece together all the details she could remember of her life before the Clone Wars and the
state of the galaxy. She hoped to find that one key piece of information that would unravel the Sith Lord’s plan, the one move that would change the fate of the galaxy and save her family.

“And that’s when Quinlan fell off the bridge and nearly broke his nose,” Obi-Wan finished his story with a snicker and a wolfish grin. Ahsoka was just starting to get used that expression, the way it would flash into being, bright and sharp but somehow still full of boyish charm and innocent enthusiasm. She couldn’t ever remember Master Obi-Wan smiling like that but then again, they had been in the middle of war when she first met him and Anakin. Even Anakin’s honest smiles were few and far between, practically endangered when compared to the confident smirk he usually greeted the world with.

“Was he all right?” Ahsoka asked, arching an eyebrow at the snicker. “I’m assuming he was?”

“Oh, yes, of course!” Obi-Wan assured her, slurping up a mouthful of savory noodles and vegetables. “But he’ll have a nasty bruise. Master Mundi was livid. Actually, I think Master Mundi is always livid.”

Laughing at her padawan’s observation, Ahsoka speared a piece of meat with her fork. “He’s definitely a by-the-book kind of Jedi. I’m pretty sure he’s not our biggest fan on the Council.”

Obi-Wan shrugged, unconcerned with the politicking that went on in the upper echelons of the Order, something Ahsoka found wonderfully refreshing. “If Master Windu likes us then I don’t see what it matters. He does still like us, right? I swear that incident in the Halls of Healing was a mistake! I didn’t mean to flood that room! I thought I was doing as Knight Gallia instructed!”

“Yes, Master Windu still likes us,” Ahsoka chuckled, reaching out to squeeze his hand. “Honestly, you’re harder on yourself than anyone else in the Temple, Obi-Wan. How many times do I have to tell you to cut yourself some slack?”

“I don’t know,” Obi-Wan shrugged. “Didn’t you want to be the best you could possibly be when you were a padawan learner?”

_I just wanted to live to see another day most of the time_, Ahsoka thought morosely, her gaze drifting to the Senate Building where the Senate was holding a late night session on the taxation of purse colonies. The Trade Federation was arguing against it, along with several other corporate entities while several older systems, who were already paying taxes on their colones, argued in favor of expanding the tax base.

It was all very dry and boring and Ahsoka wouldn’t have paid it much attention if it wasn’t for the fact that a certain S. Palpatine was trying to mediate an agreement between the two sides. Ahsoka narrowed her eyes and frowned at the domed, blue building in the distance.

“Master?” Obi-Wan asked, his voice curious but respectful. “Why don’t you like the Senate? Every time we eat here, there is always a moment when you drift away and your countenance changes.”

Startled out of her brooding, Ahsoka turned back to Obi-Wan, reminding herself once again how perceptive he was. She had known padawan Obi-Wan was smart and observant but she still wasn’t used to him turning that sharp intellect on her on the rare occasion he did.

Ahsoka would have to do a better job of hiding her dark thoughts from her Padawan. For now.

It wasn’t time to tell him the truth.

But the time would come.
Ahsoka was positive of that.

“I don’t trust politicians,” Ahsoka finally confessed, finishing off her meal. “As a group, I mean. An individual politician can be a great person, someone who always tries to do the right thing but… I’ve seen too many fall prey to greed and corruption. It’s… it’s disheartening.”

Obi-Wan nodded, quiet as he processed everything Ahsoka said. She found that endearing, the way he would momentarily withdraw from a conversation to work over everything said and take it all into consideration before moving forward.

Her padawan was so thoughtful and kind. He truly wanted to do what was right, to be the best Jedi he could be. And to realize just how greatly the Clone Wars had warped Master Obi-Wan into the kind of person who would agree to something like the Hardeen deception, to stand by while Ahsoka was ejected from the Order, was heartbreaking.

She had worried about Anakin’s slow descent into the dark while at his side and afterwards but to see just what war and the pressures of winning a losing battle against the dark had done to Obi-Wan Kenobi was somehow worse.

*I won’t let that happen. Not this time. We’re going to change all of that, right?*

The Force did not answer directly but Obi-Wan’s head came up, a warm, understanding expression on his face. “I understand, Master Ahsoka. Maybe we should look for a different noodle shop?”

Ahsoka shook her head, her eyes soft. “This is your favorite place! Just because I’m setting a poor example for you as a Jedi doesn’t mean we have to find a new place to eat. I’m the adult here, not you. Now finish up your uncha before I decide I’m still hungry.”

With his dinner threatened, Obi-Wan turned his attention away from Ahsoka, who watched him shovel the rest of his dinner into his mouth as politely as he could. There was something charming about her fussy padawan and she was starting to understand why Master Obi-Wan and Anakin had squabbled so often during her time with them. It seemed a certain level of fastidiousness was just second nature to Obi-Wan whereas Anakin had seen that as a waste of time and energy. As long as he had understood the sorting system of his piles of droid parts and tools, what did it matter if it wasn’t arranged in a neat, little line?

Ahsoka fell somewhere in the middle, finding that neatening up her space would help clear out her mind but Obi-Wan’s insistence on a proper way of organizing everything drove her a little crazy every now and then. She now understood it helped him deal with his anxieties and she had to remind herself on more than one occasion that she was the adult in the relationship here and it was important for her to support Obi-Wan in how he chose to cope with his stress.

“Koleyo!” Obi-Wan announced with a wide smile as he pushed his plate back, following the local customs of the shop owners. There was the cheerful traditional reply of thanks in the same language and they stood up, walking up to the service droid to pay for dinner.

“So… Where to next?” Ahsoka asked, feeling particularly guilty and indulgent after being caught mid-brood. “Ice cream?”

Obi-Wan’s eyes lit up. “Really?”

Ahsoka was about to say “yes, really” when her comm link went off in her pocket. She frowned and pulled it out, walking over to a quiet alleyway between the restaurant and the next shop over. Thumbing open the frequency, Ahsoka answered, Obi-Wan watching her. “This is Knight Tano and
“Knight Tano, Padawan Kenobi,” Mace Windu’s ghostly blue figure flickered to life above the comm, his stance wide and confident and his arms behind his back. “I hope I’m not interrupting dinner.”

“No,” Ahsoka glanced at Obi-Wan, who was watching the Jedi Master with round eyes. “We just finished. Obi-Wan set a personal record today on the obstacle course.”

Holo Master Windu turned slightly to Padawan Kenobi, his face an expressionless mask before the faintest quirk of an eyebrow signified his approval. “I’m glad to hear it, Padawan Kenobi. We need you two to return to the Temple, immediately.”

“Immediately?” Ahsoka echoed, puzzled. “Has something happened?”

“We will discuss the details of your assignment upon your return,” Master Windu answered, his gaze returning to Ahsoka. “I trust you can make it back to the Temple in a reasonable amount of time?”

“We’ll be there in thirty minutes,” Ahsoka said, glancing at a chronometer Obi-Wan pulled out his pocket unasked, their bond already humming with shared thoughts.

“We’ll be waiting for you in the Council Room,” Mace replied with a nod and the holo flickered out of existence.

“Did he say ‘assignment’?” Obi-Wan asked as he tucked his chrono away into a pouch on his belt. “Is that like a mission? Is this our first mission, Master?”

“It sounds like a mission to me,” Ahsoka grinned, feeling wave after wave of nervous excitement flooding her half of the bond, which she returned with a wave of centered calm. “Can I get a rain check on that ice cream, Padawan?”

“It can be our reward for our first successful mission!” Obi-Wan agreed, practically skipping back to the turbo lift that would lead to the train station that would ferry them back to the Temple. “Where do you think they’re sending us? Will it be dangerous? Do I have time to study before we leave? Is it going to be a diplomatic situation? What if it’s pirates?! Quinlan keeps insisting he’s going to be the first of our age group to defeat a pirate.”

“It probably just a little diplomatic squabble,” Ahsoka assured Obi-Wan as they took the lift down to one of the main arteries of Coruscant traffic only to be whisked away by a train back to the Temple and their very first mission briefing as Master and Padawan Learner.

Chapter End Notes

HELLO DARLINGS!

WE’RE BACK!!!!!

After a lovely break away to smell the roses, work on some other stories and handle some other stressors in my life, Tano and Kenobi is baaaaaack!

As promised, Season Two should be about 12 chapters long the title of this season is....
The Tatooine Arc!!

^_^

As always, you can find me on tumblr at Fireflyfish!
Curiosity

Chapter Summary

Two years into a successful apprenticeship with Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano, Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi is filled with both excitement and anxiety at promise of his very first mission with his master. But before they jet off to Raxus on the Outer Rim, Obi-Wan needs to do some researching in the Jedi Archives.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sun had set by the time Ahsoka and Obi-Wan arrived back at the Jedi Temple, the five spires lit up as a beacon to one and all, the great seat of light and hope in the galaxy.

This was the home of the Jedi.

This was the heart of the Order.

Obi-Wan had exhausted his questions about their upcoming assignment and was trailing after Ahsoka, observing the people on the streets as they passed them. The Temple District was quieter than the Senate District but there was always something to see. Sentients from every corner of the galaxy could be found in the district, from academics and scholars who wanted to do research on the Jedi and their history to those who came seeking a chance to work within the Temple grounds to those who simply saw the Temple as a tourist spot, a place one simply had to see when they got a chance to visit Coruscant.

Security at the Temple during Ahsoka’s childhood had been far more rigorous than it was now. She was still surprised to see the occasional tour group put together by a senatorial friend of the High Council or a wide-eyed clutch of invited sentients following after whatever Jedi Master had been roped into giving the tour this time. Ahsoka had once tagged along with one of these groups during her first year back in the past, following Master Diaz and a crop of new senators from the Mid Rim through the halls as she tried to re-learn where everything was supposed to be.

“Master?” Obi-Wan’s voice broke into Ahsoka’s thoughts as they entered the Temple. “Master? I… may I confess something?”

They had just passed through the massive main entrance of the Temple, moving past the towering bronzium statues that represented great masters from the ancient days of the Order. Ahsoka glanced at Obi-Wan and nodded, gesturing for him to follow her over to a private corner.

Safely tucked away where no one could hear them, Ahsoka turned to her padawan. “What is it, Obi-Wan? Is something wrong?”

“No, well, I don’t think so,” Obi-Wan frowned at the floor as he scratched at the back of his neck, his expression one of deep thought. “It’s… well, you see, Master. I… I am very excited about this new assignment we’ve been given. It’s only… I…”

Ahsoka canted her head to the side, brows raised as she waited for Obi-Wan to work through how
he was feeling. She had an inkling of what the boy might confess to but she wanted to give him as much time as he needed to voice his concerns and worries.

Taking a deep breath and nodding, Obi-Wan plunged ahead. “You told me to be honest about my feelings, Master, and… and… I am very nervous, Master. This is our first mission and… and I think I have changed my mind. I don’t want it to be pirates.”

Nodding, her face relaxing into a warm, comfortimg smile. “You’re a little scared, aren’t you?”

Obi-Wan flushed crimson all the way up to his ears but he agreed. “Yes, Master. A little. Is that bad? We don’t even know what it is yet.”

“No, it’s not bad and you’re right,” Ahsoka said, leaning down to place both hands on his shoulders. “We don’t know what our assignment is. For all we know, it’s some boring bodyguard job for a diplomat. It could be a three-day assignment like that and then we’re back at the Temple.”

Obi-Wan nodded, his gaze still focused on his boots. “I’m sorry, Master. I should trust the Force to guide us.”

Ahsoka sighed and gently pulled Obi-Wan into her arms for a hug. “Don’t apologize for being honest about how you feel. If I don’t know you’re upset, how can I help make it better?”

Obi-Wan leaned into her shoulder, mumbling. “I just… all these thoughts came tumbling into my head of what could go wrong, or all the things I don’t know yet and haven’t studied. I still can’t fully repair a hyperdrive and my Bacchi is terrible and I don’t want to let you down! And what if I do? What if I fail somehow and you get hurt or you die?! Would they send me to the Corps? What if Master Jinn tried to claim me as his padawan learner?”

“Woah! Woah!” Ahsoka interrupted Obi-Wan’s litany of worries and fears, leaning back out of their hug to examine the young boy’s face. “No one is sending you anywhere, Obi-Wan. No one. Okay? You are my padawan and no one is going to separate us.”

Obi-Wan’s blue eyes were round with worry. “Truly, Master?”

“Truly,” Ahsoka reached out to ruffle her padawan’s short, soft fringe of hair. “C’mon. We’re going to be late and we wouldn’t want to be late for our first mission briefing, do we?”

Shaking his head “no”, Obi-Wan stepped back and collected himself, straightening his robes and taking a breath before looking up at Ahsoka. “I think I’m ready now, Master.”

“That’s my padawan,” Ahsoka chuckled and wrapped an arm around him for a quick hug. “Let’s go. We can’t keep Master Windu waiting.”

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As it turned out, they were not being sent to investigate pirates, which left Obi-Wan both relieved and disappointed as they stood together in the Council room. Relieved that they weren’t going to be in any real danger, but disappointed that he wouldn’t be the first padawan in his age group to face down a brigand.

And their “mission” wasn’t really a “mission”, if one were technical about it. Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi had been assigned to accompany Master Plo Koon to facilitate a peaceful
resolution between a Core World and one of its colonies that was in rebellion. The negotiations and peace treaty were going to be held on Raxus and Obi-Wan couldn’t help but notice his master flinch at the mention of the planet. He wondered if that meant Ahsoka and Master Skywalker had traveled to the planet when she was a padawan, and hoped if that were the case this new assignment wouldn’t bring back painful memories for her.

There were times, when his master thought he wasn’t paying attention, that Ahsoka would go silent and somber, her eyes lost out a window as she wrapped her arms around herself. When those moods would strike her, Obi-Wan would wait patiently, too shy and respectful of his master’s history to directly intervene until they passed.

Even so, he would make sure to move around their shared living space louder to make sure he wouldn’t startle her, and often prepared Ahsoka’s favorite tea while he waited for her to come back.

His master’s dark moods never lasted for very long but they were always mournful. There was something about whatever those memories contained that tore at his master and Obi-Wan wanted nothing more than to prevent another episode from ever happening again if he could.

He knew he couldn’t but that didn’t stop him from trying, from working harder and trying to live up to his mental image of Master Skywalker, his eternally bright, strong and charismatic grandmaster who had been taken from Ahsoka far too soon.

“So our mandate is to learn and observe?” Ahsoka asked the Council for clarification, glancing at Obi-Wan, who nodded in agreement.

“Yes,” Master Windu answered, gesturing to Obi-Wan. “Padawan Kenobi is still a bit young to be involved in more… aggressive missions and, as we have discussed in the past, there are still some on the Council who have concerns about your skills as peacemaker, Knight Tano.”

Obi-Wan wanted to bristle at the perceived insult to his master, but Ahsoka sent a soothing wave through the Force that told him he shouldn’t be angry and Obi-Wan bowed his head. How the Council could not see how amazing Master Ahsoka was continued to baffle him but if she was not angry then it would be wrong for him to be angry as well and he focused on acknowledging his anger and letting it float away like smoke caught in a breeze. He found the visualization helpful when dealing with his stronger emotions.

“I understand,” Ahsoka told the assembled masters, her voice clear and professional. “Padawan Kenobi and I look forward to working with Master Plo Koon and I’m sure we will learn a great deal on our assignment.”

“Our ship will not leave for Raxus until tomorrow afternoon,” Plo Koon rumbled as he rose from his seat in the circle of the Council members. “That should give us plenty of time to prepare for our trip.”

“Is there anything in particular you would like us to do before hand?” Ahsoka asked as she accepted a datapad with the mission briefing and dossier. She briefly scanned it before handing it to Obi-Wan, who accepted it as if being handed a priceless holocron. He held it tight to his chest and straightened up, pulling his shoulders back and trying to be every inch the part of a mature and capable padawan learner.

“If Padawan Kenobi could do some research on history of Acronae and her colony of Acromino before we leave, I would appreciate the extra information,” Master Plo requested, gazing down at the padawan who had stayed silent through the entire meeting, watching everything with round eyes. “Master Nu speaks highly of his abilities as a researcher.”
Obi-Wan felt proud to have received a compliment in front of the Council but he kept the rest of his happiness behind his shields, laminating another layer of protection between his mind and the overwhelming light of the Council.

“I’m sure Obi-Wan would be happy to take on that task,” Ahsoka said, reaching out to pat her padawan on the back. “You think you can manage that, Padawan Kenobi?”

Grinning up at his master, Obi-Wan decided he was never going to tire of hearing Padawan Kenobi said aloud. “Yes, Masters. I am looking forward to it.”

“If there’s nothing else?” Master Windu stood up. “You are dismissed. Good luck and may the Force be with you.”

“And with you, as well,” Ahsoka and Obi-Wan replied in unison, bowing at the same time. Master Plo Koon bowed to the assembled Council members and left with the pair.

Once they were outside of the Council room and walking to the lift, Ahsoka let out a breath, shaking her head ruefully. “One day I’ll get used to being in the Council Room without my master.”

Obi-Wan frowned and moved a little closer to his master, hoping to comfort her with his nearness. Ahsoka noticed this and reached down to squeeze his shoulder in silent thanks.

“It is not something that happens overnight,” Master Plo replied with affection in his modulated voice. “I must confess, there are days when I long to be a Padawan again, to have someone else take on the responsibilities of my day.”

“Glad to hear I’m in good company then,” Ahsoka laughed. “How are the peace proceedings going on Raxus?”

“As well as can be expected,” Master Plo sighed. “Acromino has a wealth of natural resources that her parent system is loathe to lose free access to but public opinion has turned against the ruling majority and with the Senate threatening action against them, Acronae has been forced to acquiesce to peace talks.”

“You don’t sound very hopeful,” Ahsoka observed, meeting Obi-Wan’s eye and arcing her brows in surprise. “Does the Senate suspect peace talks will break down and that’s why they’re sending us?”

“I would not be surprised if that was the case,” Plo Koon replied as the lift chimed open and he stepped out, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan following him. “Our ship will leave at 1500 hours but I would like to meet beforehand to make sure you are adequately prepared for our mission. Padawan Kenobi?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes, Master?”

“I have notified Master Nu to give you access to the full Archive should you discover something of worth during your researching,” Plo Koon explained. “I look forward to your analysis of the situation, Padawan.”

“Thank you, Master!” Obi-Wan answered, positively glowing with pride. “I shall do my best.”

“We won’t let you down,” Ahsoka promised, bowing to the Kel Dor master as he bid them good night.

Once they were alone, Ahsoka turned to her padawan. “So… still nervous?”
Chewing on his thumb nail, Obi-Wan glanced up at his master. “Not as much but I’m still glad it’s not pirates.”

Ahsoka laughed. “You know what? I am too.”

Sleep was elusive that night and Ahsoka found herself sitting on the meditation cushions that faced their window overlooking the jeweled nightscape of Coruscant. She had tried meditating but found mental stillness elusive so she took out her datapad and began to write as she always did when the ghosts in her heart were too loud to ignore.

About six months after her arrival, and three datapads full of notes, Ahsoka realized she was going to need a central database to keep track of everything and quietly requisitioned one from the central archives. Master Jocasta Nu had eventually agreed to the request and once the space within the Archive system was created for her, Ahsoka set about tagging and cross referencing her notes.

She opened the entry for her first mission with her master, during the early part of the Clone Wars, when she had flown across the galaxy to take her place at Anakin Skywalker’s side. Like Obi-Wan, she had been both scared and excited, unsure of what to expect from the Chosen One. There had been rumors about him flying around the Temple since Ahsoka was a youngling but she never paid much attention to them. Anakin had been little more than a myth to her younger mind, the former slave who became a padawan learner to the Sith Slayer.

Ahsoka wondered what her padawan would think of that.

He would probably die of embarrassment and those cute ears of his would turn so red!

A soft chuckle escaped her and Ahsoka scrolled down to the passage where she had written out her thoughts.

I remember being so nervous, afraid of making a mistake and getting someone killed. Not myself, because I still didn’t believe I could die, but someone else. Like one of the clones or maybe the enlisted pilots who were flying me down to the surface. Christophis was so pretty from orbit and as we flew in closer, it wasn’t until I could make out the tanks that I noticed the destruction everywhere.

Anakin was so confused. I still don’t know if Master Obi-Wan requested me for Anakin or if it was an honest mix-up on the Temple’s part. Knowing what I know now, I would lay odds on it being Master Yoda’s doing, attempting to help Anakin learn how to let go of his attachments.

I don’t think I helped much in that regard.

Ahsoka’s fingers trailed over the text there, noting Asajj Ventress’s unexpected arrival and the betrayal of a trooper named Slick. By going through her memories she was able to get a general idea of the movements of Ventress and Count Dooku through the war. In hindsight, laid out like a historical tome, it was clear that the Separatists were getting some kind of inside information on the Republic’s movements. There were simply too many engagements that should have gone the their way if not for the chance intervention of Dooku or Grievous or someone else who was supposed to be on the other side of the galaxy.

Shaking her head, Ahsoka wondered how they didn’t catch it beforehand.
We were just run so ragged. There were never enough Jedi, never enough time to stop and think about what we were doing. I still remember when Master overdosed on stims and me, Rex and Jesse had to pin him to the ground so that Kix could sedate him.

And this was what she was training Obi-Wan for? Taking an innocent child and teaching him the arts of war and combat so that another innocent child wouldn’t suffer? Who was she to decide who had to carry the heavier burden in the future?

How could the Temple have asked that of her?

How could she ask that of Obi-Wan?

“Master?”

Startled, Ahsoka looked up from her dark thoughts, not at all surprised to see Obi-Wan holding a cup of tea out to her. She tried to smile and took it from him, setting her datapad aside. “Was I thinking too loud again?”

Obi-Wan shrugged, sitting down on the cushion next to her, his hands wrapped around his own mug of tea. “What happened on Christophis?”

Ahsoka grimaced, chastising herself for not keeping her thoughts behind a better shield. “That was where I had my first mission with my master. It’s where we met actually.”

Brows furrowed, Obi-Wan nodded as he took a sip of tea. “Not here at the Temple?”

“No, I… I was assigned to Master Skywalker,” Ahsoka said, watching the steam drift up from her mug. “There was a situation on Christophis and I was sent out afterwards. We thought everything was taken care of but it turned out it wasn’t. But I saved Master Skywalker’s life and he seemed to like me.”

“You’re reckless, little one,” Anakin sighed, gazing at the ground in front of him. “You never would have made it as Obi-Wan’s padawan. But you might make it as mine.”

Tears stung at her eyes and Ahsoka took a long drink of tea to hide them from her padawan.

I miss you so much, Master.

Obi-Wan was quiet while his master grieved, her pain and anguish clear to him in the Force. This dark mood seemed to be particularly bad and he weighed his options before setting his mug down on the ground. He shuffled over to Ahsoka’s cushion and carefully perched himself on the edge, reaching out with his wiry arms to pull his master in for a hug, hoping he wasn’t overstepping his bounds as a padawan learner.

Ahsoka let out a watery sigh and let her padawan comfort her, let the young boy she had chosen to shepherd to manhood support her in this moment of memory and loss. She wrapped her arms around Obi-Wan and murmured softly, “Thank you, Obi-Wan.”

Obi-Wan turned his head so that his cheek rested on Ahsoka’s shoulder. He wanted to tell her that he was strong and he could help her through anything, that it was his job to take care of his master as she took care of him. He wanted to tell her that he missed Master Skywalker too, even though he had never met him. He wasn’t sure why he wanted to say that but it felt true, deep in his bones. He missed Master Skywalker and wished he was there for Ahsoka.

But all of that seemed terribly forward of him, so Obi-Wan answered honestly enough, “It always
makes me feel better when you hug me so I thought I might return the favor, Master?”

A weak chuckle floated up from their hug and Obi-Wan nodded to himself, deciding that he had not in fact overstepped his bounds and that his master appreciated the gesture. Ahsoka squeezed her padawan closer, “You know what, Obi-Wan? There are days when I wonder how such a young kid can be so wise already.”

Pursing his lips in thought, Obi-Wan replied. “I think it’s because I read a lot of books, Master. And I listen to you. Quinlan Vos has a hard time sitting still long enough to hear the full assignment in class and that’s why his marks are so low.”

“Is that so?” Ahsoka sat back up, rubbing away the tears she hadn’t been able to stop. “Is that why he’s always stopping by, to see your notes from class?”

Obi-Wan shook his head, a sheepish grin on his face. “No. He just wants to come visit. You’ve quite the reputation in my class.”

Ahsoka arched her brows at that. “What are you telling them about me, Obi-Wan?”

“Only the truth, Master,” Obi-Wan replied, looking slightly offended. “That you are a former Shadow, raised entirely outside of the Order and that you and Master Skywalker roamed the Outer Rim doing good and… ehm… breaking up organized crime rings. I might have also told them you fought some pirates as well.”

“Obi-Wan Kenobi!” Ahsoka’s jaw dropped. “You make us sound like holo stars!”

“Well… your stories sound like they come from holovids!” the padawan harrumphed, folding his arms over his chest. “You cannot accuse me of exaggerating when you, yourself, told me last week that Master Skywalker once bargained with a Hutt for your freedom!”

_I knew I shouldn’t have told him about that._ Ahsoka let out a long sigh and shook her head, amusement on her face. “You have a point, my young Padawan. Although maybe you should be a little more discreet when talking about my… adventures with Master Skywalker. Some of that stuff is still… top secret.”

_Yeah. That should work for now,_ she thought with a bit of guilt.

Obi-Wan nodded, retreating back to his cushion. “Yes, of course, Master. I simply… I forget that not everyone’s master was as deeply embedded in the criminal underworld as you were. It’s hard when the other padawans are bragging about everything their masters did before taking them on.”

“Oh, trust me!” Ahsoka laughed, standing up and holding out a hand to help Obi-Wan up. “I remember that from when I was a padawan, I mean, an initiate. The only people who gossip more than students are their masters.”

“Really?” Obi-Wan yawned, a sudden wave of exhaustion washing through the bond. “What about?”

“Oh things like whose padawan is doing better in what class,” Ahsoka explained, covering her mouth as her own yawn rose up from the pit of her stomach. “Which team has what assignment and other boring things like that.”

As another wave racked Obi-Wan small frame, he stretched his arms up and up, blinking a few times to focus on Ahsoka. “Sounds terribly boring, Master. Do you mind if I go to bed now? I am very tired all of a sudden.”
“Nope,” Ahsoka replied, reaching over to ruffled Obi-Wan’s hair and giggling at his weak protest. “Good night, Padawan.”

“Good night, Master.”

Obi-Wan was already gone from the suite by the time Ahsoka woke up, a note tapped into his datapad left on the breakfast table.

_I have ordered breakfast, Master. It should arrive at 0730 and I made sure it included your favorites. I will eat in the dining hall before I go to the Archives. I should be back at 1000 hours._

_Obi-Wan_

Smiling, Ahsoka put the datapad back in Obi-Wan’s room, on top of the little stack pushed up against the corner his desk was tucked into. She was not at all surprised to see a go bag half packed and sitting on the foot of his bed as well as his favorite pair of tactical boots resting on the floor. It was clear her padawan was trying to prepare for anything that could possibly happen if the little field kit poking out from the opening of the bag was anything to go by.

“No wonder you were so successful in battle, Master Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka murmured as a chime at the door alerted her to the arrival of breakfast, right on time as her padawan had promised.

Obi-Wan quietly chewed on a meal bar as he scoured the Archives for information on Acronae and Acromino and the rebellion that had been going on for the past few years. The relationship between the two seemed not unlike a family dispute, with the Acronae leaving its daughter colony to manage its own affairs until they started unduly increasing the taxes on the population of the colony. The details of internecine squabble might have seemed boring to Quinlan but it fascinated Obi-Wan that it took so little to destroy what had been such a close and effective partnership.

“How did it come to this?” Obi-Wan mumbled around his mouthful, adding the document to his traveling datapad. “Why couldn’t they just sit down and talk out their troubles?”

“Compromise is difficult, Padawan Kenobi.”

The familiar voice of Qui-Gon Jinn startled Obi-Wan out of his rumination and he nearly choked on his breakfast as he jumped in his chair. Gazing up from his seat, he could see the Jedi Master smiling at him from the other side of the long row of desks, his hands resting on his hips. “That is why the Jedi Order is so important. We provide an impartial voice that, when guided by the Living Force, can help both parties reach a truce that benefits everyone.”

Obi-Wan blinked and nodded, still too startled to speak. According to the Temple rumor mill, Master Jinn wasn’t expected back for another few days but clearly he had managed to sneak out of the deification ceremony on Ranbeth. That struck Obi-Wan as poorly done but who was he to speak against a master?
“Good morning, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan said, pushing himself up out of his seat to bow respectfully. “How did your mission on Ranbeth go? Well I hope?”

“Well enough,” Master Jinn replied with a half smile. “What brings you to the Archives so early this morning? Shouldn’t you be in a class with your agemates?”

Standing a little bit taller, Obi-Wan raised his chin as he answered proudly. “Master Tano and I have been assigned to accompany Master Plo Koon to oversee peace talks between Acronae and Acromino. Master Plo Koon gave me permission to do some research before we depart on the history of the two planets.”

“I see,” Qui-Gon nodded, his expression warm. “You must be very excited. It’s a great honor to be sent on a mission at such a young age.”

Obi-Wan flushed and glanced off to the side, inhaling sharply before replying. “Well… we’ve really only been assigned to observe Master Plo Koon’s work. But it is still an honor to given this assignment. I am the first in my class to receive such a task.”

“Of course,” the Jedi Master nodded, mirth dancing in his eyes and Obi-Wan couldn’t decide if Master Jinn was laughing at him or just being friendly. “Jedi Knight Tano must be very proud of your progress. How goes your saber studies? Are you still focusing mainly on jar’kai?”

“Yes, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan answered. “Master Tano says I am progressing well and my age group will begin an intensive study of Ataru at the start of the next cycle.”

“Oh really?” Qui-Gon mused, smoothing a hand over his beard as he nodded a greeting to a passing master. “Ataru is my specialty, you know. If you ever find yourself stuck on a difficult form I would be happy to offer what wisdom I have. You need only ask, Padawan Kenobi.”

“Thank you for your kind offer, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan bowed again, his eyes focused on the table in front of him. “I will be sure to mention it to my master.”

“Excellent,” Qui-Gon said and gave Obi-Wan a crisp bowing nod of his head. “If you’ll excuse me, Padawan Kenobi, I must be going. I wish you the best of luck on your mission and may the Force be with you.”

“May the Force be with you as well, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan replied, bowing one last time as the towering Jedi master walked away from the desk, giving him the chance to slump back into his seat, nerves making him weak in the knees as adrenaline drained away.

Sighing, Obi-Wan picked up his datapad and slowly fell back into researching the customs and cultures of the people of Acronae and Acromino.

After another hour of reading, note-taking and downloading documents onto his datapad, Obi-Wan stood up for a stretch and a walk up and down the stacks. He passed by a bronzium bust of one of the Lost Masters, frowning up at the Rodian who had chosen to leave the Order in the later half of her life. He wondered what could make a Jedi Master leave the Order, what strange twists and turns of fate could convince someone to cast off their entire life and embrace another, more dangerous and chaotic path.

Who would Obi-Wan Kenobi be without the Jedi Order? Where would he go? What would he do? He marveled at how Master Ahsoka had lived on her own for so long on the Outer Rim, never falling to the dark side or even being tempted. He liked to think that if something similar happened to him that he would be as strong as his master but he highly doubted that. Obi-Wan’s temper was far
too short and he felt things with such intensity that at times it could overwhelm him. It was only through time and practice that he had managed anything resembling calm and even then, it took very little to get his back up. Master Ahsoka said it was charming but Master Yoda disagreed and Master Windu said nothing, just raised an eyebrow at Obi-Wan and moved on.

Obi-Wan supposed Master Ahsoka found his temper charming because she said it reminded her of Master Skywalker. He found it hard to believe that Master Skywalker would have a problem with anything, let alone an explosive and short fuse, but he knew his master would never lie to him. He prayed that with enough practice he would one day be able to rein in his emotions and approach the galaxy with the serene confidence that his mental image of Master Skywalker possessed. Obi-Wan was confident that if he could attain such perfection then he would not only make Master Ahsoka proud but he would show those who had doubted him just how wrong they had been about him.

“I bet Master Skywalker didn’t have to beg someone to take him on as a Padawan Learner,” Obi-Wan muttered to his datapad, trying to ignore the sudden flare up of anger in his gut. “I bet his master took him on as soon as he could.”

Obi-Wan would have given anything to know more about his grandmaster and his great-grandmaster but such things were barred to a padawan learner like himself. And with Master Ahsoka being a former Shadow, it was highly likely that whatever information the Archives had on his lineage would be hidden buried under so many layers of encryption it would take a professional slicer a month to get through it all. Most likely only a Council member would be able to access the files and…

Wait.

Obi-Wan did have Master Plo Koon’s permission to access the entire Archive and Master Nu had shown him how to search the entire database to find the articles, entries and data sets he needed for his research.

And no one was paying Obi-Wan the slightest bit of attention this early in the morning.

If anyone asks, I’ll just tell them that I thought I saw Master Skywalker’s name in one of my articles, Obi-Wan told himself as he pulled up the search screen and typed in the name Skywalker under the Master category.

He frowned when the search algorithm asked him for a first name. He had never bothered to ask Master Ahsoka what her master’s first name was and he wondered if his people were from a culture that only had one name, like Master Yoda. He had heard of human cultures like that, where one only had a given name and every other name indicated one’s relationship to the speaker, the listener or their place within their community. It sounded complicated and fascinating but it would make it all the more difficult for Obi-Wan to track down Master Skywalker if that was his only name.

Obi-Wan skipped the first name entry and activated the search, finishing off his protein bar as he watched the search engine chew through the millions of petabytes of data contained within the Archives. According to Master Nu, there were files held within the great vault of knowledge that were older than the physical temple itself, having been transferred from older temples now lost to time. There were files written in languages and code that only the Temple archivists could translate, the species and people who had given birth to them long since died out. There was such an immense feeling of age and history in the Archives and Obi-Wan found it comforting, to be surrounded by so much wisdom. If the Jedi were great it was partially due to the breadth and depth of their knowledge housed on Coruscant.

The terminal before Obi-Wan chimed and he peered down to see the results of his search, trying to
temper his curiosity with the knowledge that he most likely wasn’t going to find anything.

**Search query string: Family Name, Skywalker. Species, Human/Near-Human. Gender, Male.**

**Results: None.**

Obi-Wan let out a deep sigh. “I thought not.”

He was about to pull up the recent history of Christophis, to see if he could find any oblique references to Master Ahsoka and Skywalker’s activities on the planet when his chronometer alarm went off. He reluctantly closed out of the terminal, following the instructions given to him by Master Nu, and pushed himself back from the table and returned his chair to its previous position.

Tucking his datapad under his arm, Obi-Wan hurried out of the Archive and loped off to his meeting with Masters Ahsoka and Plo Koon, his master’s first mission to Christophis forgotten for the time being.

Chapter End Notes

Hello All!

This was a pretty emotion-heavy chapter and I promise we'll be getting to more action and adventure in the next one. It's too bad we didn't have time to see what kind of silly hats Qui-Gon would have had to wear on his mission to Ranbeth but he skipped out so now we will never know.

Meanwhile, OBI-WAN KENOBI! You sneaky little brat! I hope Ahsoka's got something planned for the inevitable "Why is there no trace of you or Master Skywalker ANYWHERE??" conversation that I have a feeling will be coming.

Anyway, thank you everyone for all of your lovely comments and questions! I am always so thrilled to see them and they brighten my day! If you'd like to shriek with me about THE UPCOMING AWESOMENESS THAT IS STAR WARS CELEBRATION THEN YOU AND FIND ME AT [FIREFLYFISH](#) WHERE I PROMISE I WILL LOSE MY VOICE SCREAMING ABOUT WHATEVER IT IS THEY ARE HINTING AT ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Thanks for reading and have a lovely week!
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi have been assigned to observe Jedi Master Plo Koon as he travels to Raxus on the Outer Rim to facilitate a peace treaty in a civil war between two systems. Tensions are high on both sides and the negotiations promise to be explosive…

Ahsoka knew something was wrong when she set foot in the airy, circular chamber where the two sides of the conflict, the mother system of Acronae and the daughter colony of Acromino, were arguing. Both groups of diplomats, huddled together around two separate tables, jerked their heads around to stare at the arrival of the Jedi and Raxus Senator Issa Fensani. Obi-Wan peered around Ahsoka, anxious curiosity hovering around him like a light mist. As usual, Master Plo Koon was a still pond, cool and serene as he followed the Senator down through the aisles of desks to greet the delegates.

“Honored guests,” Senator Fensani announced as he came to the center of the floor. “May I present Jedi Master Plo Koon, Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and her Padawan Learner, Obi-Wan Kenobi. They will be assisting us as we work towards a fair and equitable resolution to this unfortunate dispute between your peoples.”

“Welcome, Master Jedi,” the head diplomat, Kida Morastus of the Acronae party said, bowing low. “We are honored by your presence.”

“As are the free people of Acromino,” came the sharp retort from Kraspen Loren, the lead diplomat from the other party. “But I’m afraid you’ve come a long way from Coruscant for nothing, Master Jedi. I don’t see how your presence will soften the hard heart of our former overlords.”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, who met his eye and gave him a minute shake of her head.

*Now is not the time for questions,* Padawan, Ahsoka thought, hoping that the feeling would get across, even if the words didn’t. Their bond hadn’t quite advanced to the level where they could communicate without words, the way Master Obi-Wan and Anakin had been able to.

Obi-Wan nodded and said nothing.

“‘Overlords’?! ‘Overlords’!” one of the Acronaens sniffed, pointing a finger at the other party involved. “Listen to how they speak of us, Master Jedi! There will be no peace with these… these terrorists!”

The simmering resentment on both sides threatened to ignite into violence and it made the hair on the back of Obi-Wan’s neck stand up. Ahsoka pursed her lips and scanned the crowd, wondering why two groups who claimed to want peace were nearly about to come to blows before any kind of official talks took place. It didn’t make any sense. What had poisoned the peace talks while they were in hyperspace?
Plo Koon held up both hands, stepping directly between the two parties. “Tensions here are clearly high. I suggest we break for the day and return tomorrow after a full night’s rest.”

Ahsoka watched the assembled delegates, nodding in reluctant agreement. The two sides retreated to their little huddles to discuss the Jedi’s suggestion as Plo Koon turned back to the Senator and Ahsoka. “If there were any formal plans for this evening, I think it would be prudent to cancel them, Senator Fensani.”

“I agree, Master Jedi,” the Senator nodded, bowing to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan as he took his leave and headed back towards the exit to cancel whatever plans Raxus had in store for their guests.

“Something isn’t right here,” Ahsoka murmured to Plo Koon, Obi-Wan leaning closer to catch their soft whispers back and forth. “I can’t put my finger on it but… something is going to happen. Something bad.”

“Then we must be mindful of the Force and its warnings as we proceed forward,” Plo Koon replied, his arms folded over his chest as he waited for the two sides to come to an agreement. He seemed outwardly calm but Obi-Wan knew something was amiss when he saw the master rest his hand on his belt just a breath away from his lightsaber.

Ahsoka turned to Obi-Wan. “Padawan? Why don’t you go join Senator Fensani? We’ll catch up to you once we’re done.”

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to protest, to inform his master that he was supposed to stay by her and Master Plo’s side, but something cold and sharp suddenly pierced his gut with fear and foreboding. It was a sensation he had never felt before and he looked up at Ahsoka, his eyes round with fright. “Master… Something is wrong.”

“What?” Kraspen Loren stormed into their conversation, his black eyes wide with concern. “What did he say?”

“I really think we should all adjourn for the day.” An aide to one of the parties, Ahsoka couldn’t be sure which, started to urge people to the door. “We shouldn’t take up any more of the Jedi’s time.”

“We haven’t yet come to an agreement!” Kida Morastus snapped at her subordinate. “We’re not leaving this room before they do!”

There came an equally tempestuous response from the other side and Ahsoka worried there was going to be a physical altercation. She bent down to Obi-Wan and took his hands in hers. “What’s wrong? What are you sensing?”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, horrified at his failure to pinpoint the nature of his unease. “I don’t… I don’t know, Master! Just… danger! To everyone here!”

“Danger?!?” gasped another diplomat and there was a shriek from one side of the other: it didn’t seem to matter. Both sides of the conflict started fleeing towards the doorways, shouting for help from their security details.

“The Jedi says there’s danger!”

“I knew we couldn’t trust them!”

“Assassins!”

Plo Koon frowned, turning his gaze to Obi-Wan, who could feel the weight of the Jedi’s displeasure.
Obi-Wan took a deep breath and steeled himself for a lecture when Ahsoka, looking around, let out a shout. “Bomb!”

Tucked up under the large ornate wooden desk where the prime minister of Raxus usually sat was a small collection of thermal detonators, the red light of their timers flashing in sync as they counted down.

Wasting no time, Plo Koon grabbed Obi-Wan’s arm and started running for the door, Ahsoka hot on their heels. The diplomats who had fled earlier were now hunched at the locked doors, pounding on them to be let out.

With a wave of the Force, Plo Koon flung open the doors on the south side of the hall as Ahsoka flung open the doors on the west.

Obi-Wan could hear the bombs start ticking as they entered their final cycle.

Beep.

“Everyone! Evacuate the building!” Ahsoka shouted to passing civil servants as Plo Koon activated the fire alarm with the Force.

Beep.

“Masters!” Obi-Wan cried out, wanting to help somehow as civilians started running past them. “What do I do?”

Beep-Beep!

“Run!” Ahsoka ordered, pointing to to the main lobby and entrance as she and Plo Koon stayed where they were, guiding the panicking crowd to safety. Too scared to argue, Obi-Wan fell in with the surge of people running for the main entrance.

Beep-Beep-Beep!

Obi-Wan was nearly to the door when the bombs went off.

The explosion ripped through the grand hall of the Raxus legislature, sending a groaning, shuddering shock wave of light, heat and destruction through the building that blew out all of the windows on the first and second floors. Somehow in the last few seconds before the explosion, Ahsoka and Plo Koon had pushed Obi-Wan and the civilians he had been running with through the open doors, sending them tumbling across the paved central square of Raxulon. The other diplomats, who had sprinted ahead, were huddled together as far away as they could get watching the smoke and fire billow out of the window, curling up into the clear blue sky overhead.

Obi-Wan pushed himself up onto his hands and knees, ignoring the sting of the few scrapes and cuts he’d gotten from his slide to freedom. He looked up at the conflagration, horror on his face and he cried out. “Master!”

Without a second thought, he flung off his outer robe and charged back towards the burning building, paying no heed to the sounds of oncoming sirens and a few first-responders who were shouting at him.

“Kid! Stop! It’s too dangerous in there!”

“Stop! You’re just going to get yourself killed!”
But Obi-Wan’s master and Master Plo was in there and he wasn’t going to stop until he found them both and brought them back, safe and sound. Please, sweet Force, please protect them!

The explosion had shattered the glass doors of the main entrance that Obi-Wan and the civilians had fled through, and he now picked his way over glass shards and bent metal to slip inside. The lobby was empty: the fire had not reached it yet and he sprinted through it toward the lofty hall where he thought his master had been when the bombs went off.

Ahsoka and Plo Koon were nowhere to be seen.

Icy fear and terror clutched at Obi-Wan’s heart and he spun around, thinking that perhaps the Jedi had been thrown some place else. He hurried back into the lobby, which was quickly filling with smoke, looking for any sign of them when he heard a cry.

“Help me! Stars above! Help me! Please!”

It sounded like an older man and it was coming from behind what looked like a collapsed information stand. Obi-Wan dashed over to him and with a groan he managed to shove a mangled metal sign off a heavy pile of debris that had pinned the man in place. “Are you hurt, sir? Do you think you can walk?”

“I think so, young Jedi,” the man gasped as the sign shifted. “If you can help me up.”

“Of course,” Obi-Wan grunted, using the Force to toss the shattered ceiling tiles and empty storage bins off of the gentleman. He reached down to help the man to his feet, letting the other man lean heavily on him as they limped back to the exit and out into the fresh air.

“Thank you, Master Jedi,” the man wheezed as they made their way through what remained of the exit. “You saved my life.”

“Hardly,” Obi-Wan shook his head, distracted, as they kept moving forward, praying frantically for someone to come and take the victim off his hands so that he could return to his search. Horrible images flashed through his mind.

“Jedi! Master Jedi!” another voice called out, drawing Obi-Wan’s eyes to a makeshift triage area and he turned the injured man toward it.

More and more sirens filled the air, a high, sharp counterpoint to the bass rumble of the fire. Overhead there were fireships shooting a suppression agent into the flames of the building as more firefighters, emergency response droids and first responders flooded into the area. The Raxulon police were already starting to cordon it off.

The sight of them all sent a wave of reassurance through Obi-Wan as he carefully handed off the man he had saved to a waiting medic. “I found him in the lobby under some debris. I think he might have a concussion.”

The old man reached out to grab Obi-Wan’s hand in his and squeezed it tightly. “Thank you, my boy. Thank you for saving my life.”

Trying to muzzle his anxiety about his master and Master Plo Koon, Obi-Wan took a deep breath, looked the man in the eye, and gave him an acknowledging bow. “It is my duty as a Jedi, sir. Now if you’ll excuse me.”

Obi-Wan turned on his heel and ran back towards the building, his heart pounding so hard he wondered if others could hear it. He stretched out with the Force, trying to locate where exactly his
master was in the mess of the legislature building, and found something weak that seemed familiar, like a candle holding steady against the fading light of day.

*Master?!* Obi-Wan focused all his concentration on that thought, hoping to reach her through whatever haze of pain or confusion she might be in. He slipped past a droid spraying water up onto the second floor and then darted around another pair of firefighters and a peace officer as he dashed across the last few meters to run back into the building. “I’m coming, Master!”

“Woah! Hey! Where do you think you’re going, kid?” A large, burly Besalisk suddenly appeared in Obi-Wan’s way, picking him up with one set of hands as he continued to work a firehose with the other set. “You can’t go in there! The whole place is on fire!”

“Put me down!” Obi-Wan shouted, trying to struggle his way out of the well-meaning Besalisk’s hold. “My master is in there! I have to save her!”

“Your master?” another emergency worker asked, hurrying over to Obi-Wan and waving for the Besalisk firefighter to put him down. “You mean there’s a Jedi in there?”

“Yes!” Obi-Wan said, once he was set back on the ground. “There are two, my master, Ahsoka Tano and Master Plo Koon! I have to rescue them!”

“Kid,” the human medic reached for him, grabbing him by the shoulders, “you can’t go in there! The fire is going to claim the whole building. We don’t know if it’s structurally sound anymore! It’s a death trap!”

“I don’t care!” Obi-Wan shouted, his hands curled into fists. “My masters are in there and I am going to find them!”

“I can’t let you!” the medic fired back and took a firm hold of Obi-Wan’s robes, fully intent on hauling him to safety. “You may be a Jedi but you’re still a kid. You can’t go back in there. I’m sorry, but I’m sure you’re master is going to be okay. Jedi are trained for this kind of stuff.”

“No! I am going in after her!” Obi-Wan twisted out of the man’s grasp, sprinted for the building, and would have run straight into the growing fire if it hadn’t been for another explosion on a higher floor rocking the square and freezing him in place.

A surge of fear locked his legs up and he gasped for air, telling himself to let it go, to let it pass through him and into the Force. But the fear didn’t listen. It shouted at him that his master needed him since no one seemed to care that there were two Jedi inside the building. Something could have happened to Master Plo and Ahsoka while they were busy making sure the civilians were all right. The people outside just assumed that because they were Jedi, they were going to be fine!

“Get back here!” the medic from before shouted, pushing his way through the crowd toward him. Obi-Wan glanced over his shoulder, worried. Was that man really going to chase him down and bodily haul him back to the triage area? Did he not understand Obi-Wan’s very real fear that as they dithered outside, something horrible could be happening to Ahsoka?

“Ahsoka! Get the droids! We need another medic here!” came a shout from another first responder as the loud white noise roar of the sprays of fire suppressant and water battled with the crackling hissing of the fire. Obi-Wan turned back to the building and saw a group of about ten or so people, bent over and huddled together as they scrambled through the entrance.

The soot-covered survivors ran past Obi-Wan, some sobbing, some coughing, and others just gasping and begging for help. He watched them flee past him to collapse into the arms of the waiting
medics and emergency droids, feeling numb and frozen as he turned back to frantically look for a sign of his masters.

No. They can’t… they can’t be gone. I would have felt it! I know it! Obi-Wan took a few steps forward, feeling a strange leaden sensation wash over him. A straggler from the group stumbled out of the building, this one a young woman who practically knocked Obi-Wan over as she reached for him. “Oh thank the stars! They saved us! They saved us all!”

Tears were running down her cheeks, cutting lines in the grey dust and black soot there. He carefully shifted her around on his shoulders and helped her back to safety, almost deaf to her relieved sobbing.

“They saved my life!” she gasped, clutching Obi-Wan. “The Jedi! They saved me! They’re still in there! Those Jedi are still in there!”

The word Jedi pierced Obi-Wan’s haze and he looked up at the black-haired woman. “The Jedi are still in there? They’re alive? Both of them?”

“Yes!” She gasped, collapsing into the arms of the medic from before. “They saved us all! We were trapped on the third floor and we couldn’t get down! But they rescued us! I don’t know how we lost them but…”

“OBI-WAN?!”

A frantic, desperate cry went out over the chaotic scene and Obi-Wan spun around, watching another two figures make their way out of the grey, smoke-filled mouth of the building now scorched and black as the fire continued to burn. The woman taken by a medic and forgotten, Obi-Wan rose to his feet and staggered forward, fear and relief beating in time in his chest as he waited for the humanoid shadows to resolve into Ahsoka and Master Plo.

“Master?” Obi-Wan gasped, breaking into a sprint at the sight of Ahsoka’s montrals.

The two Jedi cleared the main entrance, running to safety as Plo Koon shot a look over his shoulder at the inferno devouring the rest of the building. Ahsoka didn’t stop and caught Obi-Wan as he flung himself into her arms. “Oh Master! You’re alive! You’re alive! I thought I’d lost you!”

“Obi-Wan!” Ahsoka nearly sobbed, pulling her padawan closer and practically curling around him. “Thank the Force you’re safe! I was so worried about you! Are you alright? What are you doing out here?”

“I was trying to find you!” Obi-Wan cried, looking up at his master, grasping the collars of her robe tight in his hand to reassure himself she was safe, that he hadn’t lost her. “I kept trying to get back to you but there was someone buried under some rubble and then the medics wouldn’t let go of me and then there was another person who needed my help!”

“We need to move,” Plo Koon ordered as he guided Ahsoka upright and turned Obi-Wan away from the building. “I sense the building is going to collapse. Hurry!”

Ahsoka took Obi-Wan’s hand in hers and all three of the Jedi raced to clear the perimeter, Plo Koon giving instructions to the firefighters to pull back as the fire moved into the final death throes of its destructive life cycle. Overhead the fire brigades were pouring more and more water onto the hungry red hot flames, smoke curling into the blue sky.

“Is everyone out?” a firefighter asked Ahsoka and she glanced over at Plo Koon to confirm before answering, holding Obi-Wan tight against her side. “Yes, as near as we can tell. There’s no one else
we can sense in there.”

The building let out a great, loud groan and shudder as it began to collapse in on itself, the third story crumbling into the second and both of those dropping into the first. A great, heavy cloud burst out of the flaming wreckage, spewing ash and soot into the air as a shockwave of hot air washed over the central square. The emergency cordons danced and flickered in the sudden wind before going still.

Obi-Wan let out a long breath and looked up at Ahsoka. “Are you alright, Master?”

Glancing down at him, Ahsoka managed an exhausted smile. “Yes, Obi-Wan. I’m fine.”

She looked up at Plo Koon and took a deep breath, nodding as if trying to reassure herself that she had told Obi-Wan the truth. “We’re all okay.”

After the bombing of the Raxus Parliament building, accusations flew between both sides, with the Acronaens accusing the colonists of resorting to terrorism to push their agenda forward. The Acrominoans claimed that it was a move by their parent system to discredit them and their fight for sovereignty. Obi-Wan watched most of these developments from the safety of Senator Fensani’s home outside of Raxulon, which he had offered to the Jedi when they first arrived on the planet.

Master Plo and Ahsoka spent the next few days in the city, assisting the rescue teams and the recovery teams as they sifted through the rubble looking for clues as to the identity of the bomber. Luckily, thanks to the fast thinking of Plo Koon and Ahsoka, there were no casualties and only a few serious injuries. Obi-Wan begged to be allowed to go with them on their investigations, but Ahsoka told him that it would be better if he stayed behind. When he protested that he was just going to watch and wouldn’t touch anything, Ahsoka sat him down for a talk, her face serious.

“I know you want to help, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, her gaze distant for a moment as she worked through what she wanted to say. “And I believe you when you say you won’t get underfoot. I know. I believe you.”

“So why can’t I go?” Obi-Wan asked, his brows furrowed. “I don’t understand. Did I do something wrong?”

“No,” Ahsoka shook her head sharply. “No, of course not. But you’re not ready for this.”

He opened his mouth to protest but Ahsoka’s frown killed the heat in his reply. “But… what if it happens again?”

“Then I can act knowing you are safe and sound here in Senator Fensani’s home,” Ahsoka said, holding Obi-Wan’s arms in her hands, rubbing his shoulder with her thumb. “Please… do this for me, Padawan?”

Nodding forlornly, Obi-Wan agreed to his master’s request. “What should I do while you’re away?”

“Practice your forms, work on your lessons and meditate,” Ahsoka instructed, standing up and picking up her robe as she moved to the door. “And I want you to take notes on the coverage of the attack on the holo feeds. Let me know if anything strikes you as odd or funny, okay?”

“Yes, Master,” he sighed as he followed her out the door and into the main foyer where the Senator
was quietly talking with Master Plo Koon.

“Your premonition saved many lives,” Plo Koon intoned, fixing him with a long look. “The Force is strong with you, Padawan Kenobi. Do not think staying here is a punishment.”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan nodded, his gaze on the floor, respectful. “I promise I shall take thorough notes while you are in the city.”

“If they are as well-thought out as your notes on Raxus itself, I am certain it will be of considerable assistance to the investigation,” Plo Koon replied, bowing his head to Obi-Wan and stepping outside with the Senator.

Ahsoka gave her padawan a half-smile. “Don’t feel bad. The Council’s already sent out our replacement. The minute Adi Gallia sets foot on this planet, you and I are being shipped back home to Coruscant. This mission is now officially too dangerous for us.”

Obi-Wan doubted there was anything too dangerous for Ahsoka but he kept that theory to himself as he trailed after her to the door, watching the Senator and his masters climb into a land speeder and take off towards Raxulon.

He did as his master instructed, spending two hours every morning working through his forms and calisthenics. Each day, after a shower and some food, Obi-Wan meditated and worked ahead on his school tasks. In the afternoon he poured over the holofeed reaction to the bombing, making notes of who was claiming what and who was accusing who.

After a while, what struck Obi-Wan as particularly odd was how both sides of the conflict were insistent that they were not responsible for the bombing. In fact, no one had claimed responsibility at all. When he showed his notes to his master and Master Plo Koon, they both frowned over them and Obi-Wan found himself invited into a discussion about the possible motives behind the bombing.

“Assuming neither side is responsible,” Plo Koon concluded over dinner the evening before Knight Gallia was scheduled to arrive. “Who stands to benefit? Certainly not anyone involved in the civil war.”

Ahsoka nodded, pushing the food on her plate around with a sigh. “I agree. It doesn’t make any sense. It’s only going to drag the fighting out longer.”

“Masters, I thought that’s what the Acronaens wanted?” Obi-Wan asked, glancing at them both. “Was I wrong?”

“The Acronaens want to maintain control of their colony, yes,” Master Plo nodded as he ate. “But not at the expense of their standing in the Republic. It was the threat of sanctions that first brought both sides to the table in the first place. Now, with distrust sown between them, the Republic may not be able to make the two sides see reason.”

“So what happens now?” Ahsoka asked, passing Obi-Wan a shaker of salt at his request. “Will they try for peace again?”

“According to young Obi-Wan’s notes, it does not seem like that is likely,” Plo Koon sighed, rubbing a hand over his forehead. “There is something at work here, something beyond our awareness, something elusive. I sense we will not like the answer when we find it.”

Ahsoka nodded. “Well… I wish you the best of luck in your investigation, Master Plo.”

“Your help in this has been invaluable, Ahsoka,” Plo Koon replied with a warm rumble. “And you
as well, Obi-Wan. The emergency workers and first responders speak highly of you. We have heard several stories of your attempts to rescue us. I am touched by your concern and I thank you for it.”

Obi-Wan turned bright red, his gazed locked on the plate in front of him as he tried to think of the appropriate thing to say. His mind went blank as he stammered, “Well… I… I couldn’t leave you in there. Master Windu would be furious with me.”

Ahsoka burst out laughing at that, Plo Koon joining her, and the Force seemed to brighten around them, loosening the tension in Obi-Wan’s shoulders and reassuring him that everything would be fine.

Jedi Knight Adi Gallia arrived the next day, her bright red Republic Cruiser cooling down next to the other nondescript light freighters and cruisers in the local spaceport hangar. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan stood with Master Plo Koon as they waited for the Tholothian Jedi to emerge from the ship.

As the door sighed open and the boarding ramp lowered, Knight Gallia emerged, the soft tails of her traditional headdress dancing on the wind thrown up by the cruiser’s engines. Marching down the walkway, Gallia greeted the three of them with a nod. “Master Plo, Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi, it’s good to see you looking so well.”


“I was on the first ship out,” the tall, dark woman replied. “Although I’m not sure I received all the details. Master Mundi told me that young Kenobi discovered the bombs?”

“It was Padawan Kenobi’s sensitivity to the Force that alerted us to the danger,” Plo Koon answered, gesturing to Obi-Wan, who blushed in embarrassment. “Knight Tano discovered the bombs and was instrumental in rescuing the involved civilians. Without her, we would have had many casualties.”

“Well done, both of you,” Knight Gallia said, a broad smile on her face. “I will take over your half of the investigation from here, Knight Tano. Is there anything pertinent you feel I should know before you depart?”

“This is a datapad with my thoughts and observations on the bombing, as well as my Padawan’s notes,” Ahsoka said, handing the device over. “We haven’t been able to place our finger on it but we both believe this might be the work of an outside agent. Who, and for what reasons, we can’t say.”

“Thank you,” Knight Gallia nodded and bowed to the both of them before walking off to make her greeting to Senator Fensani.

“You two will be returning on the Resiliant,” Plo Koon explained, pointing to the ship they had arrived on that was three landing pads over. “There’s been a request by the Council for you two to visit Mirial and pick up another Jedi before you return home. It shouldn’t add more than a day or two to your travel time.”

“Mirial…” Ahsoka mused, looking down at Obi-Wan. “Isn’t that where your friend Luminara is from?”

Obi-Wan grinned. “It is!”
“Perhaps you can enjoy some of the local culture,” Plo Koon chuckled. “Thank you again for your assistance in this matter, Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi. May the Force be with you both.”

“May the Force be with you, Master Plo Koon,” they responded in unison and took their leave of the Kel Dor Master, walking towards their ship, warmed up and ready to fly.

“I have just one question about this whole affair,” Ahsoka said as she glanced down at Obi-Wan. “What happened to your outer robe?”

Obi-Wan flushed, his ears turning crimson. “I… err… I discarded it during the bombing and… then I could not recover it. Then it seemed insensitive to ask if anyone had seen it what with all the wounded and the investigation taking place.”

Ahsoka shook her head and laughed.

They were eight hours into the twenty-four hour flight to Mirial when the pilot got a distress call and commed Ahsoka over the ship system. She was in her state room meditating, and when she hurried up to the cockpit she wasn’t surprised to find Obi-Wan on her heels.

“What’s wrong?” Ahsoka asked, peering at the message glowing faintly on the com board. “Is that Huttese?”

“According to the translator,” the co-pilot explained, showing Ahsoka the message in Basic.

“What does it say, Master?” Obi-Wan tried to wedge himself around Ahsoka’s side so he could read the missive. The cry for help was short and simple.

SOS!! Ship’s hyperdrive has failed! Catastrophic decompression and hull rupture! Crew is in life pods. Please send help ASAP! SOS!!

“What are their coordinates and how strong is the signal?” Ahsoka asked as she took a seat behind the pilot, frowning at the swirling blue-white streaks of hyperspace outside the ship. “What kind of time delay is on that?”

“The signal is strong and there’s only be a delay of a few hours as best we can tell, Master Jedi,” the co-pilot answered, pointing to some coordinates on the navicomputer screen. They struck Ahsoka as familiar but she couldn’t quite put her finger on why. There was something tickling the back of her mind but she was having trouble coaxing the Force into resolving that bad feeling into something a bit more concrete.

“Master?” Obi-Wan asked, his face expectant. “We have to to help them, right? By Republic hyperlane law?”

Ahsoka looked over at her padawan and nodded. “Yes, sorry. I got distracted. Take us out of hyperspace, Captain. We’ll pick them up and then continue on to Mirial.”

The co-pilot got to work altering their flight path in the navicomputer as Obi-Wan watched and Ahsoka’s feeling of unease grew. There was something wrong here, something she wasn’t remembering clearly. Something important that she had forgotten about this part of the Galaxy.
Something from the Clone Wars.

*What am I missing? Was there a battle here? Did Master have a battle out here? There’s really nothing between Raxus and Mirial except for Korriban and the Gordian Reach. What IS it?*

“Coming out of hyperspace in three, two, one,” the pilot announced as the ship lurched back into real space only to find a small blockade of ships, heavily armed and highly modified, facing them. The pilot let out a curse and Obi-Wan gasped, glancing over at his master.

Ahsoka scanned the small fleet before them and then noticed the planet hanging in the darkness behind it. It looked like a dull, brown and barren dustball of a planet, one with a hazy atmosphere and all the appeal of a pile of bantha dung.

And then it hit Ahsoka and she understood why those coordinates had set off her nerves.

The planet in front of them was Florrum.
Previously on Tano and Kenobi

After a terrorist bombing on Raxus, Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi are sent on their way to Mirial to pick up a fellow Jedi before returning to the Jedi Temple on Coruscant. Everything seems to be returning to normal when their Republic cruiser receives a distress signal. Ordering their ship to drop out of hyperspace Ahsoka sees a familiar planet out of the cockpit window.

The planet Florrum. And a fleet of ships that may or may not be pirates.

“Pirates?!”

Ahsoka frowned, her mouth pulled into a thin line as she stared at the small fleet of light freighters and Corona ships that floated in the void of space between her cruiser and the planet Florrum.

She couldn’t quite wrap her mind around the reality in front of her. The last time Ahsoka had been in this part of the galaxy she had been captured by Hondo Ohnaka’s motley crew of pirates, nearly sold into slavery, escaped, and been captured again only to end up facing off against General Grievous before escaping in a bounty hunter’s ship. To say Ahsoka had less than pleasant memories of this place would be an understatement.

Of course that was at least twenty years into the future that she had vowed to change.

“Master? Is that…?” Obi-Wan couldn’t manage to hide the nervous tremor in his voice as he glanced from the ships to Ahsoka and back. “Are they… pirates?”

“It certainly looks that way,” Ahsoka reluctantly said before turning to Captain Avett. “Open the comms. Maybe we can reason with them.”

“With pirates, Master Jedi?” he replied as the co-pilot got to work sending out the message on all known frequencies. “You can’t be serious! The Republic doesn’t bargain with pirates.”

“I don’t know about you, Captain,” Ahsoka shot back, her brows arched, “but I didn’t plan on getting blown out of the sky today. If there’s something we can trade for our freedom, then we give it to them.”

“What if they’re slavers?” came the captain’s bitter response and Obi-Wan’s eyes grew even more round and scared.

“Then you better hope our backup gets here before they ship us off to Hutt Space,” Ahsoka shot back, moving swiftly down the hallway to the comm panel. Obi-Wan hurried after her, his fear and worry radiating outward and she had to take a moment to center herself and prevent her padawan’s understandable fear from coloring her judgement.

“Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka sat down at the comm panel and watched him as he did the same, his hands curled into fists at his side. “I know you’re scared but I need you to focus now. Just like you did on
Raxus. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan swallowed a lump in his throat that was trying to cut off all the air to his lungs. He took a deep breath and nodded to his master, closing his eyes and retreating within himself to find his center.

Almost immediately the panic and fright started to clear out of the Force.

Ahsoka felt the vise on her lungs ease and she sent out a strong feeling of gratitude and pride to her padawan. Master Obi-Wan had been an expert in keeping his emotions under control during tense moments and while her Obi-Wan wasn’t quite there yet, he had already shown a natural gift for handling high-stress situations.

Still it would have been nice to have a longer break between crises. Ahsoka thought as she sent out her own coded message to any Jedi or Republic vessel in the area, asking for immediate assistance. Quite a few frequencies were being jammed by the pirates but thankfully there were still some that were known only to the Jedi and the highest levels of the Republic Security Forces and she focused her attention on those.

Hopefully, their cry for help would get back to the Temple as soon as possible and Master Plo or Master Gallia could be temporarily diverted to rescue them from whatever the pirates had planned.

Assuming they were pirates and not something worse.

“Master?” Obi-Wan spoke up next to her, his voice soft. “We’re being hailed.”

Ahsoka took a deep breath and flipped open the comm channel. “Captain? Put them through to me back here.”

“Yes, Master Jedi!”

Ahsoka sat up straighter and consciously relaxed her shoulders as she watched the blue-white hologram resolve itself into a familiar figure. Someone she hadn’t seen in years.

“Greetings, my Republican friends!” Hondo Ohnaka grinned into the holocamera, looking no older than twenty, if that.

He bowed a little, doffing his cap to his victims. “Welcome to Florrum! Home of the great pirate prince, Hondo Ohnaka! That’s me, in case the tales of my exploits have not made it to the Core yet.”

Ahsoka grit her teeth, telling herself not to roll her eyes or do anything that would imply she had knowledge of the Weequay pirate or somehow upset the delicate balance of the timeline she was on. Besides, the suspicious Captain Avett and co-pilot Lincae wouldn’t understand, to say nothing of Obi-Wan, who watched the holo with trepidation on his face.

Taking a page from Padme, Ahsoka decided to try and charm their way out of the situation they found themselves in, and plastered a cheerful smile to her face. The fastest way to Hondo’s heart is through his ego. Flattery will go a lot further than threats.

“Thank you for such a… warm reception,” Ahsoka breezed, staring down at the holographic pirate hovering over the projector in the comm panel. “Forgive us for our unexpected arrival but we’re here to answer a distress signal from a ship with a compromised hyperdrive. I don’t suppose you would know anything about that, would you, Hondo Ohnaka?”

“A distress signal, you say?” Hondo looked around, as if he were physically searching for the
disabled ship itself. “I am mystified! As you can see, all of my friends’ ships are in perfect working order! In fact, we just had our one-hundred-thousand lightyear inspections done. Perhaps there is a problem with your communications array?”

“No, I’m pretty sure we received a distress signal, Hondo,” she shook her head. “But if there’s no one here in need of our help, then we’ll just be on our way.”

“Leaving so soon?” he grinned, a rather off-putting display of teeth and grey wrinkles. “But you just got here! Why don’t you come down and enjoy some of our famous Florrum hospitality?”

Ahsoka glanced off to the side, catching a glimpse of Obi-Wan’s face. His fear was the first thing she could sense in the Force but there was something else, something between confusion and awe, as he watched her converse with the pirate as if she was carrying on a conversation with Master Jinn.

“Well…” she sighed, turning her attention back to Hondo, “as much as I love exploring new worlds, we’re on a pretty tight schedule and I can’t afford to be late to our appointment on Mirial. Thank you for your offer. It was most generous.”

“Oh, no no!” Hondo persisted, leaning forward so that his face took up the whole of the holo projector. “You cannot leave so early! You only just got here! If you will not come down to Florrum then come to my ship! We will have some drinks a few light refreshments and then you can be on your way!”

Ahsoka reminded herself to smile as she politely but firmly refused his offer. “Thank you but I must decline. Republic business waits for no one.”

“Nonsense! There is no Republic business out here! Come, come! Join me on my ship,” Hondo smirked, his beady black eyes shining as his voice lost some of its warm charm. “I insist.”

And with a sharp gesture from Hondo, the signal was cut off and an alarm sounded from the cockpit. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan hurried back to the front of the ship.

“Master Jedi!” Lincae cried. “They’ve locked on to our ship with their targeting array! And they’ve launched tow cables!”

“It’s a boarding party,” Ahsoka spat as a warning siren went out through the ship as the cables and harpoons found their targets along the ship’s hull. “Send out an SOS on all frequencies! Keep broadcasting!”

“Shouldn’t we fire on them?” Captain Avett asked, disbelief clear in his voice. “We’re right on top of them! Surely one of them would be a direct hit!”

“There’s too many of them and we can’t risk making them angry,” Ahsoka shook her head. “I’m not needlessly throwing our lives away if I can help it. Obi-Wan? Follow me.”

Obi-Wan nodded, hot on Ahsoka’s tail as she ran toward the stern of the ship, where the airlock was located. There were yellow alarm lights flashing as they hurried through the hallways and a high-pitched klaxon sound that wasn’t helping Obi-Wan’s nerves.

“Master? What are we going to do?” Obi-Wan asked, his hands drifting to his belt to pull his lightsabers free. “Are we going to try to fight them off?”

Ahsoka took up a defensive position behind a bulkhead, listening to the buzzing sounds of the pirate ship trying to override the controls of the cruiser’s airlock. “Not if we don’t have to.”
Puzzled, Obi-Wan glanced up at her. “Then what is our plan?”

“We’re going to negotiate,” Ahsoka smirked and waited for the boarding party to break through, gesturing for him to take a position behind her.

Obi-Wan’s eyes nearly popped out of his skull in surprise as he did as she commanded. “Negotiate? With pirates? Master, how are we going to do that?”

“Watch and learn, little one,” Ahsoka explained as the airlock started to groan and the control panel flickered from red to green. “Here they come. And put those sabers away. You’ll know when we need them.”

Obi-Wan grumbled to himself but he returned his saber hilts to his belt, telling himself that Ahsoka was his master and she knew what was best. Surely she and Master Skywalker had encountered pirates before and survived.

It wasn’t his place to disagree with her even as a small part of him doubted the pirates would be receptive to any offer Ahsoka would make.

There was a loud grinding shriek of metal on metal and the sudden gasping pop of the seal on the airlock breaking, immediately followed by the sigh of air from the other ship flooding into the hallway. Ahsoka took a deep breath and closed her eyes, reaching out to touch the Force, to feel its choppy waves buffeting against the ship, against her senses.

If she wasn’t careful, things could change and turn from difficult to life-threatening in the blink of an eye. She hadn’t traveled through time and spent two years training Obi-Wan in the ways of the Force to lose him to Hondo Ohnaka, of all people.

They needed to find a way out of this mess with their skins intact.

What would Master Obi-Wan do? What would Padme do?

“Master Tano?” Lincaé’s nervous voice crackled over the ship’s speakers. “They’re breaking through the airlock! What do we do?”

“Keep broadcasting!” Ahsoka answered, flicking off the comm as the airlock door finally slid free and the pirates, all Weequay and just as dishevelled as she remembered them, tumbled through the opening. Obi-Wan stepped closer to her, just barely peeking around her before darting back against the wall behind her. “Weequay! There must be a dozen or more!”

Ahsoka doubted that and she canted her head around the corner just enough to make out five, possibly six henchmen. Looking down at Obi-Wan, she raised her finger to her lips, telling him to be silent as she unsheathed her sabers. He went to pull his out but a quick shake of her head stopped him.

*Not yet, Obi-Wan.*

Yes, Master.

*I promise. You’ll get your chance to fight pirates if that’s what you really want.* Ahsoka winked at him and then stepped out and through the bulkhead with a cheerful greeting. “Hello there!”

The pirates responded as she expected they would by immediately opening fire, sending Obi-Wan into a protective crouch behind the bulkhead, his hands covering his face as Ahsoka made short work of their shots, deflecting most of them but directing a few back at the pirates who either collapsed in an unconscious heap or let out a yelp and shouted for backup.
There wasn’t much to them, their defenses even more pathetic than Ahsoka remembered from the last time she had to deal with Hondo and his ilk.

Of course she had been no more than seventeen at the time and she had been trying to defend a much larger cruiser with six younglings and an ancient droid. Considering her handicaps at the time, Ahsoka had to admit to herself that she did a good job of protecting the younglings.

Master Obi-Wan had said as much once they were safe back in Republic Space.

“Master?” Obi-Wan’s voice broke through Ahsoka’s musing as she stood in the middle of the hallway, staring down at the groaning pirates in front of her. “Are you alright? Did you kill them?”

Ahsoka gave Obi-Wan a half-smile. “I’m fine. And they’ll be fine too. As soon as they send over Hondo Ohnaka so that we can start the negotiations.”

Obi-Wan slipped out from around the bulkhead, his eyes wide as he took in the damage at his master’s feet. Not a single man was left standing and not a one was dead, not even with a particularly serious injury. One of the pirates was slumped against the wall, gasping into a comm. “Boss! It’s a Jedi cruiser! The Jedi wants to talk to you. Says she wants to negotiate!”

Ahsoka waited, her arms folded over her chest. She glanced down at Obi-Wan, who met her gaze with an adoring nod.

His master did indeed have the situation well under control.

“Well, what does she want?” Hondo bellowed from the other end of the comm and Obi-Wan Ahsoka shared a look as they waited. “If it’s just one Jedi, what is taking you so long? Do not think that I will be kinder to you than my dear sainted mother! Excuses will not be tolerated!”

“May I?” Ahsoka sighed, shaking her head and plucking the comm from the pirate’s hand and pulling it to her with the Force. “Trying to board my ship isn’t exactly my idea of good hospitality, Hondo. Now how about we sit down and talk some business?”

“Business, you say?” Hondo’s voice was low, a sign that he was mulling over her offer. “I don’t usually do business with Jedi. Mama says you are all untrustworthy.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and Ahsoka shook her head in amusement at his clear disgust. “Are you going to let a little thing like a few Jedi keep you from a tidy profit?”

“Profit you say?” Hondo’s voice perked up at the mention of credits. “What kind of profit did you have in mind? I have heard those kyber crystals in your lightsabers are quite valuable.”

_Again with the lightsabers!_ Ahsoka grumbled to herself as she took firm hold of her annoyance and flung it into the Force. “So I’ve heard. So why don’t you come over to my ship and we’ll see if we can make a deal.”

There was a long moment of silence as Ahsoka and Obi-Wan waited for a reply. And waited. And waited.

“Hondo?” Ahsoka spoke into the comm, a chill running down her spine. She glanced down the hall that lead to the airlock and then up the central aisle way of the cruiser, trying to pin down what it was the Force was trying to tell her. Obi-Wan peered up at Ahsoka, his brow furrowed.

“Master? Something doesn’t feel right.”
“I know,” Ahsoka stepped in front of her padawan and with a long exhale she ignited one saber. “Stay behind me, Obi-Wan.”

“Yes, Master,” he nodded, trying hard to keep the fear and anxiety behind his shields as they waited for whatever it was that was coming for them. He felt the Force, tight and tense around them and something else. Like a faint shifting as if they were in a boat on water. There was a groan and they both realized at the same time.

“Master! I think there’s more—!”

“They’re coming through, Obi-Wan!” Ahsoka shouted as the hallway suddenly filled with blaster fire, too much for them to handle on their own. “Fall back to the hold!”

Obi-Wan did as he was told, both sabers out and ignited, as Ahsoka followed, the two ready to make a stand in the back hold of the ship as the pirates charged in with a raucous roar. With more room in the hold to maneuver, Ahsoka took the lead in deflecting the attack as Obi-Wan slipped around the side of the room to disarm those pirates who weren’t paying attention to his smaller form.

“Master!” Obi-Wan shouted as he ducked another wild swing and brought his elbow up into a pirate’s jaw. “What do we do?”

“Stay close to me!” Ahsoka fired back as she spun past one attacker and jumped over another blast, lashing out with a foot to take down another pirate who crashed backwards into his fellows.

Obi-Wan darted through the crowd, slicing through blaster barrels as he ran, trying not kill anyone as he hurried back to his master’s side. Once he was there, he took up a position at her back, protecting her as best he could, but more and more pirates kept coming through the hold doors.

“Whatever happens, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka panted as the odds started to turn against them, “stay close to me.”

“Yes, Master,” he answered with a grunt as another deflected blast rattled his arms and pushed him ever closer to exhaustion. “I don’t think the Force got our message, Master Ahsoka.”

“What message was that?” Ahsoka took another step backwards and found herself literally back to back with Obi-Wan, her eyes darting from pirate to pirate as they came to a stop, having fully encircled the Jedi.

Obi-Wan looked back over his shoulder at his master, too tired to be frightened. “That we didn’t want it to be pirates the first time out.”

Ahsoka shook her head, just as weary. “No. I don’t think it did.”

And then there was the faint whistling cry of a stun blast and Ahsoka and Obi-Wan knew no more after that.

“Ahsoka?”

“Snips, wake up!”

“Master!” Ahsoka cried out as she woke up in a sudden frantic rush, her eyes darting around the
room, trying to place where and when she was. She couldn’t recognize the grey ceiling or the durasteel walls and there was the faint smell of stale ozone that was nothing like the air on the Resolute or the Ghost.

Where was she? Had she gone back to the future? Was everything just a dream?

“Master?”

Obi-Wan.

Focusing on her breathing, Ahsoka waited for her eyes to adjust to the dim overhead light and found Obi-Wan sitting cross-legged next to her. His hands were bound in front of him, loosely clasped, as he watched her wake up. “It’s all right, Master. Everyone is accounted for and uninjured.”

Ahsoka let out a sigh before rolling onto her side and discovering that her hands were bound as well. Pushing herself upright, she reached over to put a hand on Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “You’re okay? They didn’t hurt you?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. I woke up a little bit before you. Captain Avett and Pilot Lincae are here as well.”

Peering over her padawan’s shoulder, Ahsoka could see the captain and the co-pilot slumped together against the far wall and across the hall was another occupied cell opposite theirs. “Who are they?”

“The source of the distress signal, as it turns out,” Obi-Wan explained, standing up and walking up to the cell bars that hummed dangerously.

Ahsoka realized they were in some kind of cell or holding unit, no doubt designed for live cargo.

Pointing with both hands, Obi-Wan introduced the crew of the ship that had sent out the call for help. “This is the crew of the Happy Gundark, Master, and her name is Captain Penyo.”

Ahsoka gave the other captain a weak smile. “Hello. I take it your were ambushed by Hondo Ohnaka too?”

“Yes, we thought we hit an asteroid or some planetary debris,” the captain sighed, shaking her head, the dark braids of her hair sliding over her shoulder as she frowned at the floor. “We are a survey ship, sent out by the Republic to conduct a census of the Sertar system. We had no idea there were pirates on Florrum.”

“Which is just the way they like it,” Ahsoka muttered as she stood up and examined their cell, which was no more than three meters square. It didn’t have ray shields, which would make their escape easier, and the restraints wouldn’t be difficult for her to break out of. Obi-Wan might have some trouble but that wasn’t what concerned her.

How was she going to get the civilians and her own captain and pilot to safety?

“Your padawan told us it was our distress signal that brought you here,” Captain Penyo said, looking up at Ahsoka, her lips quirked in apology. “I’m sorry we took you from your mission, Master Jedi, but I can’t say I’m not glad to see you.”

“It’s Ahsoka,” she explained, bowing her head to the crew of the destroyed ship. “Is this your entire crew over there?”
“Minus several hundred thousand credits worth of droids,” a Twi’Lek crewmember named Joti groused. “Those idiots could have sold those for millions on the black market! But instead they blew them sky-high when they fired on our ship.”

Ahsoka folded her arms over her chest as she paced from one end of their cell to the other. It took her no more than a handful of steps to make it to Obi-Wan’s side but the movement helped burn off a sense of agitation that was tickling the back of her mind.

“Did you check on Captain Avett and the pilot?” Ahsoka asked Obi-Wan as he watched her quietly. Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes, Master. They’re fine. Just unconscious and Pilot Lincae might have a bruise come tomorrow morning but nothing serious.”

“So what’s the plan?” Captain Penyo asked, leaning forward so she could get a better look at Ahsoka in the dim light of their cells. “How are we getting out of here?”

Obi-Wan’s gaze shifted from the captain back to Ahsoka and she felt a sudden heavy weight of responsibility settle on her shoulders. It was up to her and her alone to get them out of this situation and while she had attempted to contact the Republic and the Jedi Order, there was no guarantee that the message had gone through. They had no weapons to speak of and she had no idea what ship they were on. If Hondo was still on the ship, Ahsoka was convinced she would be able to reason with him and they would be able to get out of this mess without any bloodshed but if Hondo had returned to the surface of Florrum and left an underling to dispose of them then things were going to get a bit more dangerous.

“Did they say what they were going to do with you when they captured you?” Ahsoka asked as she walked back to the corner she had woken up in, sinking down into a meditative pose with her legs crossed and hands resting in her lap. “Anything at all?”

“Yeah,” came a disgusted snort from the angry Twi’Lek. “They’re going to send us to Klatooine and sell us.”

Ahsoka was unable to control her eye roll of disgust. “Why am I not surprised? Obi-Wan? I want you to watch the door. Let me know as soon as you sense anyone approaching.”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan bowed to her as he slid down against the wall and watched the far doorway. “Is that all?”

“And work on unlocking your cuffs,” Ahsoka raised her brows as she inclined her head towards his hands. “I know you’ve practiced that in class before. Now it’s time to put it into action.”

Obi-Wan nodded, pulling his knees up and flooding the Force around him with the bright, sharp light of his focus.

“And for those of us who aren’t Jedi?” came a dry request from Captain Penyo. “What should we do?”

“Rest,” Ahsoka replied with a calm expression, her eyes closed. “When we do make our play for freedom, it’s going to take all of our strength.”

There came a disbelieving grumble from the crew of the Happy Gundark but Ahsoka could sense no darker emotions coming from them, only fear, anxiety and exhaustion. She didn’t know how long the survey crew had been locked up in the hold but she could understand their simmering anger. While meditating and searching for a solution in the Force would be invaluable to their escape, it still looked to them like Ahsoka was flopping down for a little nap in the middle of the worst thing that
had ever happened to Captain Penyo and her crew.

While she meditated, Obi-Wan continued to work on the lock that held his binders in place, not strong enough yet to simply pull them apart with the Force. He would take a moment every now and then to glance up at the door and make sure no one was coming before he would try to separate the two halves that made up his restraints. After the first few tries, the friction was starting to rub the skin on his wrists raw and he pulled the sleeves of his inner tunic down with his teeth so that they covered his hands up to his knuckles.

“Does that even work, kid?” the sullen russet Twi’Lek muttered as he took up guard duty for his crew. “I’ve seen it in holovids but never in real life.”

Shrugging, Obi-Wan tried again, letting out a heavy sigh when he failed. “Knights and masters are capable of simply opening them through sheer force of will. Padawans… we have to pick the lock.”

“That’s rough,” Joti replied, watching Obi-Wan work. “How does it work?”

“Locks, like doors, have two natural states,” Obi-Wan explained closing his eye and chewing on his lower lip as he concentrated. “Open and closed. A well-trained knight can easily identify what needs to change within the locking mechanism to switch from closed to… stang.”

Joti shook his head as Obi-Wan’s latest attempt failed. “Why don’t they just teach you how to use a lock pick?”

Obi-Wan blinked, surprised by the suggestion. “Why would I need a lockpick if I have the Force?”

“Cause it doesn’t look like the Force is really working for you at the moment,” Joti observed before he carefully reached through the bars and held out two lock picks. “Do you know how to use these?”

“I have a working understanding of them, yes,” Obi-Wan sniffed, sitting up a little more. “But I’ve never used them before.”

“Well there’s a first time for everything, right?”

Feeling a wave of defeat wash over him, Obi-Wan reached out with the Force to take the lock picks from Joti’s hand when he felt it all slip away, as if the Force itself were being dragged out to sea by a powerful riptide.

He gasped for air, sitting up straight and telling himself to breathe, to focus on a steady rhythm as his heart started pounding wildly in his chest.

*What… what’s happening?* Obi-Wan stared around his cell, seeing only the unconscious faces of Captin Avett and Pilot Lincae before he looked over to Ahsoka, whose brows were furrowed but she didn’t seem to have noticed anything amiss in her meditation. He was half tempted to chalk it up to his fear and anxiety when the Force came rushing back, a sudden tidal wave of energy, power and sensations washing over his mind, swamping his shielding and swallowing him whole.

For a moment, Obi-Wan thought he was drowning and he kicked and clawed frantically, trying to swim upwards against the overwhelming waves of the Force. They tossed him back and forth in a way he had never experienced before.

With a gasp, he broke the surface and felt air return to his lungs or remembered to breathe: Obi-Wan couldn’t be sure which, but he knew that he was caught in the ripples of something impossibly powerful in the Force.
He took another breath and another, focusing only on the inhale and exhale of his lungs before his awareness returned to the cell and Joti calling for his attention.

“Kid? Hey! Kid! You okay over there?”

Obi-Wan shook his head, trying to recall the details of what had just happened.

There was something warm and light in his chest, filling up an aching void he hadn’t even known was there. It was as if someone had taken a small star and placed it within his rib cage, a small flickering ball of light that radiated warmth and happiness.

It felt alive, whatever it was.

Wonderfully, amazingly, joyously alive.

“What’s wrong?” Joti asked. “Where did you go?”

“I don’t…” Obi-Wan looked up, confused. “I don’t know.”

Ahsoka was working through their escape plan when her inner world exploded with starlight. The black void of her meditation lit up with a galaxy of burning points of light as the Force sang with such joy that it nearly made her weep in empathy. She felt the buffeting sensation of the Force against her spirit, delight and love and something so pure and vital she didn’t have the words to describe it.

What happened? What was that? Ahsoka wondered as she quickly surfaced from her meditation. She opened her eyes with an inhale and gazed over at Obi-Wan who was marveling at his binders, opening and closing them with a simple wave of two fingers. There was a dazed smile on his lips as he worked and there was something different about his face, something she couldn’t quite place in the low light.

“Obi-Wan? Are you alright?” Ahsoka got up from her spot in the corner and crept over to sit next to her Padawan, stunned to find tears on his cheeks. “Obi-Wan! What happened? Why are you crying?”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, his eyes round and his expression confused. “I don’t really know why, Master. I was going to use the Force when something… something happened! Something wonderful, I think. I don’t know. I’m having trouble remembering.”

Ahsoka broke the locks on her binders and put an arm around Obi-Wan, touching two fingers to his forehead.

A simple scan of Obi-Wan told Ahsoka that nothing was physically wrong with her padawan but he was right.

Something had changed.

There was a new brightness to his spirit, a faint but steady flicker of something glowing within. Ahsoka reached out to it, gentle and kind, and felt the spark grow brighter, felt it dance and weave in an invisible wind thrown up by the Force and leap from Obi-Wan to Ahsoka, returning to where it
belonged.

Completing the circle.

“Master…” Obi-Wan spoke up, drawing Ahsoka’s attention back into the physical world. “I don’t feel injured. If anything I feel… happy. Like when I found out you chose me to be your Padawan. It feels like… joy. Does that… does that make any sense?”

Ahsoka looked within her own spirit and found that she agreed with Obi-Wan. “It does. You’re right. I don’t sense any pain or anger only… happiness. It feels like…”

It felt like when Anakin accepted her as his padawan.

When they were reunited after that nightmare on the moon of Trandosha.

When he told her how proud he was of her on Mandalore.

Ahsoka turned to her padawan, suddenly struggling with crude, abstract concepts like time and numbers. “Obi-Wan? How old are you?”

“Fifteen standard years, Master,” he answered, confused. “I’ll be sixteen in a few months.”

Everything snapped into place, like the most perfect Telladorian mosaic.

Anakin.

It felt like Anakin.
A Vision to Behold

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After finishing one mission on Raxus and falling prey to an pirate ambush in orbit around Florrum, Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi are faced with a dire situation. If they cannot escape the clutches of the young pirate Hondo Ohnaka, they will be sold at a slave auction on Klatooine in Hutt space. To make matters even worse, they are overcome by a mysterious wave of power and emotions in the Force! Have they just experienced the birth of Anakin Skywalker? And if so, where is he?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anakin Skywalker was alive.
Ahsoka’s master was alive.

Did we just… was that his… birth? Ahsoka turned the idea over in her mind, reaching out to touch the Force, which was particularly ebullient and radiant.

Had Obi-Wan and Ahsoka just felt Anakin’s birth through the Force, all the way on the other side of the galaxy?

There was a sudden gust of elation and joy, like a crisp spring breeze laden with the fragrance of blooming maiden’s tears and embers. It reminded her of the Room of a Thousand Fountains, of the moment when she chose to take the path she now found herself leading Obi-Wan down.

It reminded her of speaking to that strange Presence who had helped her through her first few months back in the past.

Has Anakin been born? Ahsoka sent the nervous, hopeful question into the glittering, effervescent void of the Force.

Yes, the Presence answered with such a calm, firm certainty that Ahsoka could find no room for doubt. Anakin Skywalker is very much alive. And quite hungry.

“Master?” Obi-Wan’s voice broke into Ahsoka’s communion with the Force spirit. “Master, are you alright?”

You had best return to your padawan, Ahsoka. He is prone to anxiety at the smallest provocation if left alone, the Presence cheerfully instructed before fading away. Ahsoka was left with the vaguest impression of a soft chuckle before she opened her eyes and looked down at Obi-Wan, who was scrubbing the tears off his cheeks in a kind of happy confusion.

“Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka exhaled, smiling at him. “You’re okay? I see you managed to unlock your restraints.”
Obi-Wan glanced down at the metal binders, his lips quirked into a half grin. “Yes, I’m not sure how but I was successful, Master. Do you know what that was? Are we in danger?”

“Oh, we’re still in danger,” Ahsoka responded with a soft laugh. “And we’ll talk about what I think that was later when we’re safe back in Republic space.”

Obi-Wan looked disappointed at that, his brows furrowed as he nodded. “Yes, Master. Now is not the most opportune moment.”

_I promise, Padawan. It will all make sense one day._ Ahsoka reached over to rest her forehead against Obi-Wan’s temple, ruffling his short, soft hair. _You trust me, right?_

Obi-Wan shyly leaned into Ahsoka’s embrace, curling a hand into the front of her robes and nodded. _With my life, Master. It’s just… I have never felt anything like that before. It was so… wonderful. What do you suppose it was?_

_Maybe your future padawan!_ Ahsoka teased, the biggest, brightest smile on her face as she and Obi-Wan pulled apart.

“My what?” Obi-Wan gasped, horrified. “Master, I am not even sixteen yet! How can you say something like that?”

“Technically I didn’t say anything,” Ahsoka pointed out as she stood up to shuffle over to Captain Avett and Pilot Lincae’s side.

Her padawan blinked at her in confusion before he let out a gasp. _I heard you!_

Ahsoka winked at Obi-Wan. _Yes, you did. Now help me wake these two up. It’s time to get out of here._

_Yes, Master!_

As soon as the distress message from Ahsoka and Obi-Wan’s cruiser reached the Temple communications hub the knight working the desk immediately forwarded the signal to the Council, which was finishing up a mission debriefing and about to break for the evening meal.

Mace Windu frowned at the alert that appeared on his datapad. “Pardon me, Master Jinn. It seems an emergency has arisen and the Council needs to discuss our options.”

“An emergency?” Qui-Gon asked, taking a step forward, concern written on his proud face. “Is there any way I can be of assistance in the matter? I have yet to unpack from my last mission and I can be gone right away.”

“I’m not sure if that’s necessary just yet,” Master Windu said, forwarding the message along to the other councilors and holding out his pad to Yoda, who called it to him with the Force.

A small gasp went up around the room.
Shaak Ti was the first to speak. “Have we confirmed this message is indeed from Knight Tano?”

Qui-Gon’s gaze immediately shot over to the Togruta Jedi Master, concern evident in his eyes. “What has happened? Are Knight Tano and Obi-Wan in danger?”

“We have yet to confirm anything,” Master Windu said to Shaak Ti before turning back to Qui-Gon. “If we require your assistance, Qui-Gon, we will let you know. Thank you, but the Council needs to deliberate in private.”

A muscle in Qui-Gon’s jaw twitched but he managed a respectful bow to the masters before he turned on his heel to march out of the room.

“I do not see why Master Jinn could not be sent out to recover Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi,” Master Mundi commented after the doors closed. “He is ready to depart and there would be little to no delay.”

“But even with the fastest ship in our fleet it will still take him three days to get to Florrum,” Mace Windu pointed out, looking over at Yoda, who was stroking his chin. “Do you have a suggestion, Master Yoda?”

“Closer to the two, Master Plo Koon and Gallia are,” Yoda mused, pulling up a star map of the area from the overhead holoprojector. “Get there faster they would.”

“But that would disrupt the investigation into the Raxus bombing and this is a crucial period of time for their work,” Master Mundi said, setting the galaxy to spin slowly. “Perhaps we could redirect another knight in a nearby quadrant.”

Master Sifo Dyas spoke up, his holo projection flickering softly over his chair. “Knight Di is only a few sectors away and he has just completed his mission. We could easily redirect him.”

“An excellent choice,” Windu nodded, already keying in the commands to his datapad. “How long do you think it would take him to arrive?”

“Six to eight hours,” Master Dyas frowned at something beyond the camera, running his hand over his dark hair. “I’ll contact him myself. If the Council would excuse me?”

As the Jedi master’s holo flickered out, the Council members remaining took a moment to compose their thoughts before Master Tiin spoke up. “Perhaps we were too hasty in sending Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi into the field so early.”

“I do not think so,” Master Windu replied, shaking his head slowly. “Master Plo spoke highly of their actions in the field and especially Padawan Kenobi. Master Gallia told us she found Ahsoka’s notes to be particularly observant and well-written. I think this is simply a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“Who will tell Master Jinn about the Council’s decision?” Master Ti asked, looking over at Mace with a steady gaze. “He seemed most concerned for young Kenobi.”

“My padawan’s padawan, speak with I shall,” Yoda said, lightly hopping out of his chair and calling his gimmer stick to his hand. “Keep us informed, Master Dyas will. Wait for now, we must.”

And with Yoda’s exit, the Council session ended on an anxious note.
Qui-Gon was waiting outside the door of the Council Room and immediately moved to Yoda’s side when he walked through the door. “Master Yoda, please let me assist in the rescue of Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi. Knight Tano is young and inexperienced with Outer Rim pirates and it may cause undue stress to Obi-Wan.”

Yoda paused to look up at Qui-Gon, pursing his lips as he contemplated Qui-Gon’s words. “Walk, we shall.”

Qui-Gon fell into step beside Yoda, taking slow strides to not out pace his grandmaster. “Has the Council made a decision on this subject?”

“Yes,” Yoda nodded, his walking stick making sharp little clacks against the stone floor. “Concerned you are? For Padawan Kenobi?”

“Of course,” Qui-Gon answered honestly. “Facing pirates is a dangerous proposition, especially for one so young, like Obi-Wan.”

“Alone, he is not,” Yoda pointed out. “With his master, Knight Tano, he is.”

Folding his arms over his chest, Qui-Gon nodded in terse agreement. “This is true, my Grandmaster, but this her first mission back in the field after two years at the Temple. That is not an inconsiderable amount of time.”

Yoda said nothing to that, continuing to hobble along the hallway, nodding to passing Jedi who paused to bow to him. When he and Qui-Gon finally reached the turbolift, Yoda stepped inside and met his grand-padawan’s gaze. “Worry, you should not. Already dispatched another Jedi Knight, the Council has. Much closer, Knight Di is. Safe and returned to us, Knight Tano and her Padawan Kenobi will soon be.”

Qui-Gon seemed to take a moment to process what he heard, looking away from Master Yoda before he gave his grandmaster a tight smile and nodded. “That’s good to hear, Master Yoda. It would be unfortunate to lose a fellow Jedi to pirates on the Outer Rim. Enjoy your evening meal.”

Without waiting for an answer, Qui-Gon left, the doors to the turbolift sliding shut and leaving Yoda alone with his thoughts.

*That won’t stop him*, a voice that was not a voice spoke to Yoda, who took a centering breath and nodded.

“No,” Yoda agreed. “It will not. More to share have you, on the subject of Qui-Gon Jinn, my mysterious friend?”

There was the faintest sensation of a warm chuckle and the fleeting presence within the Force faded away with a last comment. *Nothing you don’t already know.*
Deep in the belly of the Pantoran Plum a Weequay pirate by the name of Izzap walked down the hallway to greet his associates, Hard’i and Stank, who were standing guard outside the door that led to the ship’s holding cells. “Boss sent me to check on the booty. Make sure nobody’s done themselves a mischief before Mama gets here.”

“What’s the split gonna be?” Hard’i asked, holding Stank’s blaster rifle while he keyed in the code to open the armored door. “It’s gotta be 70-30 in our favor right? I mean we did all the work! We even captured two Jedi!”

“I heard 60-40,” Izzap shrugged, rolling his eyes as Stank screwed up the code again before getting it right. “Karking hell, Stank! Anyway, Hutts will grow knees before Mama gives Hondo a bigger cut than hers of the takings.”

Hard’i and Stank laughed as Izzap walked inside, hearing the door hiss shut as he turned on the light. There were four identical cells in this particular ship and two more storage areas designed for cargo that couldn’t fight back.

The unfortunate crew of the survey ship took up one cell and directly across from them were the two Jedi and the flight crew.

Izzap stepped forward, peering into the cell that held the survey crew. They all looked to be asleep, the Chalactan pilot, the Twi’lek officer, a Zabrak and two other humans, all huddled in the back of the cell. Izzap couldn’t blame them. They were headed for a short, miserable future as slaves in Hutt Space, a fate he wouldn’t wish on his worst enemy.

But that wouldn’t stop him from enjoying his share of the profits from their sale.

Izzap came to the end of the aisle and turned around, holding his blaster rifle closer as his path carried him back to the cell where the Jedi were sleeping, their hands still bound. They were sprawled haphazardly across the floor, no doubt where his fellow pirates had dropped them.

They don’t look so tough, Izzap thought as he watched the young human male’s steady breathing. He was unfamiliar with human ages but the kid didn’t look any older than thirteen standard years, if that. He had heard that Jedi traveled in pairs so he supposed that made the tall Togruta the kid’s partner, which struck Izzap as a little strange, but what did he know? He wasn’t even sure he believed in the Force.

Deciding that everything was just fine and he would have nothing to report to Hondo, Izzap headed back to the door, loosening his hold on his rifle and stretching his neck from side to side. He couldn’t wait to get planetside and see if he could get a moment or two with the beautiful Etta. With the profits I make from this job, I can afford to buy her that necklace she wants.

His hand was on the door panel when he felt someone tap him on the back of the shoulder. He whirled around, his blaster yanked to his shoulder and ready to fire at whoever was stupid enough to try and sneak out past him.

No one was there.

“What the kriffing hell?” Izzap muttered to himself, taking a few steps closer to the holding cells, just to make sure everyone in there was still unconscious.
The prisoners were still out cold, the red Twi’lek lightly snoring.

*Wait.* Had the Togruta Jedi moved?

“Hey, Hard’i?” Stank asked, looking down the far hallway, somewhere between bored out of his mind and almost asleep. “You got a chrono on you?”

Hard’i nodded, holding up his wrist where a particularly expensive chrono was. “Yeah. Got this off the governor’s aide for Felucia when I worked for Mama. Why?”

“How long has Izzap been in there?” Stank leaned back against the wall, lightly tapping a rhythm along his rifle as he stared at the ceiling. “Seems a long time, don’t you think?”

After checking his chrono, Hard’i rolled his eyes and pounded a fist against the door. “What the hell are you doing in there?”

The two guards exchanged a look when Izzap didn’t answer them.

“Maybe he’s taking a nap?” Stank offered, shrugging his shoulders. “Can’t say I blame him? The cells are nice and cozy if you’ve got the keys.”

Hard’i let out a traditional Weequay curse and keyed open the door and marched inside. “Bog damnit, Izzap! What’re you doing in here?”

The door slid shut after Hard’i, leaving Stank alone in the hallway, humming to himself. He checked the hallway, left and right, drumming in time to the song he was composing in his mind. He was working on a particularly percussion heavy segment as he stood by the door.

At the sound of the door opening, Stank turned towards it, a grin on his face. “You wanna hear the next verse of my song?”

“Not particularly, no,” the towering Togruta Jedi said, her hand up in front of his face and the world went dark for Stank.

Ahsoka caught the unconscious Weequay before he collapsed to the ground, handing him off to the Zabrak from the survey crew standing just behind her. Obi-Wan was further back in the room, going through the weapons of the other two pirates, setting aside the blaster rifles for himself and Ahsoka. “Is that everything?” she asked him.
Obi-Wan nodded, standing up and handing Ahsoka her rifle as the others picked up the rest. “Yes, Master. Seven knives, five holdout blasters, a stun baton, a vibroblade dagger and two stun grenades.”

“Hold onto the grenades,” Ahsoka instructed Obi-Wan. “We’ll need them later.”

“What do we do with those chutas?” Captain Avett asked, practically spitting in his disgust.

Ahsoka leaned around, holding up a hand to weave the Force over the locking mechanism of the cells and snap each one shut. “We leave them here. Obi-Wan and I injured or incapacitated quite a few of them before they took us. They’ll either be in the med bay or their bunks.”

“If we could find a way to lock them up where they are that would cut down their fighting numbers down to something more manageable,” Captain Penyo said, checking the charge pack on her holdout blaster.

“Exactly what I was thinking,” Ahsoka agreed as the tense group stepped out into the hall. Obi-Wan hurried over to the door panel and slapped it closed before yanking the covering off the wall and working on hotwiring the door shut. He could have fired on it but that might have attracted undue attention and surprise was the best weapon they had at the moment. “We’ll work our way through the ship, pirate by pirate, and we’ll take the bridge last. That’s where the worst of the fighting is going to be.”

“Corona class ships have a control hub in the main engine area,” Pilot Lincae spoke up, offering up his dagger to Obi-Wan so he could strip the cover from some of the wiring in the door panel. “If we can take the engine we’ll have control of the whole ship.”

“Can they override it from the bridge?” Ahsoka asked, leaning a little to the side to see if her montrals could pick up any unexpected arrivals. There were none, only the Force humming around her with purpose and determination both from Obi-Wan and their fellow prisoners.

Captain Avett nodded. “Yes, but if we cut all communication lines to the bridge from the engine room, they won’t even notice what we’re up to.”

“Then let’s get moving,” Ahsoka said, hefting her rifle up as Obi-Wan stepped back from the panel. “Is the door locked, Obi-Wan?”

“It will take a lightsaber to get them out of there,” Obi-Wan grinned, hoisting his borrowed rifle into position.

“Obi-Wan and I will go first,” Ahsoka instructed their small party. “Stay behind us and don’t fire until we tell you to.”

There were nods of understanding as Pilot Lincae gave them the directions to the main engine room. Ahsoka took up point, moving light on her feet and wondering what Rex would make of the situation she found herself in. *He would probably say this is why it’s important to cross-train with different weapons. I’m so glad I listened to him and passed that on to Obi-Wan.*

Obi-Wan stayed behind her, his presence nervous but grimly determined as they moved down the hallway. The rifle was a little big for him, but he carried it like a clone, ready to pivot into a shooting stance. *I can only imagine the look on Rex’s face at seeing General Kenobi carrying a blaster rifle. Especially after all the times he called it “uncivilized”.*

*Master?* Obi-Wan’s mental voice interrupted Ahsoka’s reminiscing as they came to an intersection, each way looking identical. *Pilot Lincae says left.*
“Then we go left.”

“How soon until my sainted mother arrives?” Hondo asked, lounging in the captain’s chair, happily patting a stolen lightsaber now resting on his hip. “I am looking forward to renegotiating our take from this effort. It has been most profitable.”

The other three sabers rested on a console that was to Hondo’s left. The crew that was uninjured or not involved in running the rest of the ship avoided them like they were covered in the kranda virus. One bumped into the console on accident as he went to go check on the answer, making the hilts roll a little before they stabilized and he made the sign to ward off evil before hurrying over to his buddies near the comm panel.

“What trouble, my friends?” Hondo chuckled, leaning back in his seat, his hands crossed behind his head. “By the time anyone shows up looking for them, they will all be far away from here and we will be thousands of credits richer, my friends!”

“Mama is due to arrive any minute, Boss,” the pirate at the navigation panel said, finishing his calculations.

“The salvage crew says the cruiser is in perfect working order, Boss,” another pirate said from his comm panel as the door to the turbolift in the back of the bridge opened. “Just superficial damage. We should be able to see it for a pretty penny.”

“Are you sure this is a good idea, Boss?” Turk Falso asked, also giving the sabers a wide berth as he moved to his own control board. “We don’t want no trouble with the Jedi, do we?”

“How considerate of the Jedi to bring me so many new toys!” Hondo laughed to himself until he noticed that his gang members weren’t enjoying the joke with him. “What? I thought that was hilarious!”

It was then that Hondo noticed Turk Falso was staring back over his shoulder, Turk’s eyes wide and round as he held his hands up, slowly reaching for the ceiling.

“What is wrong with you?” Hondo asked, spinning around to his right to let out a startled gasp at the Jedi in the doorway and the well-armed prisoners behind her pointing blasters into the room. “How did you get out?” He glared around, throwing his arms up in disgust. “Who let these prisoners escape from the holding cells? I will flog each and every one of you for this disappointing cowardice!”

Ahsoka called her saber back from the console and activated one blade as she handed her blaster rifle to Joti, feeling a wave of satisfaction wash over her at the familiar bass throb of power. “Hello, Hondo.”

Hondo stood up slowly, eyes narrowed in suspicion. He looked over where the pile of captured sabers had been resting only to watch the remaining two fly across the bridge and hiss to life in the hands of Obi-Wan, who was in no mood to banter with the pirate. Behind them was Joti, Captain Avett and Pilot Lincae, all three aiming at the assembled pirates, the triumphant smiles on their faces
hard and sharp.

Ahsoka stepped forward, calling her second saber from Hondo’s belt with a yank and thumbing it on when it reached her. She looked at the two groups of pirates clustered together on each side of the room and nodded to Obi-Wan. “You know what to do.”

“Hands out!” Obi-Wan ordered the smaller group on the left, stepping aside to let Pilot Lincaea approach the group with some of the same binders that had imprisoned them earlier. Hondo’s eyes darted from Ahsoka to Obi-Wan and back. The pirates looked over to him for instruction and for a moment Ahsoka wondered if she had read Hondo wrong, if this young, brash Hondo was going to try something stupid and very unprofitable.

Fortunately for everyone, common sense won out and Hondo let out a sigh, his voice low and beaten. “Do as the tiny Jedi says.”

Ahsoka nodded, indicating with a tilt of her head the other group of pirates, and the Zabrak and Joti took a great deal of vengeful pleasure in locking them up with their own restraints.

With that quickly and quietly done, Ahsoka ordered Captain Avett to the helm as she walked up to Hondo, her sabers still out. “Thank you for taking such good care of my ship while I was sleeping off your stun blast in those holding cells.”

“Well… what can I say?” Hondo shrugged, hoping to charm Ahsoka into cutting his losses somehow.

A part of her found that amusing, that Hondo’s own unique brand of melodramatic self-interest was present even at such a young age. “I am a fan of the color red and your ship is such a beautiful color red that I simply could not resist it!”

Ahsoka snorted at this. “Ah huh. Why do I not believe that?”

“You doubt my sincerity?” Hondo gasped, throwing a hand to his forehead and collapsing into his captain’s chair as if to swoon, his whole upper body practically falling over the side of the chair, and it would have amused Ahsoka if the Force hadn’t let out a sudden warning.

“Master! Look out!” Obi-Wan shouted as Hondo pulled himself back upright with a speed Ahsoka wouldn’t have given him credit for and a holdout blaster in hand. He pulled the trigger, aiming wildly in Ahsoka’s direction.

With a dodge down and to the right and a sharp upwards twisting motion of her sabers, Ahsoka ducked the blast, cut through the barrel of the small blaster and came to a stop, her blade centimeters away from Hondo’s leathery neck.

The sound of her lightsabers and shocked cries and gasps from the pirates filled the room before a dry, rasping sound that might have been a laugh floated out of Hondo.

“Well…” the pirate said with a weak smile, dropping the smoking gun and raising his hands up. “I had to try. My dearest Mother would have had my head if I didn’t try.”

“Your mother?” Ahsoka asked, pulling her blade far enough away that Hondo felt safe enough to relax back into his chair but not enough to try anything else. “What does your mother have to do with this?”

“She’s on her way,” Hondo said, folding his hands against his stomach. “Any minute now I believe. You understand of course that this wasn’t personal! It was just business.”
“Slavery is not good business,” Ahsoka glared at Hondo. “It’s illegal in Republic space.”

“Slavery?!” Hondo gasped in manufactured outrage, holding a hand to his chest. “Who said anything about slavery? You can’t prove a thing! We were simply going to take you to a warmer climate! Space can be so cold, you know. It’s not good for the heart.”

Ahsoka rolled her eyes and shook her head. “Right. And you hit me with that stun blast because you thought I needed some rest.”

This earned Ahsoka a snicker or two from the shackled pirates as Joti led them out of the room.

“Exactly, my friend!” Hondo grinned, leaning back in his chair to look up at Obi-Wan. “Your master is very clever, my little friend. I think you’ll go far together.”

Obi-Wan arched an eyebrow at the pirate before glancing up at his master. “The pirates are all locked up, Master. Now what do we do?”

“Now, we negotiate terms,” Ahsoka said, leaning against the back of the navigator’s chair. “Something that is equitable for both parties involved?”

“I like how you think,” Hondo said leaning forward in his seat. “What are you proposing?”

“You give us back our ship and let us go and I won’t be forced to resort to more… aggressive persuasion methods,” Ahsoka said, extinguishing one blade and hooking it back onto her belt.

The turbolift let out a soft ding and Captain Penyo stepped out, carrying two small blasters. “We were able to subdue the salvage crew that was on the cruiser. Everyone else is either in the holding cells or trapped in medbay or barracks.”

“That is some of the best news I’ve heard all day,” Ahsoka said, nodding her thanks to the other woman. “Do you hear that, Hondo? From where I’m standing, you’re looking at a busted hand of sabacc. If I were you, I would fold while there’s still profit to be made.”

“I would like nothing more, my dear,” Hondo sighed as the comm panel lit up with an incoming signal. “But I’m afraid the negotiations are out of my hands.”

Ahsoka frowned and nodded to Obi-Wan, who with the help of Pilot Lincae managed to get the display screen working.

“Hondo, my darling! Do I see a Republic cruiser in orbit around this dustball you call home?” a thickly accented, floridly feminine voice trilled as the image of Mama Ohnaka came into view. Ahsoka turned around slowly, her eyes round with shock as she took in the grey, wrinkled, bejeweled and flamboyantly dressed Weequay matriarch. Her headdress was practically out to her shoulders and there were enough feathers exploding from the back and sides to fully cover a medium sized mooka bird.

“Is that your mother?” Obi-Wan asked, equally stunned by the conflagration of color and tacky taste in everything.

Hondo nodded, an adoring smile on his face. “Yes. Is my mama not the most beautiful woman in the galaxy?”

Ahsoka looked over at Obi-Wan and gave a minute shake of her head.

“She is a vision to behold,” Obi-Wan answered with forced cheerfulness.
“Hondo?” Mama Ohnaka peered at the camera, no doubt confused by what she saw on her end. “Who are these people? Does she have a lightsaber? Did you hire a rejected Jedi bounty hunter? Hondo, I told you before that we don’t mess with bounty hunters! They have no loyalty! Not even to credits!”

“Yes, Mama,” Hondo grimaced, holding up his hands to stop his mother before she launched into another lecture. “Mama, I… I have made some friends! Jedi friends! And the lovely cruiser you see is their ship! Say hello to my mama, Jedi… ah..?”

“Tano,” Ahsoka replied before turning to face the viewing screen. “I am Knight Ahsoka Tano and I have a proposition that I hope you will find mutually profitable, Mother Ohnaka.”

The Weequay matriarch pursed her thin, harsh lips and sat back in her chair, leaning against an arm rest. She gestured with one ring bedecked hand. “I’m listening, Knight Tano. Tell me more.”

Chapter End Notes

Howdy!

As we all expected, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan have managed to get out of one scrape, unfortunately only to end up in another! Hopefully they'll be able to negotiate their way out of this and get back to safety and Republic Space. Mama Ohnaka makes another guest appearance and this time she's rocking a truly baroque pirate hat. I mean there is a bald space ostrich who gave up their feathers for that thing. RIP Space Ostrich tail feathers.

Thank you everyone for your lovely comments and kudos! They always make my day and I will do my best to get to all of them when I can.

As always, if you'd like to squeal with me over painful Star Wars fics, pics and gif sets you can find me at FireflyFish where you can also whine with me about Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes and the impossibility of getting General Kenobi before I hit Old Man Ben's age.
A Profitable Exchange

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi

Captured by pirates, Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi lead their fellow prisoners to freedom. Now in possession of the very ship that boarded their own cruiser, and surrounded by the rest of the pirate fleet, Ahsoka Tano must strike a hard bargain with the pirate matriarch Mama Ohnaka if she and Obi-Wan want to make it back to Coruscant and the Jedi Temple in one piece.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m listening, Knight Tano. Tell me more.”

Let’s hope this works, Ahsoka thought to herself as she stepped forward to face the viewing screen, noticing out of the corner of her eye Obi-Wan stepping up next to Hondo in case he decided to try anything foolish.

She wasn’t sure if Obi-Wan was fully capable of handling Hondo at fifteen but she didn’t have time to worry about that right now.

“I would like to propose an exchange, Mother Ohnaka,” Ahsoka said, holding open her hands. “You see, we both have something the other one wants. Your son’s pirates have control of my ship, and I have your son, his ship, and his crew.”

“You are a Jedi,” Mama Ohnaka snickered, waving a dismissive hand. “It is against your Code to harm an innocent like my precious little gorka berry.”

Obi-Wan frowned at that. “What is a gorka berry?”

Hondo rolled his eyes and leaned over to mutter to Obi-Wan. “A sweet fruit my mother favors above all others save peaches from Naboo. She thinks it is a charming nickname.”

“Hondo, I can hear you!” Mama Ohnaka shot back, her beady eyes narrowed at son. “Oh, what happened to my sweet little boy? Where did I go wrong? How could you have fallen prey to Jedi of all people! They do not know the value of credits! They do not even like credits!”

Obi-Wan and Hondo exchanged looks and wisely went silent.

“Mother Ohnaka,” Ahsoka interrupted what looked like the start of a long tirade against the Jedi with a forced, bright smile. “While it is true that we Jedi are taught to eschew the search for credits for credits’ sake, we do understand that there are some things that are worth more than credits.”

Mama Ohnaka scoffed at that. “Oh? Like what?”

Ahsoka activated her blade in a bright flash of blue and held it up to Hondo’s throat. “This.”
Obi-Wan let out a gasp that was echoed around the bridge by the Republic and survey crew alike, no one able to quite grasp the concept that Ahsoka, a Jedi knight and guardian of the peace, was going to threaten the life of a pirate’s son to get them out of danger. Logically speaking, there was really no other way out, but the sheer act of seeing her calmly and rationally threaten the bumbling young pirate still startled them all out of their sense of complacency.

This was a dangerous situation, not one any of them could escape any time soon.

Eyes narrowed, Mama Ohnaka sat back in her chair, her lips pursed. “So tell me Jedi, how do you plan on escaping from here if you murder my only son? You have one, maybe two ships, and I have five by my count. We outnumber you.”

Ahsoka met Mama Ohnaka’s gaze with her own, her blue eyes hard. “What are you planning on doing? Blowing us out of the sky? Either way, your precious little gorka berry ends up dead.”

The two women stared at each other, eyes locked as they waited for the other to blink.

Obi-Wan felt a wave of anxiety rise up, swamping his stomach and threatening to cut off the air to his lungs at the nightmarish thought that Mama Ohnaka might be willing to kill her own son to hold onto the profits possible from the sale of a stolen Republic cruiser. He suddenly had an all-new appreciation for just how dangerous his master’s apprenticeship must have been with Master Skywalker if she was able to calmly intimidate a pirate matriarch like this.

Obi-Wan couldn’t even imagine what Master Skywalker would have done in a situation like this.

“It seems we are at an impasse,” Mama Ohnaka sighed, shaking her head. “I knew it was too soon for you to take your first steps out into the world, Hondo. I told you, but no! You would not listen to me. I am only your mother and want nothing more than to protect you! Oh, it breaks my heart!”

“Mama!” Hondo gasped, leaning forward in his chair, his hands out as if he could reach through the screen and comfort her himself. “I am so sorry! Forgive my rash and foolish actions! I only wanted to make you proud and richer than any mother could ever dream!”

“What use are all the riches of the Outer Rim if my precious little gorka berry is dead?!” Mama Ohnaka wailed, her hand to her forehead. “What in all the credits of Nar Shaddaa possessed you to take Jedi hostage, my precious boy?”

Ahsoka blinked and shared a glance with Obi-Wan, a little puzzled to have the negotiations momentarily interrupted by familial angst.

Is this normal, Master? Obi-Wan arched an eyebrow at her.

Shaking her head, Ahsoka replied through their bond. For typical pirates? No. But for this family, I guess this is par for the course.

But Hondo and his mother carried on as if they were in the same room as he explained the reasons for taking the Republic cruiser hostage. “I was only trying to follow in your footsteps, Mama! You always said that taking more prisoners was just good business!”

“Then why didn’t you tie the blasted Jedi up properly?” Mama Ohnaka groaned, waving a hand about as she ordered wine be brought to her. “Oh, it is too early in the morning for such things, Hondo. When I am done with this, you and I are going to have a long talk and you are grounded for at least a week! Maybe two! I haven’t made up my mind yet!”

“Mama!” Hondo protested. “I am a man now! I have my own gang! You cannot treat me like your
But Mama Ohnaka dismissed her son’s protests with a wave and turned her attention back to Ahsoka, who was still holding her lightsaber uncomfortably near Hondo’s head. “Oh, put that away. Let us discuss the particulars of this transaction, Knight Tano. Hondo? Why don’t you and Knight Tano’s little Corellian mango go elsewhere and let the adults talk. Hmm? Would you do that for me, little Jedi?”

“Corellian mango?!” Obi-Wan gaped, turning to look at Ahsoka, who was studiously deactivating her blade. “Master! She can’t call me that, can she?”

“At least you’re not a gorka berry,” Hondo snickered, reaching out to elbow Obi-Wan. “Now come! I will show you my room! I have such treasures there!”

“Go with him, Obi-Wan, and you too, Joti,” Ahsoka sighed, shaking her head. “And make sure he doesn’t try to liberate another weapon.”

“Such distrust!” Hondo protested as he stood up and walked to the door, fully expecting Obi-Wan and Joti to fall in line behind him. “And here I thought Jedi were full of faith in the people of the galaxy!”

Mama Ohnaka rolled her eyes as the two walked out of the room, muttering to herself so low only Ahsoka heard her. “The Jedi don’t take the idiot children, Hondo. Otherwise I might have given you to them.”

Ahsoka whirled around to gape at Mama Ohnaka, shocked she would say such a thing about her own child. “Mother Ohnaka!”

Mama snorted and took a long draught of her wine. “Don’t play nice with me, Jedi. We both know my son is dumber than a Jawa. He gets it from his father, may the gods rest his drunken soul.”

Stunned at the sudden change in Hondo’s mother, Ahsoka realized that perhaps the melodrama from before had been designed to throw her off, giving the Weequay matriarch the edge she needed in this negotiation.

Taking a deep breath, Ahsoka summoned her wits and waded into battle with Mama Ohnaka.

“This is your room?” Obi-Wan gazed in horrified dismay at the messy cabin stuffed high with random bric a brac and a variety of coats and hats from what seemed like every corner of the galaxy. There was a small pile of boots and shoes that spilled out from a locker tipped on its side and more than a few glasses that stunk of something disgustingly alcoholic. “How can you live like this?”

“Very comfortably!” Hondo grinned, flopping himself boneless back onto his bed as Obi-Wan and Joti stood in the doorway of the room, suspicious of the pirate’s actions. “Come in! Come in! I have some fine vodka from Akitan III and an exquisite Corellian whiskey! You will love it! I insist you try some.”

Hondo hopped up and bounded over to the other side of the room, rummaging around for three clean
glasses and the aforementioned alcohol. Scarves, shirts and random bits of tech went flying from one side of the room to the other, although when Obi-Wan caught sight of a blaster stock he yanked it free from the general pile of detritus with the Force.

“Such distrust!” Hondo sighed, shaking his head as he smiled at Obi-Wan, who held the blaster pointed back at the privateer. “You would make an excellent pirate with instincts like that.”

“I’m not sure if that was a compliment,” Obi-Wan grumbled, exchanging a look with Joti, whose lekku were twitching with irritation. “I’m not really in the mood for a drink, Hondo. We’re here to keep you out of your mother and my master’s way while they find a peaceful way out of this for everyone.”

“If that’s possible,” Joti grumbled, kicking a pile of pillows and sheets away from his foot. “Why don’t we just put him in the holding cells with the rest of his men?”

“Master needs him readily available as a proof of life and a show of good faith,” Obi-Wan responded, reciting from a textbook he had finished a few months ago during one of his crisis prevention and management classes. He had found the topic unexpectedly invigorating and read ahead from day one of that term.

“You make this all sound so terribly boring, little one,” Hondo sighed, pouring himself a stiff drink as he returned to lounge on a bed drowning in garish pillows that looked like something a Hutt would sleep on. “This is where the real profits are made! Between two dashing captains, with only their wits and nerves of durasteel to save them! Mama will not let your pretty master off so easily, little Corellian Mango.”

Obi-Wan inhaled sharply and recalled his master’s words.

“You must let go of what you cannot control and focus on what you can. What is within your power to control, little one?” Ahsoka said to him one afternoon when he had been struggling with his lessons and his age-mates.

“How I react and… my emotions?” Obi-Wan had haltingly answered and received a proud grin from Ahsoka in response.

“Exactly!” Ahsoka beamed, ruffling his hair. “What makes a Jedi truly great is not their lightsaber but their ability to do what needs to be done in even the most desperate and dangerous situations.”

“Like Master Skywalker?” Obi-Wan asked curiously.

Ahsoka winked. “Yes. Just like Master Skywalker.”

Obi-Wan trapped his lower lip between his teeth for a moment before exhaling and taking his emotions, irritation, anger and fear, and putting them in a small box, which he then pictured drop-kicking off a rocky cliff to bounce and crash into the storming seas below. The little box landed with an explosion of water and white sea foam before sinking down to the bottom of the ocean.

That should work for now, Obi-Wan decided and then turned his attention back to Hondo. “How long have you been a pirate?”

Hondo looked over at Obi-Wan, his head tilted as he toyed with the end of one of his wrapped braids. “Why do you want to know, little Jedi?”

“Because I have never met a pirate before,” he replied honestly, a shrug of his shoulders. “And I want to have all the details right when I tell my friends on Coruscant.”
Chuckling softly at that, Hondo nodded at Obi-Wan and Joti. “Pull up a chair, my friends! I am in a good mood and shall tell you all about my adventures! But I cannot guarantee they are all fit for a child’s ears.”

“I am not a child!” Obi-Wan huffed which only made Hondo and Joti laugh. He rolled his eyes and stood up straighter, refusing to take a seat even though Joti hopped up onto what looked like a sturdy storage locker.

“I remember my first raid like it was yesterday!” Hondo sighed, gesturing as if he were playing to the back of a packed theater. “I was five and Mama had decided that it was time for me to start learning the ways of my people!”

“Piracy at age five?” Joti snorted, looking over at Obi-Wan in wry disbelief. “Wow. And I thought my family was bad.”

Obi-Wan shrugged, trying to be fair to both Hondo and Joti. “A crechemate of mine accidentally pushed me into a river when I was five. I nearly drowned.”

“Eh-hem?” Hondo coughed, watching the other two with hooded eyes until they turned their attention back to the pirate and his dramatic origin story.

“Pardon us, Captain Ohnaka,” Obi-Wan said with fake politeness. “Do continue.”

“Please! Call me Hondo! All my friends call me that and since you are no longer shooting at me, why not be friends?” Hondo laughed and picked right up where he left off. “As I was saying, at the tender age of five I was introduced to the magical world of ill-gotten credits! Oh it was a truly glorious day when I stole my first credit! Mama had been staking out a small trading operation that was receiving regular shipments of goods from the Mid Rim!”

Obi-Wan had the sinking feeling the story was going to be very, very long.

Ahsoka and Mama Ohnaka were almost done with their negotiations when a hydrospanner got thrown into the works. They had just decided that the exchange of ships and prisoners was going to take place on Mirial, which was in Republic space but small enough and far enough out that there wasn’t likely to be a heavy Security Forces presence when a pirate ran into the view screen and whispered something in Mama Ohnaka’s ear.

Her reaction was not encouraging and Ahsoka glanced over at Captain Avett and Captain Penyo, who were running the comm and navigation. Pilot Lincae was supervising the engines behind Ahsoka, occasionally muttering something derogatory about the ship in Bacchi, which thankfully Mama Ohnaka did not hear.

“You scoundrel!” Mama Ohnaka seethed, pointing a thin, bony, ring-covered finger at Ahsoka. “How dare you call for reinforcements while we are in the middle of a negotiation? This is an insult! An outrage! And surprise from a Jedi, I really must say. Well played.”

Ahsoka blinked in confusion and decided to improvise, hoping the spirits of her mentors were with her. “Well… I’m not your typical Jedi. As you can tell. And you know what they say about Jedi.”

“What is that, Knight Tano?” Mama Ohnaka practically purred in amusement.
Struggling to come up with a saying that would smooth over what was going on while Captain Penyo whispered to Captain Avett about some kind of incoming message, Ahsoka flailed before coming up with something she had once heard Master Obi-Wan say. “We never threaten. We inform.”

Laughing at Ahsoka’s comment, Mama Ohnaka sat back in her chair. “Perhaps you should ask for some information from your fellow Jedi.”

“What?” Ahsoka gasped, stunned that her message had been received and responded to so quickly. “Open up the comm to all frequencies! Who the hell is out there already?”

“Ah ha! So you were waiting for reinforcements!” Mama Ohnaka smirked proudly as the screen split and another face appeared before Ahsoka, that of a Nikto Jedi she didn’t recognize.

“Knight Tano?” the Jedi spoke, his low voice rough and accented. “This is Knight Ima Gun Di. Are you reading me, Knight Tano?”

“Loud and clear Ma… Knight Di,” Ahsoka said, ignoring the voice in the back of her head that informed her that Knight Di was destined to fall on Ryloth protecting the native Twi’lek population from starvation and worse at the hand of the Separatists. “Thank the Force you’ve arrived so quickly! I was in the middle of negotiations with the matriarch of this pirate crew, a woman by the name of Mother Ohnaka.”

“Mama Ohnaka?” Knight Di replied, disbelief in his voice. “What is she doing all the way out here on Florrum? I thought her crew was based out of Klatooine.”

“Oh, I like him!” Mama Ohnaka grinned, taking a long sip of her wine. “He is well informed! And heavily armed, or so my men tell me.”

“Thank you, Mother Ohnaka.” Ahsoka tried to turn her grimace into a smile.

“Call me ‘Mama’.”

“Yes, Mama Ohnaka. Now if you don’t mind, I would like to talk to Knight Di in private?” Ahsoka said, hoping against hope that the pirate matriarch would have a temporary moment of insanity and let Ahsoka figure out just what was going on here.

The Weequay pirate shook her head and wiggled a finger. “Ahm…. no. I don’t think so. And I am growing bored of this discussion, Knight Tano. I miss my gorka berry terribly. Where have you taken him?”

“Ahsoka shot a look back at Pilot Lincae. “Go find Obi-Wan and Hondo and bring them back up here.”

“Who is ‘Gorka Berry’?” Knight Di asked, his brows raised in confusion. “Are the hostages safe, Knight Tano?”

“For now,” Ahsoka said, holding a hand to her forehead. “We were trying to discuss how to make the exchange when you arrived.”

“Exactly!” Mama Ohnaka leapt into the conversation with a vengeance. “How do you expect me to trust you with my Hondo if you Jedi keep showing up uninvited? What is to say you will not betray us on Mirial? Hmmm? I say we make the exchange down on the surface of Florrum!”

“Absolutely not!” Ahsoka shot back, her eyes narrowed. “Florrum is clearly Hondo’s territory and...
who’s to say there aren’t even more ships and guns down there.”

Knight Di blinked. “Can we not make the exchange in space?”

“Not when Mama Ohnaka has more ships than we do,” Ahsoka sighed, gesturing to the pirate matriarch, who was having far too much fun. “There’s no guarantee she won’t blast us out of the sky once she’s got Hondo back.”

“It’s so lovely to deal with someone who understands our ways, Knight Tano,” Mama Ohnaka sighed happily. “Remind me to send you a fruit basket when this is all over.”

Ahsoka turned away from the view screen at the turbolift chime, muttering darkly to herself, “If we all live that long.”

“We’re here, Master,” Obi-Wan announced as he stepped out in front of Hondo, who held his hands out wide as if stepping onto a stage.

“Hello Mama! Have you missed me? I was just telling my new friend about my first stolen credits!” Hondo grinned. “Do you remember? I was so proud of them. I think I framed them.”

“Oh yes!” Mama Ohnaka sighed, a hand over her heart as the faint chuckle of her bridge crew made it across the comm channel. “You were adorable! Clutching those little golden sticks in your tiny hands! The fool didn’t know what hit him.”

Knight Di gave Ahsoka a look with slightly widened eyes, his lips quirked. “Perhaps we might return to the negotiations at hand?”

“Yes, yes,” Ahsoka nodded, waving a hand. “If you would like to try, I need a moment with my padawan learner.”

“Yes, of course, Knight Tano,” the Nikto Jedi nodded and began to carry on a conversation with Mama Ohnaka about how to get them out of this threeway standoff. Captain Avett and Captain Penyo continued to monitor the ship’s systems as Joti and Pilot Lincae moved the remaining survey crew members onto Ahsoka’s Republic cruiser.

“Master?” Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka curiously as Hondo swanned back to his seat. “What did you need to speak with me about?”

“I have an idea of how to get us all out of here safely but I want to tell you before I bring it up with Mama and Knight Di,” Ahsoka said, looking down at her padawan and squeezing his shoulder. “I’m asking a lot of you today and I’m afraid I’ll have to ask a little bit more.”

Obi-Wan nodded, his blue gaze steady. “Anything, Master.”

Ahsoka explained her plan and Obi-Wan listened quietly, his lips drawn into a thin line and his hands twisted into a white knuckled knot. Once she was finished she took a step back and waited for Obi-Wan’s reaction.

After a beat Obi-Wan nodded. “With all due respect, Master, that is a bad idea and I do not approve of it.”

But before Ahsoka could explain the logic behind her choices, he continued on.

“But I see no other way out,” Obi-Wan murmured, glancing over at Hondo. “I shall do as you instruct, Master. Just promise me you’ll be safe?”
Nodding, Ahsoka turned back to face the bridge. “Yes. I promise, Obi-Wan.”

Taking a deep breath, Obi-Wan stood up straight, threw his shoulders back and marched over to Hondo. “Captain Ohnaka? If you would come with me?”

“What?” Hondo looked at Obi-Wan puzzled. “I just got back to my seat and my sainted mother is in her element!”

“Oh Hondo!” Mama Ohnaka preened on the viewscreen. “Hello, my little mango!”

Obi-Wan bowed to the screen. “Madame, if you’ll excuse us?”

And with that, Obi-Wan politely but firmly hauled Hondo to his feet and marched him off the bridge and down to the boarding ramp that was connecting the Corona class ship to the cruiser.

“Where are you taking my son?” Mama Ohnaka sat up as Knight Di rolled his eyes and held up his hands. “Knight Tano! I demand an explanation!”

Ahsoka stepped back into the range of the camera and held her hands out, a tense smile on her face. “I think I’ve figured out a way to make this work so that everyone gets what they want and no one gets blown out of the sky.”

“Thank the Force,” Knight Di muttered, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Let’s hear it, Knight Tano.”

The plan was simple.

Obi-Wan, Hondo and the survey crew, as well as Captain Avett and Pilot Lincae, would fly in the Republic cruiser to Mirial. Ahsoka would transfer to Mama Ohnaka’s ship as collateral to ensure Hondo’s safety. Knight Di in his light corvette would stay behind for two hours to ensure that none of Hondo’s pirate crew pursued them to Mirial and try to ambush the exchange.

Mama Ohnaka took a long sip of her wine, finger juggling a gold coin over her left hand while she thought it over. Knight Di tapped one taloned finger against his chin before speaking up. “It’s a good exchange,” he nodded. “I would advise you take the deal, Madame Ohnaka.”

“Oh what?” Mama purred, a sly smile on her face. “I still have better numbers.”

“For now,” Ahsoka pointed out as Captain Avett handed her a datapad with all the necessary coordinates. “The longer it takes for me and my crew to get back to safety, the more likely it is for the Republic to send more ships and Jedi. I can assure you that they’re not going to be as interested in… compromise as I am.”

Mama Ohnaka scowled. “You are a worthy opponent, Knight Tano. Perhaps too worthy. I agree to this exchange. My ship will be docking with yours in five minutes.”

“Not before you land your fleet,” Ahsoka insisted, her arms resting on her hips. “Land those extra ships and then I’ll give you the comm code for my ship and the coordinates we’ll take to fly to Mirial.”
“Bah!” Mama Ohnaka made a rude gesture at the screen and barked at an underling to tell the other ships to return to the surface of Florrum. In the tense silence while they waited for confirmation from Knight Di that the ships were en route to the surface, Captain Penyo stepped up to Ahsoka.

“I can’t let you do this alone,” the survey crew captain insisted, looking back at the screen and the angry matriarch. “Please let me go with you. It’s not safe.”

Ahsoka smiled at Captain Penyo, taking in her worried face and intense brown eyes. She had seen that look before when she was going to do something reckless on behalf of the Republic and later the Rebellion. It was someone’s well-meaning desire to help her. It reminded her of Ezra now that she thought about it.

“I appreciate the offer, Captain,” Ahsoka said, her voice gentle and kind. “But it’s safer if you go with the others. Trust me. I can handle a ship full of pirates. I’ve faced much worse and come out alive on the other side.”

Captain Penyo frowned at Ahsoka, shaking her head as long dark braids shifted against her shoulder. “I never believed the stories they told us about Jedi but… they’re true. You are all crazy.”

Grinning shyly, Ahsoka nodded. “Yup. Pretty much. You should have seen my master. He would have tried to outrun Mama and her goons.”

“Would he have won?” Penyo asked, curious.

Laughing, Ahsoka nodded. “Knowing my master’s luck? He would have won hands down.”

“Comm me when you’re on the cruiser and the airlock is sealed,” Ahsoka instructed Captain Avett as they hurried through the ship, ignoring some of the faint banging on the walls and doors from Hondo’s men who were still holed up thanks to their earlier actions. “Once you’re detached and I’m on board her ship, we’ll open communications and jump into hyperspace together.”

“Yes, Master Jedi,” Captain Avett agreed, turning right towards the boarding ramp that connected them to the Republic cruiser. Ahsoka watched him cross the pressurized tube that connected both ships and was about to close her door when she heard a voice in the back of her head.

Master?

Ahsoka turned around to see Obi-Wan at the other airlock, his blue eyes round with fear and worry. Touched and just as nervous as her padawan, perhaps even more so since this was the first time they were going to be separated in a situation like this, Ahsoka raised her hand to him.

*May the Force be with you, Obi-Wan. I’ll see you on Mirial.*

Nodding, Obi-Wan returned her farewell with his own and a swell of faith and love. *I won’t let you down, Master. I will see you on Mirial. May the Force be with you.*

And as one, Master and Padawan activated the airlock mechanism, sealing them off from each other for now.
Sixteen uneventful hours later at roughly 1435 hours Mirial time, Master Sifo Dyas stood between two empty landing pads in the Itbutathi space port of the capital city of Mirial. His eyes were closed as he concentrated on the flow of the Force around him, of the people passing outside of the spaceport, families going about their business, local officials carrying out their necessary tasks of government and further out from the city, the sleepy, quiet life of the rest of the cold, desert planet.

He had been enjoying the hospitality of the Mirilan people while on a few diplomatic assignments for the Council out on the Outer Rim and, now that it was time for him to return, he found himself perfectly placed to assist his fellow Jedi out of a spot of trouble.

Knight Di had commed ahead to inform Master Dyas of the negotiations between Knight Tano and Mother Ohnaka. He was impressed that there had been no casualties as far as Knight Di could tell. The pirates on Florrum had not taken off after their boss to avenge him and Knight Tano seemed perfectly in control of the situation.

It was an unexpectedly pleasant surprise, not unlike the strange ripple in the Force he had felt two days earlier. Whatever it was had been powerful but far away, like an echoing rumble of thunder. Master Dyas had tried to meditate on it but the Force did not seem inclined to share any more of its mysteries than it already had.

Master Dyas was about to slip out of his meditation when he felt the sudden appearance of two bright stars in his mental world as Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi’s ships dropped out of hyperspace. With a slow exhalation of breath, Master Dyas sent a warm feeling of welcome to the pair and exited his meditation, stepping back to a nearby bench to await the arrival of the two ships.

Forty minutes later, both ships were landing in elegant tandem, and Master Dyas stood up, walking forward to stand in the middle between the two ships. As he had requested, there were no security or port authority agents waiting for the pirates, who waited until the Republic cruiser lowered their boarding ramp before they did the same.

Padawan Kenobi emerged from the cruiser first, his arm wrapped tightly around the arm of a slightly older Weequay young adult, who yawned as he talked with Kenobi.

Master Dyas observed this interaction with faint amusement: while the Weequay was full of energy, Padawan Kenobi looked exhausted, as if he had been up for all sixteen hours of their flight, possibly listening to the Weequay talk.

As the two approached and Master Dyas could hear the Weequay’s voice and get a feel for his personality in the Force, he had a better understanding of Kenobi’s exhaustion.

“And that is why you should leave behind this heartless existence and join my crew!” Hondo gestured towards his mother’s ship. “Think of the riches! Think of the luxury! Think… of the women! Or the men! I’m not one to judge! I mean, nothing is as beautiful as credits. Well, perhaps my sainted mother but that’s it.”

Master Dyas was thankful he had not been noticed as he allowed himself a small chuckle before stepping forward. “Padawan Kenobi?”

The relief on Obi-Wan’s face was sudden and great, nearly swamping the Force. “Master Dyas! Thank the Force you’re here. This is Hondo Ohnaka, the pirate prince of Klatooin and dutiful son to Mother Ohnaka, the great pirate matriarch of the same planet.”
Bowing his head to Hondo, Master Dyas introduced himself. “I am Jedi Master Sifo Dyas. A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Hondo.”

“The pleasure is all mine, I assure you, Master Dyas!” Hondo enthused, thrilled to have met not one but four Jedi during his little excursion into crime. “I must say your tiny Jedi is quite loyal to your organization. I have offered him everything a young man could want! Wine, women and credits untold and he still refuses my offer to join my crew. Unbelievable!”

“Padawan Kenobi went through a great trial to be chosen for apprenticeship,” Master Dyas explained with a warm smile in Obi-Wan’s direction. “I am afraid he is far too loyal and dedicated to Master Tano to abandon her for the dramatic life of a pirate on the Outer Rim.”

Hondo was going to say something else when a great wailing sob of relief rang out over the space port. “Hondo! Oh my precious son! Come to me, my gorka berry!”

“Mama!” Hondo gasped and Obi-Wan immediately let him go. At the same time, Ahsoka ducked out from under the pirate ship and stood up, a smile on her face as she walked towards Obi-Wan, who nervously twisted his fingers together as he waited for his master to join him and Master Dyas.

Hondo ran to his mother, his arms outstretched and she greeted him with equal fervour, her impressive hat with its rainbow of feathers and decorations shivering as the small family embraced under the shadow of their cruiser. Ahsoka watched them with amusement as she continued over towards Obi-Wan and Master Dyas, letting out a breath she had been holding when she crossed into the warm sunlight and was at Obi-Wan’s side again.

“Welcome back, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured, too aware of Master Dyas’s presence to fling his arms around Ahsoka like he wanted to. He settled for a deep, respectful bow instead. “Are you all right?”

“I’m quite well,” Ahsoka said, her voice warm with affection as she returned his bow with one of her own. “You look exhausted, Padawan. What happened?”

Master Dyas watched the two and listened to the Force humming around them. There was something about them, something he couldn’t identify or place. They were special, these two. He had known it back when he stood up for them at Kenobi’s braiding ceremony and he was even more certain of it now. Another knight and padawan pairing might have been lost to the cruelties of fate but not only had Tano and Kenobi come out in one piece they had saved a ship abandoned by the Republic and managed to avoid any loss of life in the process.

He would give the Council a glowing report on their actions.

A loud bellow came from the pirate ship, where the mother and son were preparing to return to their ship. “Oh! Little mango!”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes. “Yes, Hondo?”

“May the Force be with you!” Hondo grinned and doffed his hat, bowing theatrically to the three Jedi before jogging back into his mother’s ship.

Mama Ohnaka gracefully waved to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan before leisurely strolling back onto her ship, and in another few minutes they were gone.

“I would imagine you two have had quite enough excitement for the month,” Master Dyas smiled as he walked with them back towards their cruiser. “We’ll stay here in Itbutathi for a day or two to refill and wait for Knight Di to join us and then return to Coruscant, where I would imagine you two are
going to be very popular with the younglings.”

Ahsoka laughed, looking down at Obi-Wan. “To say nothing of your agemates, right Obi-Wan?”

“Quinlan Vos will be livid,” Obi-Wan nodded, his expression solemn but his eyes twinkling with mirth. “Luminara will be disappointed we did not report Madame Ohnaka and Hondo to the authorities.”

“A small price to pay for so many lives saved,” Master Dyas observed and stepped onto the cruiser to take stock of the survivors on board.

Left alone standing outside the ship, Ahsoka looked over at Obi-Wan, her voice soft and teasing. “I just want you to know that when we get a moment alone, I am hugging the stuffing out of you, Corellian Mango.”

“Master,” Obi-Wan beamed with every last adorable dimple. “That is the nicest threat I’ve heard all week.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello! Sorry this went up a little late. I just got back from the Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 and it was amazing! But it gave us precious little editing time. If there are mistakes here, I just want everybody to know that it's my fault and not my editor's fault. She's feeling under the weather and did the best job she could considering the circumstances.

There are also some housekeeping and update information over on my tumblr FireflyFish but for those of you who do not wish to go to the Blue Site of Gif Doom here's the pertinent info:

Tano and Kenobi will NOT update on May 14th. We will resume our usual update schedule next week on May 21st.

Going forward, I’m going to push back the Tano and Kenobi update time to 6:00 pm EST.

So starting on May 21st, the next chapter of Tano and Kenobi will go live at 6:00 PM EST with Chapter 19, Forewarned is Forearmed.

Thanks a bunch and I'll see y'all in two weeks!
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi…

Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi successfully negotiated their freedom from the Ohnaka Pirate gang led by the colorful matriarch Mama Ohnaka. After making the exchange of prisons on Mirial, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan return to Coruscant with the rescued civilian crew and Jedi Master Sifo Dyas.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Knight Tano? Padawan Kenobi? Might I have a moment of your time?”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan looked up from the storage container they were sorting through searching for some extra pillows and blankets. While their cruiser could in theory house up to fifteen sentients, that did not mean the accommodations would be the most luxurious and they were making up beds where they could.

“Of course, Master Dyas,” Ahsoka said, standing up and dusting her hands off as Obi-Wan closed the storage crate and pushed it back under the berth it came from. “What do you need?”

“I would like to speak to you two in private, if I may?” he asked, standing just outside of the doorway. “I understand you were going to turn this room over to Captain Penyo and her crew?”

“They’ll take three of the staterooms,” Ahsoka explained as she followed Master Dyas out into the hallway, Obi-Wan trailing after them. “Obi-Wan and I will double up in a room, which leaves a room for you and Captain Avett and Pilot Lincae.”

Master Dyas nodded as they passed down the hallway, returning a greeting from Joti, who was handing out freshly brewed caf to his crew mates. Ahsoka smiled at the relieved survey crew and Obi-Wan held up a hand as they passed by, taking a turn towards one of the smaller, more private rooms that was usually used for sensitive diplomacy or to negotiate delicate matters.

“Please take a seat,” Master Dyas gestured to the room’s round table circled with four plush chairs. He walked over to a hot water dispenser that was built into the wall and opened up another cabinet that held a collection of blue-grey porcelain cups. “Would either of you care for tea or caf?”

“We’ll take tea,” Ahsoka said, looking over at Obi-Wan, who watched the master with sharp blue eyes. “And honey too, if we have some.”

“No honey but we have some excellent sun nectar from Arcadia,” Master Dyas replied as he finished the preparations for tea and carried over a tray of three warm cups. “Drink up. I imagine you two are exhausted after everything that’s happened to you in the past few weeks.”

Ahsoka poured herself a generous helping of sun nectar before handing it over to Obi-Wan who, in true teenage fashion, gave himself perhaps a bit more than he really needed. “I’ll be happy to return to the Temple, where the most exciting thing to happen to me is deciding if I should run to catch a
Master Dyas and Obi-Wan laughed softly at her joke and Ahsoka let out a breath she hadn’t been aware she was holding. “So… what did you want to talk to us about?”

“Two things,” Master Dyas said, smiling behind his tea cup. “First of all, I wanted to tell you both how impressed I was with your handling of the Ohnaka gang out on Florrum. That could have been a tragedy on all sides but not only did you two manage to rescue yourselves and your own crew but you were able to rescue the civilians as well. Captain Penyo has spoken glowingly of your actions.”

Ahsoka felt a proud grin rise to her face and she tried to remind herself that a Jedi should always be humble and that she should present a good example for Obi-Wan.

“I agree,” Obi-Wan spoke up, his eyes glowing. “Master was amazing!”

Well, so much for modesty.

“I only did what any other Jedi would have done,” Ahsoka insisted, giving her padawan a look that said now was not the time to enthuse. Obi-Wan had the good sense to keep his glowing praise of his master to himself but he was ready if Master Dyas gave him another opportunity to expound on the virtues of his master.

Master Dyas smiled, a brief flicker of amusement passing over his features. “Be that as it may, it was not another Jedi that was placed in that situation. It was both of you and I believe I can speak for the whole Council when I say that I commend you for your heroism, not only with the pirates but for your actions on Raxus. You have both done very well.”

Sensing that they should just be thankful and accept the praise, Ahsoka glanced over at Obi-Wan. “I think I speak for both of us when I say, thank you, Master Dyas. We’re just happy to have made it out alive and in one piece.”

“And to have freed the civilians,” Obi-Wan added with pride. “What will happen to them?”

“They’ll be debriefed on Coruscant and given new assignments,” Master Dyas explained, tapping on a datapad to confirm his theory. “I would imagine the Republic will give them something a bit less exciting for their next go round.”

“I think Joti would like that,” Obi-Wan said. “I know I would like a respite from excitement for at least six months, possibly a year.”

This earned a round of laughter from Ahsoka and Master Dyas and it was clear the matter was closed for the time being. They exchanged a bit of small talk, Obi-Wan extolling Ahsoka’s wisdom before he launched into a colorful description of the trash compactor that was Hondo Ohnaka’s bedroom. Ahsoka listened to his story, already catching glimpses of the engaging storyteller her padawan was going to grow into. It was strange to think that her anxious and self conscious Obi-Wan was one day going to grow into the assured and confident master of her own youth but the brief glimpses she got every now and then reassured her. They were on the right path.

She was on the right path.

“That must have been quite frightening to wake up in a cell,” Master Dyas observed, sipping his tea. “How did you manage it?”

“Honestly, Master Dyas,” Obi-Wan said, finishing off his tea with an exhausted sigh. “That wasn’t the weirdest thing that happened to us that day. I’ve quite forgotten what my initial reaction to the
cell was, although it might not have been fit for polite conversation.”

Ahsoka giggled at this and stood up to get them all another cup of tea. “Obi-Wan is a stickler for propriety, Master Dyas. At all times.”

Flushing bright red at his master’s teasing, Obi-Wan shrugged a little, his hands folded in his lap. “Being trapped in a pirate’s holding cell is no excuse for vulgarity.”

“Quite right,” Master Dyas agreed with a wide grin. “But I am curious. What was the weirdest thing you experienced if not waking up in a pirate’s holding cell?”

Ahsoka paused at the tea kettle, making sure to steady her breathing and hide her sudden nervousness behind the smoothest and most subtle shields she possessed. It wouldn’t do for Obi-Wan or Master Dyas to notice her sudden anxiety about their conversation and the direction she was almost positive it was going to go.

Not now. It’s too soon! Obi-Wan won’t understand. He’s not ready for the burden. He’s still just a kid!

“Master Ahsoka can tell you more but we experienced a,” Obi-Wan paused, searching for the right word. “A wave of… joy? Emotion? I’m not really sure how to describe it, Master Dyas. At first I thought the Force was trying to drown me or kill me and then I was crying with joy but I didn’t know why.”

Obi-Wan frowned at his hands and continued, his voice soft. “I still don’t know why.”

“Hmmm,” Master Dyas murmured, leaning back in his chair and gratefully accepting a new cup of tea from Ahsoka, who sat back down next to Obi-Wan. “It seems we have experienced the same Force event, young Obi-Wan. I, too, felt a distant but powerful happening in the Force when I was on Mirial.”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan gaped at Master Dyas, mutual shock on their faces. Ahsoka recovered first, suddenly worried that in the heightened moment of their capture she had deluded herself into thinking she and Obi-Wan had witnessed Anakin’s entrance into the galaxy. “You felt it too, Master Dyas?”

“Yes,” the master replied, rolling one of the wrapped locks of hair that hung in front of his ears between his fingers as he rested his head against his hand. “I believe I mentioned before that I am unfortunately gifted with some amount of foresight, have I not, Knight Tano?”

Ahsoka nodded. “You did. Right before Obi-Wan’s padawan ceremony.”

“What is it like?” Obi-Wan asked, head canted to the side and then seemed to hear his question and shook himself out of his trance. “If it’s not too forward of me, Master.”

Giving Obi-Wan a warm look, Master Dyas assured him he had not been too forward. Relaxing back in his chair, the master closed his eyes and held out one hand as if trying to grasp the image in his mind to properly describe it to Obi-Wan and Ahsoka. “It is like seeing an imperfect picture or a broken holo. Some details are sharp and clear and others fade in and out of shadows. And sometimes my gift is nothing more than sensations, impressions or shadows cast by figures behind me. Honestly, it is more frustrating than helpful.”

“So you think this… Force event was some kind of shared vision of the future?” Ahsoka asked, carefully phrasing her words. “Of Obi-Wan’s future?”
Master Dyas opened his eyes and shrugged. “I do not know. As I said, I only experienced the event from a distance. It is clear from your descriptions that you were much closer to the epicenter of it. Whatever it was, you two are connected to it.”

So it most likely is Anakin, Ahsoka thought with a mix of relief and trepidation.

She and Obi-Wan exchanged glances before Master Dyas continued. “When we return to Coruscant, if it’s not too much trouble, I would like to meditate with you both on the subject.”

Obi-Wan turned to face his master and Ahsoka ran her hand up and down his back before agreeing to Master Dyas’ request. “If it will help you solve the mystery of what we experienced, then we would be glad to help. Right, Obi-Wan?”

“Yes, of course, Master Dyas,” Obi-Wan replied, bowing to the Jedi Master. “If it is from the future, it seems quite encouraging. There are times I think I can still feel it.”

Ahsoka watched as her padawan touched one hand to his heart, the softest smile tugging at the corners of his mouth as their own master-padawan bond gently pulsed with warmth and affection. Master Dyas watched Obi-Wan, his dark eyes narrowed, and the stood up, collecting their empty tea cups. “Well, this is a mystery I look forward to unraveling with you both. Now I think it’s time you two got some sleep. I am sure you are both exhausted or at the very least, in need of some quiet. Grab yourself something to eat in the galley and then get some rest.”

They stood up and bowed as one before Ahsoka stepped back to let Obi-Wan leave first with a promise to meditate on the Force event for Master Dyas. He headed out into the hallway while Ahsoka stood in the doorway, watching the Jedi master carefully wash and rinse their tea cups out in the sink.

If Master Dyas can really see the future, maybe… maybe he can help us?

“Ahsoka?” Master Dyas spoke, not turning away from his washing up. “Whatever it is that is troubling you can wait. You and your padawan are safe. That is all you need concern yourself with at this present moment.”

Ahsoka blinked, surprised, and bowed her head again. “Yes, of course, Master Dyas. I’m sorry. It’s hard to… come down from the excitement.”

Master Dyas smiled back at her over his shoulder, a fox-like expression of understanding. “I know. But it is not yet time for that. You will know when that time comes, won’t you?”

Confused but comforted somehow, she nodded. “Yes. I will. Good night, Master Dyas.”

“Good night, Ahsoka,” Master Dyas said and turned back to the sink.

And with that, Ahsoka headed off to the stateroom she and Obi-Wan shared, heart full of hope that maybe she had found someone who might just understand a bit of what she was going through.

Mace Windu stood next to Master Yoda, the life and activity of the Temple hangar bay humming around them. Pilots and mechanics gossiped in the far corner, currently engrossed in the tribulations of a famous holonet couple as droids walked past the two Jedi masters, pushing a freight sled that
was weighed down with goods for Temple operations. There was a pleasant wind winding through the cavernous room, buffeting Yoda’s cloak and tugging lightly at his.

“Late, they are,” Yoda finally commented, opening his eyes and glancing up at Mace. “Talk with them, you should.”

“The ways of the Coruscant Planetary Authority are beyond even our reach, Master,” Mace replied. “And Master Dyas informed me they were going to drop off the civilians before coming to the Temple. I’m sure the Senatorial Census and Survey Bureau had more than a few questions for them. Do you have some place else to be?”

Pointed green ears twitched upwards as faded blue eyes widened in amused surprise. “Ohoho! Enjoying your new position, are you, Master of the Order?”

“Well I’m certainly not enjoying the paperwork,” Mace grumbled, glancing away before something brushed against his senses. “Ah. Here they are.”

A vermillion Republic cruiser slowly hovered into the hangar bay, carefully lowering itself to the ground and venting steam and exhaust as the landing cycle finished. A loading ramp was lowered to the deck and out stepped Master Dyas, followed closely by Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi.

Mace and Yoda started toward the trio to quietly welcome them home when Mace sensed a presence at a nearby doorway back into the Temple. Yoda carried on ahead as Mace stopped to glance back, frowning at the tall, broad-shouldered shadow there.

What is Qui-Gon doing here?

Shaking his head, Mace put the thought out of his mind for the moment and returned his attention to the returning trio of Jedi.

“Master Yoda! Master Windu! Such a distinguished welcome party,” Master Dyas grinned, bowing low to the Grandmaster and to the Master of the Order. “If I had known you were coming to meet us, I would have polished my boots and worn a nicer cloak.”

“Happy to see you, we are,” Yoda chuckled, bowing his head to Master Dyas before turning his gaze to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. “Relieved we were, to hear of your rescue, Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi. Anxious I am, to hear the details of your report.”

“Padawan Kenobi is already working on it,” Ahsoka smiled, putting a hand on Obi-Wan’s back as he held a datapad close to his chest. Mace watched the teen try his best to be humble and modest as was expected by the Order, but he could catch the faintest sliver of a gleam of pride in his aura.

As he had expected, Obi-Wan was thriving under Ahsoka’s tutelage. His emotions were still tumultuous and his anxiety and extreme self criticism had not gone away but there was an underlying confidence that hadn’t been there before. Mace had no doubt that Obi-Wan would have done well under any teacher that would have been willing to take him on, but there was something about Ahsoka’s unorthodox openness and her warm affection that made the boy blossom.

I wonder how Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan would have fared under a similar mission?

“Welcome back, Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi,” Mace said, finally joining the conversation. “I’m glad to see you emerged from your adventures unscathed.”

“So are we,” Ahsoka replied, sharing a happy look with her padawan. “Thank you for sending Knight Di. We couldn’t have done it without him. Has he already returned to the Temple?”
“Arrived, he has, a few hours ago,” Yoda said, walking over to Obi-Wan and tapping the boy’s leg. The padawan respectfully squatted down and let the Grandmaster climb up onto his shoulder before standing up straight. “Spoke highly of you two, he did.”

“He’s being too kind,” Ahsoka laughed, a little embarrassed as the five Jedi started to walk towards the entrance to the Temple. “It was because of his timely arrival that we were really able to convince Mama Ohnaka to negotiate with us.”

“He tolds us about this… Mother Ohnaka character,” Mace said, his hands clasped behind his back. “She sounds… colorful.”

Ahsoka managed to stifle her mirth as she and Obi-Wan exchanged a glance before Ahsoka gestured for him to speak.

Obi-Wan answered with all the solemnity of a wizened elder. “Master Windu, there are no words to describe Mama Ohnaka. She can only be… experienced to be truly understood.”

Even Master Dyas cracked up at that and Mace got the distinct feeling that he was going to enjoy hearing about Ahsoka and Obi-Wan’s adventures with the pirates. He allowed himself the smallest of smiles as he acknowledged the padawan’s statement. “Then I look forward to hearing all about it in your mission report and debriefing tomorrow.”

“Yes, Master!” Obi-Wan replied with a grin matching his master’s pleased expression.

“Obi-Wan!” came a loud chorus of shouts from the doorway and the group looked up to see a small clutch of padawans clustered there.

Mace noted that Qui-Gon Jinn was nowhere to be seen. Adding that to the unending list of things he needed to think on later, he reached out to touch Ahsoka’s shoulder.

“A word, Knight Tano?” Mace asked. “I’m sure Padawan Kenobi would like a moment with his friends?”

Ahsoka nodded and helped Yoda down from Obi-Wan’s shoulder as he was dismissed to lope over to his friends. Master Dyas took his leave of the group with a warm goodbye, passing the small, excited padawans as he moved into the Temple.

“What is it, Master Windu?” Ahsoka asked.

Yoda hobbled over to Mace’s side, and he glanced at the little green master before addressing Ahsoka. “You did good work out there, Ahsoka. Not just with the pirates near Florrum but on Raxus too. The Council may have had some doubts about your skills before this little adventure but you have gone a long way in proving those doubts were unfounded.”

“Impressive,” Yoda cackled with an emphatic clack of his gimmer stick against the floor. “Very impressive. Proud we are, of you both.”

Mace nodded in agreement. “Yes, and impressed with your diplomacy, as unorthodox as it is.”

Ahsoka blushed and bowed her head for a moment before meeting his gaze. “Thank you. That… That’s very kind of you to say. I was just trying to do my duty as a Jedi.”

“And you did it well,” Mace said, his voice warm, hoping she understood the depth of feeling behind it. He was not given to overt displays of emotion, positive or negative, but it did not mean he did not have those feelings. His padawan Depa understood his quiet ways but that had taken nearly a decade
of mentoring and teaching to come to that. “I have to collect my padawan but… Welcome home, Ahsoka.”

Yoda nodded at Mace before he made his goodbyes. He hobbled towards a passing knight and was given a ride on the wookie’s broad shoulders.

Mace took his leave of the knight and her very popular padawan, walking back into the warm and comforting shadows of the Temple.

Ahsoka watched them both go, feeling a little stunned.

Did Mace Windu give her a compliment?

Did he just say he was proud of her?

Did he just smile at her?

I wish I could tell Anakin. Ahsoka mused, a grin hidden behind her hand as she watched Obi-Wan’s friends gasp and exclaim over his adventures on the Outer Rim. He wouldn’t believe me but the look on his face would be hilarious. “No way, Snips! Mace didn’t smile. He can’t smile. His smile was stolen by a Dathomirian witch!”

She was starting to wonder just how much her view of the Council and the Order had been skewed by Anakin’s own opinions of them.

But there would be time to wonder about that later. She needed to extricate Obi-Wan from his circle of adoring friends and take them back to their room to unpack and decompress after a long, eventful but exhausting trip.

“And that’s when Master offered to exchange herself for the pirate matriarch’s son,” Obi-Wan said, as Ahsoka walked up next to him. “Oh! Hello, Master! I was just telling them about the pirates off Florrum.”

“Did you really retake a pirate ship with three blaster rifles?” Quinlan Vos gasped, his eyes round in awe. “All by yourself?”

Ahsoka looked down at the assembled padawans, picking out a young Kit Fisto and Luminara Unduli among the crowd. “Well I had Obi-Wan and the Force so I wasn’t entirely by myself.”

“Is it true the pirates overwhelmed you?” Luminara asked, her blue eyes round. “And that you actually engaged in a lightsaber battle?”

“Yes, we did,” Ahsoka replied, glancing over at her padawan. “And I’m sure Obi-Wan will be happy to tell you all about it tomorrow during your lunch break but unfortunately I need to borrow him. If you all will excuse us?”

“Yes, Master Ahsoka!” the group chorused and waved goodbye to Obi-Wan as he followed after Ahsoka who was heading to their rooms.

“So how upset is Quinlan that he wasn’t the first padawan to face off against brigands?” Ahsoka asked once she and Obi-Wan were in the turbolift back to their quarters.

Obi-Wan let out a yawn. “He’s not too terribly upset. He has instead vowed to be the first padawan to arrest a pirate and thinks it was poor form to let Mama Ohnaka and Hondo get away.”
Ahsoka let out a loud happy sigh, shaking her head. “Well, he is welcome to try. I think I would pay money to see Quinlan Vos try to arrest Mama Ohnaka.”

Obi-Wan thought about this for a moment before replying, “I would bet you dinner at the noodle shop that Hondo would try to hire him.”

“That reminds me,” Ahsoka said as the turbolift doors pinged open and they walked off towards their quarters. “I owe you some celebratory ice cream, don’t I?”

“Yes, Master. Could we go tomorrow after our debriefing?”

“That sounds like an excellent idea, Obi-Wan.”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan’s notoriety only increased after their successful return to the Temple. Obi-Wan’s agemates were fascinated by his adventure out on the Outer Rim and it only took a few days for everyone in the Temple under the age of twenty to learn the story. Younglings gasped and giggled at Obi-Wan’s passing and outright waved with excited glee if he was in the presence of Ahsoka. There were more than a few impressed head nods from senior padawans and even Depa Bilaba told Obi-Wan she was impressed when she assisted in one of his self defense classes.

“But I didn’t do anything!” Obi-Wan insisted as he carefully and methodically blocked a series of attacks, wondering when his own skill would become as fluid and graceful as the older padawan’s. “I only did as Master bid me and babysat a very talkative pirate who has all the sense of a lothcat.”

Depa laughed at that, shaking her head. “You don’t understand, Obi-Wan. It isn’t what you did but the fact that you did it at all, and at such a young age, is what is impressive. I didn’t engage in an actual battle with Master Windu until I seventeen, and even then he pushed me out of the way and handled the altercation mostly by himself.”

“Oh,” Obi-Wan blinked, surprised to hear that. Depa Bilaba was someone he and his fellows looked up to. The Master of the Order’s padawan and a quietly impressive young woman in her own right with her shining black braids and her sloe eyes. She had an air of quiet solemnity about her that evaporated whenever she gave the younger padawans one of her impish smiles. To hear that he had done something before her was shocking to say the least. “I hadn’t thought of it like that. Master’s upbringing is so unusual that I was worried I was falling behind, honestly.”

“From what my master has told me,” Depa moved her hands into a position that allowed equally for offense and defense, circling around Obi-Wan and waiting for an opening. “Master Tano is the exception that proves the rule. I don’t think you have to live up to whatever it was she was doing on the Outer Rim before she met you.”

Obi-Wan nodded in understanding and then Depa attacked and he found himself falling to her last carefully balanced but well-placed barrage of strikes, ending up on the mats next to the rest of his classmates.
Time passed, the golden glow of summer making the days long and filled with learning and adventure. Obi-Wan’s age-group went on their first unsupervised visit to the Parks where Padawan Rast and Luminara ended up rescuing a drowning child. After that was their trip to Aurealia and their extended survival workshop. Obi-Wan found that the armored tooka he and his group were sent to chase after was more than fond of him and was prone to escaping from his cage and following Obi-Wan as he went about his tasks on that field trip.

Master Ahsoka found the whole thing hilarious and named the little creature Cody for reasons beyond him.

Time passed and there was another mission, this time to Commenor, to attend a ceremony honoring the planet’s acceptance into the Republic. Things had been routine until Obi-Wan stumbled across what appeared to be an operation trying to smuggle chrysopaz gems off planet. Several exciting and explosion-filled days later, Master Ahsoka and Obi-Wan found themselves local celebrities, being sent back to Coruscant with grand fanfare.

“Does this happen every time we successfully complete a mission?” Obi-Wan asked his master as they flew their light corvette back to Coruscant.

Ahsoka laughed at Obi-Wan’s obvious discomfort with this new round of what he considered egregious praise. “When you uncover a smuggling operation that was costing a planet trillions in lost revenue and putting civilian lives in danger? Yeah, it happens.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and flopped into the co-pilot chair frowning at the controls. “I don’t see what all the fuss is about. I hardly did anything. You did all the work.”

Ahsoka grinned, resting an arm on the pilot console and rest her head on her hand. “Oh really? And who was it that just so happened to stumble upon a crew of smugglers making off with the jewels? And set off the alarm and engaged them in a small firefight before I could catch up to you?”

Obi-Wan risked a glance over at his master and felt his attempt at purposeful Jedi modesty wither on the vine, a slow, secretly proud smile appearing on his face. “Well… I couldn’t let them get away, Master. Those gems did not belong to them.”

“Uh huh,” Ahsoka nodded with fake solemnity. “Your hands were tied, of course.”

“I’m glad you understand my position,” Obi-Wan snickered, relaxing back into his chair. “Where are we going to get ice cream this time? I think we should go to that place that makes Corellian crisped waffles.”

“I think that is an excellent choice,” Ahsoka said as she finished putting the coordinates for Coruscant in the navicomputer, which let out a chime once it was done processing their route back home. She activated the hyperdrive and stood up once the ship had completed the jump, the blue-white swirl of starlight streaking past the cockpit. “I think I’m going to go meditate for a bit. Let me know if anything comes up.”

Ahsoka spent most of that particular ride home worrying about time and how fast it was hurtling forward. It had been nearly six months since their adventure on Florrum, and the event which she had finally decided was Anakin’s birth.

This meant Anakin was still an infant and unlikely to remember whatever hardships he and his mother were undergoing. She had gone over her notes, despairing the fact her master had never been interested in talking about his past. All she had known was that he said he came from Tatooine but she didn’t know if that meant he was born there or simply arrived on the planet before he was aware
of the world around him.

And on top of that, who was the current owner of Shmi Skywalker? Ahsoka frowned at the ceiling of her stateroom, trying to piece together the fragmentary nature of a slave’s life. As far as the Republic was concerned, whatever took place outside of their jurisdiction was not to be bothered with. There was a kind of unspoken agreement between the Republic and those who operated on the fringes of the galaxy. Don’t make too much of a fuss and the Republic won’t involve itself, or the Jedi, in the affairs of local systems.

It disgusted Ahsoka on a basic level but her hands were tied. For now.

_I will find a way to free you, Master. I swear it._

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Another six months passed as quickly as the ones prior to it. Obi-Wan was seventeen and he was growing like a wroshyr tree on Kashyyyk, a few bits of soft blond fuzz appearing sporadically on his chin. He was tall and gangly, not quite filled out yet but the angles of his face were sharpening to the familiar visage Ahsoka remembered from her youth.

Slowly, inexorably, Ahsoka’s padawan was growing up. And she still had no clue how to best go about searching for his future padawan.

It was early one bright spring morning, the stained glass windows of the Northern Solar Room levered open to allow a cool breeze, when an anxious senior initiate interrupted Ahsoka and Obi-Wan’s jar’kai practice. The young Rodian stood on the edges of training area, her hands clasped against her stomach. Neither master nor padawan noticed the young girl until Obi-Wan slid across the room, his sabers behind him and almost scoring the floor with the tips of them.

“Keep your blades up, Obi-Wan!” Ahsoka critiqued as she chased after him, trying to overpower his defenses with both her sabers. “Lightsabers can cut through ship floors and you don’t want to accidentally fall through them.”

“Sorry, Master!” Obi-Wan grunted, managing to deflect his master off his blades and spin free only to find himself blinking in shock. “Oh. Hello there. When did you get here?”

“Ah! Behind you!” the senior initiate gasped, as Ahsoka came back around for another attack that Obi-Wan neatly blocked by crossing his blades over his back.

“Master, we have a visitor,” Obi-Wan said, his voice loud enough to be heard over the happy buzz of four lightsabers.

Ahsoka leaned around her padawan and smiled at the young Rodian before them, who was both awestruck and a little terrified of all that white-hot plasma on display. “Hello! What can we do for you?”

“Knight Tano? I’ve been sent by the Council,” the senior initiate said, standing up a little straighter.

Ahsoka stepped to the side to allow Obi-Wan to turn and face her. Her padawan gave her a salute with his right hand and blade before deactivating them both and walked over to grab their water bottles and towels while Ahsoka talked to the messenger.
“You are to come to the Council Room at your earliest convenience to receive your next mission assignment. And… Master Dyas says it’s all right if you wish to shower first. He had a feeling you were sparring.”

Ahsoka laughed at this and bowed her head to the young girl. “Oh did he? Was that actually included in the message?”

The Rodian held out a small datapad as proof of the accuracy of her missive. “Yes, Master. He did.”

“What’s going on?” Obi-Wan asked, handing over a water bottle to his master and peering at the datapad in her hands. “We have another mission? Where to?”

“It doesn’t say,” Ahsoka answered, handing the pad back to the messenger. “Thank you, Senior Initiate Bani. We’ll be there as soon as possible.”

“I will let the Council know,” the girl replied with a bow before turning around and heading back toward the turbolift.

Obi-Wan took a long drink of water, pouring the last of it over his head. He scrubbed his face and head off with his towel and grinned at his master. “Where do you think they’re sending us?”

Ahsoka pursed her lips as she twisted open her bottle. She took a sip of cold clear water before speaking. “I’m not sure. There’s been some unrest out on Dantooine, but nothing that would require a Jedi. Maybe something on the Outer Rim?”

“I’ve been following the news and it seems there have been a few raids along the Harrin Trade Corridor. Do you suppose it has something to do with that?” Obi-Wan mused as they made their way back to their rooms to shower and change into something more appropriate for a mission briefing.

“Given our last encounter with pirates?”

“I doubt it,” Ahsoka shook her head. “Maybe it’s a diplomatic squabble. Or bodyguard duty.”

They were showered and dressed in about twenty minutes, which gave Ahsoka enough time to consult her personal database and nothing came up as pertinent. She also checked the amount of credits she had been able to save for Anakin and Shmi’s eventual freedom, frowning at how it never seemed to grow fast enough. There was no going rate for slaves but Ahsoka distinctly remembered her master bitterly quoting his old owner one particularly dark night. “No pod is worth two slaves.”

After we get back from this mission, I’ll see if I can get permission to take Obi-Wan on a… field trip. Yes, I think that would be a good way to phrase it. I’ll tell the Council I want him to get some experience going undercover and seeing what life is like outside the Republic.

And we’ll go find them.

Confident in her plan of action, Ahsoka met Obi-Wan in their living room, watching him tuck his long padawan braid, complete with silka beads, over his shoulder as he studied himself in the room’s simple mirror. “I think I’ve finally grown into this habit, Master. How does it look?”

For one brief, painful moment, it was as if Master Obi-Wan was standing there, straightening his tabards and smoothing down his collars while he waited for Anakin and Ahsoka to join him before a meeting.

Her little boy was growing up.

“Master?” Obi-Wan repeated, turning to face Ahsoka, his braid and lack of beard chasing away the
phantoms of another life. “Is everything alright?”

“Yes, I’m fine,” Ahsoka smiled, calling her robe from a hook by the door and pulling it on as she walked out of their suite. “I was just thinking how tall you’ve grown.”

“Have I?” Obi-Wan asked with a smile of his own as he followed her. “Do you suppose I’ll be as tall as you one day?”

“We’ll see,” Ahsoka chuckled as they made their way to the Council Room.

When the pair arrived, they were greeted by a smaller group of masters than usual because several of them had been called to a meeting at the Senate building that day. The new Chancellor, a man by the name of Valorum, had requested their wisdom on a particular matter and the meeting could not be rescheduled.

“Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi,” a Council assistant announced as they stepped into the room. The two moved as one to the center of the room, bowing respectfully to Master Ki-Adi-Mundi who was the defacto head of the Council in Master Windu and Yoda’s absence.

“Good morning, Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi,” Master Mundi began, acknowledging each of them as he spoke. “I hope we did not interrupt anything too important this morning.”

“We were just sparring,” Ahsoka explained. “We came as soon as we could. What is the nature of our next mission?”

“Master Plo Koon has the specifics of your mission,” Master Mundi said and handed off the meeting to the Kel Dor master who held out a datapad for Obi-Wan to take from him.

“We have received a request for aid from Mandalore,” Master Plo began, gesturing with one hand to activate a holo projector that filled the room with the blue-white light of a ghostly planet. “The planet has been embroiled in a terrible civil war for some time now and the Senate has received a request for aid. There have been several attempts on the life of the head of state, Duchess Satine Kryze, a young girl who has recently ascended the throne.”

“Mandalore?” Obi-Wan murmured, watching the planet spin in place. “Don’t they hate the Jedi?”

“The Duchess and her supporters are part of a new movement within Mandalorian culture,” Plo Koon explained, pulling up an image of the young duchess, a young carefree portrait from happier times. Ahsoka watched in a kind of numb shock as the regal woman from her memories stared back at her, her elegant features soft and sweet with youth and innocence. “She is a pacifist. The request came from her supporters and the senator representing their sector.”

“What…” Ahsoka found her throat dry as she suddenly realized how little she actually knew about this particular part of Master Obi-Wan’s life.

She took a deep breath and continued. “What is our mission?”

“You will go to Mandalore and you will protect the Duchess from the insurgents trying to kill her. This is a dangerous mission, Knight Tano, Padawan Kenobi, but the Council is confident you are well-suited for this task. May the Force be with you both.”

Chapter End Notes
HEEEEEEEEEELLOOOOOOOO!

And we're back on a regular update schedule! As I said before, I'm going to start posting stories at 6:00 PM EST and this is the first chapter to do so. I am 95% recovered from the head cold from hell that knocked me down after the convention I went to earlier in May so I foresee no more updating problems in June. The rest of the Tatooine arc is planned out and we are ready to have some fun!

I hope everyone is having a wonderful Memorial Day weekend and if you're not in the States I still wish you the warmest and happiest of weekends!

See you next week on Mandalooooooore!
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After an exciting adventure out on the Outer Rim, Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi return to the Jedi Temple on Coruscant with Master Sifo Dyas. Master Dyas believes the two have some kind of connection to the strange Force event that Ahsoka is convinced is related to Anakin Skywalker’s birth. Back at the Temple, life continued on for our duo but Tano and Kenobi are soon called back into action by the Jedi Council and receive a new mission: Protect the Duchess of Mandalore, Satine Kryze.

Mandalore.

They’re sending us to Mandalore.

Ahsoka felt her mind go blank and the world around her fall away for one brief and blinding moment of panic.

They couldn’t go to Mandalore now! Anakin was out there, somewhere. He needed to be found! He and his mother needed to be freed from slavery and he needed to be brought to the Temple where she and Obi-Wan could protect him from Palpatine and whatever other Sith Lords were running around the galaxy at the moment.

A brief memory flashed through Ahsoka’s mind, one where she, Rex, and Anakin were in a cantina waiting for an informant to make contact, back before the Battle of Mandalore.

“So who are we waiting for, Skyguy?” Ahsoka asked as she sipped at her Tarisian latte. “And when are they getting here?”

“I don’t know,” Anakin shrugged, finishing off his shot of Gingensu cactus liquor. “Obi-Wan just said that they would help us and to treat them as you would have the Duchess.”

“The Duchess?” Ahsoka frowned at that, exchanging a look with Rex. She glanced down at her hands, remembering how distraught Master Obi-Wan had been when he returned to the Temple. “Is he doing all right? I know he and the Duchess were very close.”

Anakin shrugged, his own gaze fixed on a distant point, his brows furrowed and eyes dark. “You know Obi-Wan. He could be bleeding to death and missing a limb and he would still insist that he was fine.”

Rex nodded, tossing back the last of his Dantooine beer. “Cody said the same thing. Said the General hasn’t mentioned it but he’s keeping a close eye on him all the same.”

Ahsoka sighed softly. “This must be so hard for him. To come back to Mandalore to face Maul? After everything that’s happened?”

There was silence between the three of them before Ahsoka spoke up. “How did Obi-Wan meet the Duchess? I don’t think I ever asked before. Do you know, Skyguy?”
“I don’t know much other than what Obi-Wan told me,” Anakin said, ordering a mug of caf. “He and Master Qui-Gon were assigned to protect the Duchess when Obi-Wan was a padawan and it was a year-long mission.”

“Wow!” Ahsoka murmured, almost unable to imagine being in one place for more than six weeks, let alone a year. “So what happened?”

Anakin thanked the bartender and paid for his caf before turning back to Ahsoka and Rex. “The Mandalorian Civil War ended and they went their separate ways.”

A year?

A year? We don’t have a year to spend on Mandalore! We have to find Anakin now!

“Knight Tano?” Master Ki-Adi-Mundi’s voice broke through Ahsoka’s panic, immediately dousing it with ice-cold water. “Is something wrong? Have you had a previous experience that would cause a conflict of interest on this mission? If that is the case, we can always assign it to another Jedi. Perhaps Knight Lia and Padawan Rast?”

As worried and anxious as Ahsoka was, the very idea that someone else would go on what the Force had apparently decreed to be Obi-Wan’s destined mission rubbed her the wrong way. The Duchess Satine was Master Obi-Wan’s dear friend and that made her family. Ahsoka couldn’t just abandon Satine to someone who didn’t know the amazing woman she was going to grow up into.

Who knows? Maybe we can negotiate some kind of peace with Deathwatch before it becomes Deathwatch. And just because it took a year with Qui-Gon doesn’t mean it’s going to take a year for me and Obi-Wan to complete this mission.

“No, nothing’s wrong,” Ahsoka said, making sure her voice was clear and strong. She turned to look at Obi-Wan, who was watching her with narrowed blue-grey eyes. “You ready to go to Mandalore, Padawan?”

Obi-Wan sent across the briefest swell of concern and anxiety over their bond before nodding. “I am looking forward to meeting my first real Mandalorian.”

Master Plo Koon chuckled softly at that. “Your good cheer and enthusiasm for your tasks is boundless, Padawan Kenobi. I sense it will serve you in good stead on this next mission.”

Stars above, I hope so, Ahsoka thought as she accepted the datapad from Master Mundi and they were both dismissed.

“Master?” Obi-Wan stuck his head out of his room into the joined living area of their suite of rooms. “Do we have enough time for me to visit the Archives? I would like to do some research on Mandalore before we go. Especially given our fractious history with them.”

Ahsoka looked up from the mission datapad, momentarily distracted from her inner fretting. “I think that would be a good idea. Grab anything you think will be useful on this trip. I have a feeling this mission is going to be more difficult than the Council realizes.”

Obi-Wan frowned and stepped fully out of his room, sitting down on the edge of the sofa. “What do
you mean, Master? Have you had a vision? Should we go speak to Master Dyas?"

Smiling faintly, Ahsoka shook her head. “No. It’s not a vision it’s a… feeling. Mandalore is in the middle of a civil war and they’ve requested Jedi to protect their head of state? Doesn’t that seem strange to you? Given our history?”

Obi-Wan folded his arms over this chest, his hand covering his mouth as his gaze unfocused while in thought. Ahsoka watched him think, watched his brows draw together as he mulled over her statement.

And now that Ahsoka had mentioned it, why had the Mandalorians requested Jedi aid in this moment of crisis? Or had they simply requested aid from the Republic and the Senate had just passed it along to the Jedi? What exactly were they heading into?

“It does seem odd,” Obi-Wan finally agreed, his gaze focusing back on Ahsoka. “I’ll keep that in mind in the Archives. Master Plo gave me his master’s code so I should be able to get a full dossier for our mission. Is there anything in particular you’d like me to focus on?”

Ahsoka frowned, leaning back against the arm of the sofa. “Yes. I want you to include the outlying planets in the system, common hyperspace routes, and anything that might be useful.”

Obi-Wan gave his master a half-smile. “Worried we’ll be run off the planet by enraged Mandalorians?”

“I’ve been run out of nicer places than Mandalore,” Ahsoka chuckled. “I wouldn’t put anything past them. But I’m holding you up. Go on ahead and let me know what you find.”

Obi-Wan nodded and stood up, bowing his head to Ahsoka before he headed out the door. She watched him go with a tight feeling in her chest.

This is going to be really hard on you, Obi-Wan. I hope you’re ready for it.

I hope I’m ready for it.

Ahsoka walked back to her room and activated the data access panel, pulling up her personal database and searching for her notes on Mandalore, the Duchess Satine Kryze and Obi-Wan. After a few moments, her entries appeared before her, far too short for her liking.

Taking out an empty datapad, Ahsoka began to download the information.

While the download was processing, Ahsoka stood up and took a long look at her room, wondering what she needed to take with her on the trip. She had assumed, erroneously as it had turned out, that because Obi-Wan went to Mandalore with Qui-Gon that she and Obi-Wan weren’t going to be sent on that mission.

After all, Qui-Gon’s reputation as a diplomat was well-earned and tales of his exploits often made the holo news. After Plo Koon and Adi Gallia’s investigation on Raxus came to an end, revealing the perpetrator of the bombing as a lone, insane radical, Qui-Gon had been dispatched to bring a resolution to the internecine strife of Acronae and Acromino. It had taken him two months but both parties seemed content, if not happy.

According to Temple rumors, a few particularly brave initiates had approached him to see if he would be willing to take them on as padawan learners but nothing had ever come from their attempts.

Ahsoka wished Qui-Gon would just move on and take a new padawan learner but there wasn’t
anything she could really do about it. It wasn’t like she could make him take a padawan. She had already tried that and it hadn’t worked out very well.

“Mandalore,” Ahsoka murmured, gazing out her window at the bright blue sky of Coruscant, watching the speeders move overhead. She wrapped her arms around her waist and leaned back against the wall, closing her eyes.

For a long while, Ahsoka was silent, focusing on her breathing and letting the quiet stillness of the Temple seep down into her bones. It had been a long time since she had had to operate away from the comfort and support of the Temple, to be on her own with only her own smarts and wits to rely on. While Obi-Wan was going to be with her, he was still a teenager and she was responsible for him.

Ahsoka stepped away from the wall and walked back to her closet, opening the door and taking out a small pack and laying it down on the bed.

_We’ll have to be prepared for anything. Even being cut off from the Temple. That’s the only reason I can think of that the mission took a whole year._

Turning back to her closet, Ahsoka pushed aside her winter-weight outer robe and an extra pair of robes to reveal the grey outfit she had on when she arrived in the past. Pulling them out of the closet, she looked down at the fabric and tan armor that made up her old outfit.

Fulcrum’s outfit.

It had been three years since she she had last worn the clothing and armor that she was carefully tucking into her bag. Three years of peace and growth under the protective shade of the Jedi Order. Three years spent teaching Obi-Wan how to become the best Jedi Knight he could be.

And now they were going to Mandalore, and their first real mission that had life or death consequences. It was the first step into the dangerous future that awaited both of them.

Mandalore was going to take them one step closer to Naboo, one step closer to Padme Amidala and the Trade Federation, and one step closer to Anakin Skywalker and the chaos and tumult that would turn the galaxy upside down.

Soon, Ahsoka’s time as Obi-Wan’s master would be up.

And there would be no more reasons to keep the truth from him.

The datapad at the terminal let out a chime and Ahsoka walked over to it, checking to make sure all of the relevant entries were included. She was reading through the list, opening each entry and article and closing it to make sure everything was there, when she felt the faintest tug on her awareness in the Force.

She skipped to the end of the list to an entry that included information on the Shadow Collective, the group of criminals and mercenaries that had invaded and taken over Mandalore towards the end of the Clone Wars. Maul had gone to all of the major crime syndicates, demanding their submission to his goal and as Ahsoka read over the entry, she noted that Maul had even tried to threaten the Hutts into giving into his demands.

“We’ll need to start training for him soon,” Ahsoka sighed, pulling a few more entries from her database onto the pad and a few from the Archive as well. Obi-Wan and Anakin’s future was barreling straight towards her and she had to make sure her padawan and his future padawan were ready for it.
“I will be your Temple contact for this mission,” Plo Koon said as he stood at the foot of the boarding ramp that led up into Ahsoka and Obi-Wan’s light cruiser. “If I am not available, Master Ti or Dyas will be your second contacts. One of us should be available for consultation at all time.”

Ahsoka nodded, handing off her go bag to the blue-suited mechanic who was doing the pre-flight checklist before she and Obi-Wan departed for Mandalore. “Thank you, Master Plo. I hope we won’t need to contact you but it’s good to know you’ll be here if we do.”

Obi-Wan stood next to his master, a heavy bag slung over one shoulder. Plo Koon glanced at it before turning his gaze back to Ahsoka. “Are you planning on a trip after Mandalore?”

“The mission parameters didn’t say how long we were going to be gone,” Ahsoka explained, meeting Obi-Wan’s eye. “So I figured we should be prepared for anything. You know what Master Yaddle says, the Force helps those who help themselves.”

If Plo Koon thought this odd or strange, he did not say, only reaching out to clasp Ahsoka and Obi-Wan on the shoulder and warmly bid them goodbye. “I have the utmost confidence in you both. Protect the Duchess, and may the Force be with you.”

“May the Force be with you, Master Plo,” Ahsoka and Obi-Wan intoned before they both boarded the ship.

Obi-Wan dropped his bag off in the small central living space as Ahsoka moved ahead to the cockpit to receive the checklist from the mechanic.

“She’s ready to fly, Knight Tano,” the mechanic said, pushing his hair out of his face. “She’s as good as new.”

“Glad to hear it, Koyle,” Ahsoka smiled. “Thank you. Obi-Wan and I will take it from here.”

“Good luck, Master Jedi!” Koyle called as he headed back to the boarding ramp and vanished back into the hustle and bustle of the Temple Hangar bay.

Obi-Wan pulled up the boarding ramp and set the mag locks before joining his master in the cockpit. He took a seat in the co-pilot’s chair and glanced over at his master. “Are we ready to go?”

Ahsoka took a deep breath and nodded. “Yes. And think this time I’ll let you handle the flying. It’s about time you go used to handling a ship.”

“Is this because of what I said on Commonenor?” Obi-Wan grinned, sliding over into the seat Ahsoka vacated. “You must admit, Master. You fly like all the kath hounds of Dantooine were chasing you.”

“I am an excellent pilot,” Ahsoka sniffed, settling herself into the co-pilot chair with a grin. “Trust me, Obi-Wan. One day you’ll see. I am one of the best pilots in the galaxy. Second only to Master Skywalker himself. And Master Plo.”

“Was Master Skywalker a better pilot than Master Plo?” Obi-Wan asked, curious as he took the handoff from the hangar bay control and gracefully guided their ship out into early morning Coruscant air traffic. “Somehow I never pictured your Outer Rim exploits involving dogfights
between small fighters.”

“He was,” Ahsoka chuckled and decided to the end that particular strand of the conversation there. “So… did you bring your entire room or just most of it?”

“You told me to pack anything I felt might be useful, so I did,” Obi-Wan explained, shrugging as their ship climbed up into the atmosphere. “Although I don’t have an undercover civilian outfit like I saw you packing. We’ll need to purchase one for me when we get there.”

Ahsoka shook her head. “We’re not going undercover and besides, the best way for you to go undercover on Mandalore if you wanted to would be to get yourself some armor and a bucket to wear.”

“A bucket?” Obi-Wan asked, glancing over at his master. “I don’t understand.”

Wincing as Rex’s words slipped out of her mouth, Ahsoka waved off Obi-Wan’s confusion. “Sorry. It’s slang for helmet in some parts of the Rim. Usually referring to a Mandalorian helmet.”

“Oh!” Obi-Wan nodded as they cleared the atmosphere and were given permission by the Coruscant Planetary Authority to depart. “Did you encounter many Mandalorian bounty hunters on the Outer Rim?”

Ahsoka smiled to herself as memories of Rex and the rest of the 501st came to her mind, followed by Sabine, her brightly colored armor and rest of the _Ghost_ crew. She settled back in her chair and nodded. “I knew a few. They were good people.”

“Well, that’s reassuring,” Obi-Wan replied and engaged the hyperdrive, vaulting them into the blue-white swirl of lightspeed.

Mandalore was a wasteland, dry, barren and dotted occasionally by domed cities that clung tenaciously to life.

Obi-Wan had never seen anything like it before.

Ahsoka took over piloting their ship once they dropped out of hyperspace. She had spent the majority of their travel reading through his datapad and one of her own, scribbling notes to herself when they weren’t debating over the exact nature of their mission orders.

He had argued that there was an unspoken mandate in the orders, to assist the Duchess in any way possible to bring peace to the wartorn Mandalorian people. His master had insisted that such diplomacy was simply not possible and that they were only there to protect the Duchess Satine as requested.

“But why send us if not to help?” Obi-Wan asked one night as a particularly heinous-looking pod race quietly roared in the background. “Why would the Republic send two Jedi to Mandalore of all places if they weren’t trying to force the Mandalorians to end their civil war?”

“I think whoever requested aid didn’t expect the Senate to send us,” Ahsoka sighed as she watched the pod race. “And I don’t think we should expect a warm welcome, either.”
“Sundari central control, this is Republic vessel 2378,” Ahsoka announced over the com. 
“Requesting permission and a landing vector.”

A cool, sharp voice returned his master’s request. “Republic vessel 2378 you are cleared for landing 
on pad 4017 and we are sending the vector now.”

Obi-Wan read the vector aloud as it came through and Ahsoka altered their course accordingly. They 
finished the rest of the flight in silence, both wrapped up in their own thoughts.

He knew something was bothering his master but he couldn’t divine what it was. Unlike her dark 
moods, when Obi-Wan could tell Ahsoka was tormenting herself with memories of her master, this 
was new and different. If he had to describe his master’s current behavior, he would have labeled it 
as nervous and worried.

What on Mandalore was causing his normally cheerful and unflappable master such anxiety?

After a perfect landing, Ahsoka took a deep breath and gave Obi-Wan a smile that looked more like 
a grimace. “We’re here!”

“Do you think the Duchess will come to meet us?” Obi-Wan asked, following Ahsoka back to the 
boarding ramp.

“Maybe?” Ahsoka shrugged, holding her hands up. “But I doubt it. Satine Kryze is the head of state. 
She’s probably too busy trying to run the government and fight a civil war to come greet us.”

As it turned out, there was a small greeting party of highly ranked Mandalorian nobles, one of them a 
tall blond man with a goatee and violet eyes. Ahsoka seemed to look over each of them before they 
stepped out from under their cruiser, Obi-Wan following close behind her.

“Welcome, Master Jedi,” one of the envoys said, stepping forward. The man was garbed in a grey 
and gold and he bowed low. “I am Tiberon Vizula, of House Vizula. Welcome to Mandalore.”

“We are honored to accept your invitation,” Ahsoka said, bowing to Tiberon Vizula and the other 
assembled dignitaries. “I am Knight Ahsoka Tano and this is my padawan learner, Obi-Wan Kenobi. 
We were sent by the Republic to help aid in the protection of the Duchess Satine Kryze?”

Tiberon nodded, his mouth pulled into a frown as he gestured for Ahsoka and Obi-Wan to follow 
him toward a waiting air skiff. “Yes, I know. I apologize for my bluntness, Knight Tano, but I do not 
think the Duchess will approve of your presence here. While the Duchess has the utmost faith in her 
House Guards, there are others in her court who are not so… idealistic. They were the ones who 
requested additional assistance.”

“And what are your views on our presence?” Ahsoka asked, just as blunt as Tiberon Vizula had been. 
Obi-Wan would have been shocked but he was used to his master’s unorthodox approaches to 
diplomacy. Knowledge of a culture and a people were good but following your gut and the will of 
the Force was better.

Tiberon shook his head and chuckled. “I told her that the Republic wouldn’t be foolish enough to 
send jetii to protect a Mandalorian duchess and yet here you are. And with a jetii adi’ka to boot.”

Obi-Wan wanted to bristle at being called a child but that would do them no good at the present 
moment. He took a deep breath and reminded himself that he could only control his reactions to 
Mandalorians and he was not going to let some tall blond man with impressive cheekbones make 
him feel like an initiate.
“Obi-Wan is quite capable of taking care of himself,” Ahsoka explained, glancing back at him with a warm expression on her face. The last of the welcoming group took a seat on the air skiff and they were off, being whisked away into the domed city of Sundari. “And he won’t stand out on Mandalore as much as I will.”

“Another reason to question the judgement of the Republic,” Tiberon pointed out with an arch look. “Knight Tano, I know you mean well but we’re more than capable of protecting our own.”

“I’m sure you are,” Ahsoka said, arms folded over her chest, her head tilted to the side. “But all the same, we would like to help in anyway we can. Even if it’s just to report back to the Senate that our assistance has been refused. I’m sure that will be a simple enough report to make.”

Obi-Wan glanced back at Tiberon Vizla, watching him lean back in his seat and turn his gaze to the grey-haired man sitting next to him. They began to have a conversation and Obi-Wan watched them as he sent a thought to his master.

What caused that reaction, Master?

_The Republic doesn’t like it when its member systems rebuff its… overtures of assistance._ Ahsoka explained, the faintest heat of annoyance in her mental voice. _Mandalore and the Republic haven’t always gotten along but these New Mandalorians that have come into power place a new emphasis on getting along with the Republic. They know that turning down this generous offer of Jedi assistance might be viewed by the Senate as a slap in the face._

Obi-Wan nodded, glancing around at the assembled dignitaries. _So if they let us help, the Duchess looks weak but if they don’t let us help, Mandalore looks ungrateful in the eyes of the larger galaxy._

_Somebody wants to make the Duchess’s life very difficult,_ Ahsoka observed as their skiff flew further and further into Sundari.

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After arriving at an elegantly but severely decorated complex that Tiberon explained was the seat of House Kryze, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan were shown into a bright and airy room ringed with windows and the ceiling made entirely of smaller windows framed with geometric designs. At the far end of the room was a raised dais with a chair on it and seated there, surrounded by an honor guard and her ruling council, was the Duchess Satine Kryze.

She was much younger and softer in the face than the last time Ahsoka saw her but that sharp piercing gaze was still there, as was the air of regal authority. To her right stood a younger girl, her hair a darker strawberry blonde in comparison to Satine’s platinum locks, and it took Ahsoka a moment to realize that it was Bo-Katan, who she had last seen as the leader of the Nite Owls.

Obi-Wan was surprised to see just how much younger the Duchess looked in person compared to the holos he had studied. She couldn’t have been any older than he was and the way her hands were curled up in her lap told him that she was far more worried about meeting them than they were of meeting her.

Tiberon Vizla stepped out from behind them both and announced their presence. “Your Grace? May I present Knight Ahsoka Tano and her Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

“Come forward,” the Duchess commanded, her voice a little too sharp but not unpleasant as both
Jedi slowly advanced toward her illuminated throne and came to a stop at a respectful distance.

Both bowed in unison as Ahsoka took the lead, using her warmest and kindest voice. “Duchess Satine Kryze, we have been sent by the Republic to assist your security forces in… ensuring your continued safety.”

Satine looked down at the two of them, her face impassive but her blue eyes burning a hole right between theirs. “I know why you are here and while I appreciate the Republic’s offer of assistance, I am confident in the ability of my guards to protect me. Surely there is some other crisis that requires your presence elsewhere?”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan exchanged a look before Ahsoka responded. “Your Grace, my padawan and I are not here to replace your own House guards. We are here to supplement them, to work with you and your people to ensure your safety.”

“Tell me, Knight Tano,” Satine said, her chin held high as she clutched the arms of her throne, trying to mask her nervousness. “Why should I agree to your presence in my court? I believe in pacifism, in bringing an end to Mandalore’s violent history. You are Jedi, a group of people who have no problem resorting to violence in pursuit of your so-called peace.”

Ahsoka’s smile wavered for only a moment before she answered. “We are, of course, here at your pleasure, your Grace. If you wish us to leave you need only say so and Obi-Wan and I will report back to the Senate that our assistance was not required.”

Satine frowned and stood up from her chair. “Is that a threat, Knight Tano?”

Obi-Wan’s eyes widened in shock and affront. How dare this Mandalorian child ruler accuse his master of threatening her? Did she not understand that they were there to protect her? We are here as a courtesy!

“It is a statement of fact,” Ahsoka replied, holding her hands out. “Someone in your court requested our presence, your Grace. Perhaps you might employ us to discover who it was that went behind your back to make such a request.”

Obi-Wan watched as the Ruling Council and the assembled nobles inhaled sharply at his master’s observation. Ahsoka had subtly accused someone amongst them of, if not treason, then at least a lack of confidence in their fellow partisans which was almost as bad as overt treason.

Satine looked away and for a moment, Obi-Wan saw the facade of implacable durasteel drop, revealing a torn and scared young girl, unsure of what to do next. She met his eyes and he gave her what he hoped was an encouraging smile.

“Duchess Satine,” Ahsoka spoke, take a few steps forwards, holding her arms open. “We’re here to help you. In any way that we can. We do not have loyalties or vendettas. There is no secret plan by the Republic to interfere in Mandalore’s ongoing conflict. We an impartial third party. We want to help you. Please, let us do our job and I promise you, you’ll barely notice us.”

Satine looked down at her hands and then took a deep breath. “Fine. I will accept your assistance for now, Knight Tano. Welcome to Mandalore.”
War is Not Civil

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi have been sent to the war-ravaged planet of Mandalore to protect the head of state, Duchess Satine Kryze. Their reception is a chilly one but Ahsoka and Obi-Wan are determined to protect the Duchess from those who would do her ill.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So what do you think of the Duchess Satine?” Ahsoka asked Obi-Wan after they collected their bags and were shown to a nondescript apartment within the Kryze complex that would be their home for the foreseeable future. She dropped her bag in the living room and walked around, inspecting the kitchen and small dining area.

Obi-Wan emerged from his room, thinking about her question, and flopped down onto the couch with a sullen huff. “She is young, vaguely pretty, and discourteous.”

“Discourteous?” Ahsoka replied with a lift of her brows. “She’s stuck between a rock and a hard place, Obi-Wan. I think she did well, all things considered.”

She watched, bemused, as Obi-Wan Kenobi, her mild-mannered and excruciatingly polite padawan, rolled his eyes at Ahsoka’s observation.

“If the Duchess did not want us here then why did someone within her court beg the Republic for help?” Obi-Wan muttered, his arms folded over his chest. “It doesn’t make any sense.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Ahsoka sighed softly, walking over to squeeze Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “But that’s why we’re here. To protect the Duchess from those who would harm her and the people of Mandalore.”

“The people who don’t want us here?” Obi-Wan grumbled, scowling down at his boots.

Ahsoka screwed her lips to the side and thought for a moment how to respond to her padawan’s sullen mood. She understood his anger, having felt it herself when she was Obi-Wan’s age and serving at Anakin’s side.

“There will come a time when we will have to go to worlds where Jedi aren’t welcome,” Ahsoka finally said, her voice soft. “There will be people that hate and fear us because they don’t understand us or they just don’t like Jedi. And we will still have to do our job, to bring peace where we can, to help the injured, and protect the weak. Even if they don’t like us.”

Obi-Wan let out a sullen puff of air before he sat up a little straighter. “Yes, Master. You are right, of course. Forgive my childish behavior.”

“You weren’t being childish,” Ahsoka replied, her voice warm. “You were being defensive. You felt
like Satine was insulting me and the Jedi, didn’t you?”

Shrugging, Obi-Wan glanced off to the side. “That… may have some validity, Master. But I shall endeavor to keep it under control. A true Jedi does not allow their personal feelings to get in the way of their work.”

Smiling, Ahsoka took a seat opposite Obi-Wan. “You know what I think would help? A little meditation to ground us both. What do you think?”

She watched as several emotions flickered over Obi-Wan’s face, first a teenager’s disgust then shame, followed quickly by determination and an attempt at putting on the right face for his master. Ahsoka wondered if, long ago, Anakin had seen something similar when he told her she couldn’t go with him to rescue Master Piell on Lola Sayu.

“Yes, of course, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan said, taking a deep breath and nodding. “I’m sure some meditation would be very helpful.”

Ahsoka arched a brow at her padawan but decided that as much as Obi-Wan might not want to meditate or find it boring, she knew it would help him.

Moments like this were particularly challenging for Ahsoka. She wanted so much to be a positive influence on Obi-Wan’s life, to help him find the light and happiness she had never really been able to sense in him when she served with Master Obi-Wan.

And at the same time, she knew that as his master, sometimes it was more important for her to be firm and consistent with Obi-Wan. Especially at times like this when his teenager’s inclination was to skip boring meditation for something more interesting, like walking around Sundari.

*I guess today I have to be Master Obi-Wan.*

“Come on,” Ahsoka said, standing up and pushing her chair back so they would have some clear floor space to meditate on. “After this we can take a walk and see about getting you some civilian clothes to wear.”

Obi-Wan’s face lit up at the promise of his first set of undercover clothes and master and padawan found it much easier to meditate after that.

The next day Ahsoka and Obi-Wan were up at dawn, getting ready for a full day of bodyguard duty for the Duchess when they were summoned to breakfast by Tiber Vizsla. Once they were ready to leave, he lead them through the Kryze compound, a surprisingly airy place considering everything seemed to be made of durasteel, duracrete and glass squares.

*Make sure to memorize our way back to the room,* Ahsoka thought as she glanced over at Obi-Wan. *You need to know the way back in case our duties separate us.*

Nodding, Obi-Wan agreed. *Yes, Master. Although I am surprised the Duchess has requested our presence so early.*

*Perhaps the Duchess did not feel free to convey her intentions to us yesterday in front of her supporters,* Ahsoka mused as they passed under a particularly beautiful glass tile mosaic that
depicted Mandalore in a better time, before the war and resulting ecological catastrophe that had
turned the planet into a barren wasteland.

After passing through security at the main building of the Kryze compound, Count Vizsla showed
them into a small room set off in a corner of the large building. One wall was covered in beautiful
stained glass and there, standing at the head of a long table, was the Duchess herself.

“Good morning, Master Jedis,” Satine said, her voice more confident and her posture a bit more
relaxed than it had been the day before. She smiled at Tiber, who bowed respectfully. “Thank you,
Count Vizsla, for bringing our guests to me. You are free to return to your duties.”

Count Vizsla glanced between Satine and the Jedi before nodding. “It was my pleasure, Your Grace.
I will be in my offices, if you need me.”

“Of course,” Satine smiled, a warm expression that Ahsoka noted didn’t quite make it to her blue
eyes. Tiber Vizsla left the room with little fanfare and once he was gone, Satine seemed to relax and
gesticled to the table. “Please. Sit down and have something to eat. We should have some measure of
privacy here.”

“Thank you, Duchess,” Ahsoka said, shooting a look at Obi-Wan, who had the good sense to smile
at the young woman they were sworn to protect. “How can we be of service this morning?”

“You can dine with me,” Satine replied with a smile that was a touch too sharp and nervous. “If you
have not already eaten. Which, if you have, then I beg your pardon while I catch up with my own
meal.”

Her words came out in a rush and Ahsoka could feel the anxiety coming from the young ruler in
buffeting waves. Her heart ached for poor Satine and the position she found herself in. This was not
the brave, strong-willed ruler that had defied the Republic and her own greedy civil servants to
protect her people but a young girl, haphazardly thrown into a position of power not yet ready to
navigate the tumult she found herself in.

Just like Padme on Naboo.

“We haven’t eaten yet,” Ahsoka said, her voice kind and her smile genuine. “And I don’t know if
you can hear it but Obi-Wan’s stomach has been growling since he woke up this morning.”

Obi-Wan shot a look at Ahsoka and the Force was suddenly full of spines and the echo of an
affronted “huff” before that was washed away in a wave of sheepish agreement as his gut pleaded
for sustenance. “Pardon me, Your Grace. My master speaks the truth. As does my stomach
apparently.”

Satine let out a laugh, a clear, feminine peal of humor as she smiled at Obi-Wan, who turned a
startled shade of crimson. Ahsoka looked at the two of them and grinned as the two Jedi moved to sit
at the end of the table, a respectful distance away from the duchess.

“No!” Satine said, waving a hand. “Please! There is no need to stand on formality here. I did not
invite you here so early for an official visit.”

“Yes, of course, Your Grace,” Ahsoka nodded and she and Obi-Wan took up spots to the right and
left of Satine, who sank down into her chair with a relieved sigh.

“How do you find your rooms?” Satine asked as serving droids emerged from a side door carrying
several trays of fruits and pastries. She instructed the Jedi to take whatever they liked and Obi-Wan
proceeded to fill up half his his plate with things that the Jedi Temple did not consider part of a
nutritious breakfast. “Was everything to your liking?”

“Oh yes, of course,” Ahsoka answered as she took a little of everything offered for her meal. “Jedi don’t need much but that doesn’t mean we don’t appreciate kindness when it is offered to us.”

“Oh good!” Satine sighed, her plate just as full of food as Obi-Wan’s. “I’m glad. I did not want the first Jedi to visit Mandalore in a generation to be treated poorly. My parents would never forgive me if I was rude to guests.”

“Well you can relax, Your Grace,” Ahsoka said, sipping her caf. “We are quite comfortable. Aren’t we, Obi-Wan?”

“Yes!” Obi-Wan said, the word coming out fast and awkward. “Er… Thank you very much for your hospitality, Your Grace.”

Ahsoka glanced over at her padawan, bemusement on her face. Are you feeling okay, Obi-Wan?

He returned her concern with a mental grumble and an annoyed, Yes. I’m quite fine, Master.

“Well!” Satine said briskly, gesturing to the serving droids for the breakfast entrees to be brought out. “What are your plans for your time here? Are you going to follow me around like brown shadows? I should like to know so that I can inform Count Vizsla and my security forces.”

“Our plan is for me to accompany you and your guards as you go about your business while Obi-Wan blends in as a member of your entourage,” Ahsoka explained, accepting a delicious-looking lavendar omelette from the last serving droid in line.

“How are you going to hide his braid?” Satine asked, looking over at Obi-Wan, who was turning red from the ears down as he shoved a mouthful of omelette into his mouth in lieu of talking.

“He’ll wear a hat,” Ahsoka shrugged. “But more importantly, we were hoping you could provide us some intel on who might want to see you harmed, Your Grace?”

The strained but cheerful air of their early morning meeting was punctured and Satine collapsed for a moment before she drew herself up again. “They call themselves ‘Kyramla Kal’ which loosely translates to Basic as ‘Culling Blade’ or some such tawdry nonsense. They fancy that they know the true will of the people. That only they know the right path forward for Mandalore. They are made up of old, formerly powerful noble houses that have fallen into insignificance and are seeking to regain their former glory.”

Satine was quiet for some time and both Jedi watched as she curled her hands into fists and her cheeks flushed with anger. “They are wrong. How can they not see what their warmongering and butchery has done? Mandalore was a beautiful planet once and they have scoured the very life from it! Our wars with the Republic, with the Jedi? They were pointless! There is no glory on Mandalore. Only a people too stubborn to reject the heritage forced upon them by blood-thirsty ancestors.”

Ahsoka looked over at Obi-Wan, whose round-eyed gaze was locked on Satine’s bowed face. She watched her padawan reach out and cover one of Satine’s hands with his and squeeze it. “I’m so sorry, Duchess.”

Satine glanced up at Obi-Wan, her own expression shocked and for a moment the two teenagers seemed to forget Ahsoka was in the room. She turned her attention back to her purple breakfast, trying to give them a bit of privacy for however long their wordless connection was going to last.

A chime at the far door and the return of the serving droids with caf and tea broke the spell and Obi-
Wan and Satine quickly retreated to the safety of their roles as Jedi Padawan and Duchess.

“Would your head of security be willing to share their information about this Kyramla Kal with Obi-Wan and I?” Ahsoka asked, gratefully accepting a hot mug of caf.

Satine accepted some tea and nodded. “Yes. I’m sure Count Vizsla would be happy to. And I must apologize on his behalf, if his greeting was a bit cold. Uncle Tiber does not approve of your presence here. Officially, anyway.”

“Uncle?” Ahsoka echoed.

Satine nodded with a smile. “Oh yes. All of the great Mandalorian houses are related. My mother came from Clan Wren in House Vizsla. Her sister married Uncle Tiber.”

“So the claim to the throne goes through your father’s line?” Ahsoka clarified.

“Yes. My father was the Duke of Mandalore and when he and my mother died the title passed to me,” Satine murmured, her gaze lost in painful memories and her hands twisted into white-knuckled knots. “It… it was a terrible loss to our family. We’re still looking for the murderers but Uncle Tiber is not hopeful.”

Ahsoka had always assumed that Satine’s parents had died of natural causes and it had never occurred to Ahsoka that Satine came to throne through after assassination. Now she wondered how she could have been so blind. Mandalore’s civil war had been going on for at least a few years and for Satine to have been crowned the head of state implied that everyone in the line of succession ahead of her had to have passed into the Force.

*Now that I think about it, Obi-Wan mentioned it in his mission prep.*

“We are so sorry for your loss, Your Grace,” Ahsoka said, bowing her head. “I hope one day you find the ones responsible.”

Ahsoka felt the words roll of her tongue, polite and ungainly. She wanted to say that she and Obi-Wan would help her find the murderers, that they would bring justice to the Kryze family and Mandalore. She could feel her blood boiling and the white-hot anger injustice always filled her with. But they weren’t on Mandalore to solve a murder.

They were on Mandalore to prevent another one.

“Perhaps the perpetrators will be revealed during our time here, Your Grace,” Obi-Wan offered, his voice soft and kind.

Satine looked up at Obi-Wan, her eyes shining with unshed tears as she looked from him to Ahsoka. When she spoke it was the voice of a heartbroken girl who had lost her family far too early in life. “You think so?”

Ahsoka looked over at Obi-Wan, her mouth pulled into a thin line. *Obi-Wan, we are here to protect the Duchess! Not find out who murdered her family!*

Obi-Wan returned Ahsoka’s look with a raised chin and a clenched jaw. *It cannot hurt to keep our eyes and ears open, Master. And it stands to reason that the murderers were in league with this Crimson Blade or whatever they’re called.*

The silence was growing too long and Ahsoka relented, turning her gaze back to Satine.
“Officially we are here to protect you, Your Grace,” Ahsoka began, steeling herself to play the heartless adult in the scene. But then Satine’s face fell and all of Ahsoka’s good intentions flew out the window. “And if the Force wills it, we might even find out who’s behind your parents’ assassination.”

The teary but hopeful smile that broke out on Satine’s face and the proud, determined grin on Obi-Wan’s almost made Ahsoka forget just how impossible this situation would make such a thing.

*Stars, I hope I don’t regret saying that.*

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan spent the rest of the day following the Duchess as she went about her daily activities.

First, there was her meeting with the Ruling Council, which was long and full of arguments about the best way to respond to a recent attack in the city of Feldari. Ahsoka stood to the side, far enough away from Satine so that it did not appear that the young ruler was being manipulated by a Jedi, but she was close enough that a Force-powered leap would have by Satine’s side in a heartbeat.

Obi-Wan was dressed as a page and his day was full of running to and fro with messages to Count Vizsla, the kitchen, and to other nobles who had working areas within the Kryze compound. He learned quickly that the Duchess and her family had a portion of the compound restricted to only family and the most trusted of allies and servants. The rest of the building was used for the business of governing, with offices for the Ruling Council, the head of security and the diplomatic corps, which were few in number but energetic and seemed devoted to Satine’s cause of peace. Larger offices, like the Planetary Authority, the Judiciary and the Lower Legislative House were located in another section of Sundari called the Forum.

Lunch was a busy affair, with the Ruling Council staying to dine and continuing their arguments over their meal. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan didn’t get a chance to eat until Satine dismissed the Council and retreated to her personal rooms for lessons with her tutor. She generously had food brought for the Jedi, who sat quietly in another corner while Satine studied history, mathematics, and medical aid.

Once her lessons were done, Satine returned back to the public eye to listen to petitions from her people. Only a few key members of the Ruling Council was present, including Count Vizsla, whose advice Satine often sought out.

Obi-Wan ended up standing at attention next to a young nobleman named Almec. He seemed nice enough to Obi-Wan and didn’t seem to mind giving directions when Obi-Wan didn’t seem to understand where he was supposed to go.

Satine sat through two hours of petitions before breaking for dinner and then there was a meeting with her security forces after that before the Duchess was finally finished for the day. It was an exhausting routine that left Satine little personal time but she spent what she had in the evening with her younger sister, who was distrustful of the Jedi.

After being dismissed, Obi-Wan and Ahsoka retired to their rooms, both exhausted from a long day of keeping watch and trying to prevent something they weren’t even sure was going to happen.

“My feet are killing me,” Obi-Wan groaned as he collapsed onto the small sofa, arms and legs
splayed outward. “I think I might already have half of the complex memorized, Master.”

“Good to know,” Ahsoka smiled down at her padawan, reaching out to ruffle his soft tawny hair set free from his page’s cap. “Would you like first crack at the shower?”

Obi-Wan stood up with a yawn and made his way over to the refresher. “Did you hear anything today?”

“No,” Ahsoka shook her head as she poured herself a glass of water and took over Obi-Wan’s seat on the couch. “Culling Blade launched an attack on Feldari and there is fear they are preparing for a larger attack on Sundari in the near future. House Vizsla is having problems with House Seeres over governorship of Concordia. And there continues to be internecine violence throughout the system. No one seems to agree on a solution so the opposition grows bolder and it makes Satine look weak.”

“Which makes her pacifist government look weak and unable to protect average citizens,” Obi-Wan nodded in between loud yawns. “Pardon me, Master. I really need to take a shower and get some sleep.”

“Good idea, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, finding her padawan’s yawns contagious. “We could both use some rest. We’ll come at this fresh tomorrow morning.”

The next six weeks quickly passed in the same routine. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan would join Satine for breakfast, discuss their findings and activities for the day and receive the Duchess’ schedule as well. Ahsoka would stand guard, trying to be as unobtrusive as a tall, brightly colored Togruta Jedi could be, while Obi-Wan would hide in plain sight, listening to people who felt themselves above the young pages and servants than kept the complex politics and diplomacy of Mandalore functioning on a day-to-day basis.

Every five days, they would take a day off and wander amongst the people of Sundari, both in their civilian clothes, trying to get a feel for the mood of the people. Obi-Wan took to calling himself “Ben” after a character from a Mandalorian fairy tale and claimed that he was simply escorting the visiting Jedi around the city, per the Ruling Council’s instruction. Obi-Wan had blended in so well that the idea that Ahsoka had arrived with a padawan learner was mostly forgotten by almost everyone save Satine, Tiber Vizsla and few others in the ruling Council.

“So? Any new leads on the bombing that killed the late Duke of Mandalore?” Ahsoka asked one day as they strolled through a market, nearly two months into their stay when the boredom of peace was making both of them tense. “From what I gathered, it was the Duke’s death that set off this new round of fighting.”

Obi-Wan chewed on a skewer of fragrant spiced meat as he mused. “According the guards, the Duke’s speeder wasn’t supposed to be on that street when it was attacked. It was a last-minute change of plans. The road to the Forum was blocked because of an accident and they took a different route to the Lower Legislative House. That’s when the attack happened.”

Nodding, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan continued down the street, ignoring the wide-eyed stares as they passed. Having given up trying to blend in, Ahsoka had instead chosen to wear her sabers proudly and had engaged more than one excited child in a mock duel during their weekly excursions. “So... walk me through your theory. I can feel it tickling the back of my mind.”
Obi-Wan bowed his head shyly. “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to intrude.”

“It’s fine,” Ahsoka replied, giving Obi-Wan a gentle elbow. “And I always want you to feel that you can be open with me but I don’t want to invade your personal space, Ben. Do you understand? You don’t have to share everything with me. It’s even all right to have negative thoughts and feelings. It’s how you act on those thoughts and feelings that dictates your destiny.”

“Yes, I understand.” Obi-Wan replied, his cheeks red but his spirit calm and tucked away behind an opaque mental wall. “Have I… have I been broadcasting?”

Ahsoka quirked her lips into a half smile. “Just a little. I will say I’m glad to see you’ve come around on Satine.”

Obi-Wan’s eyes went wide and round and his blush grew to cover his whole face, his ears and neck in short order. Ahsoka wondered if her poor padawan’s toes were red too as the Force was filled with a wash of embarrassment.

Ah. So you are sweet on Satine! I knew it!

“Yes, well, I… er…” Obi-Wan rubbed at the back of his neck, frantically trying to come up with something to say that would explain whatever thoughts or feelings his master might have accidentally been privy to. “You see… The Duchess is…”

“The Duchess is a lovely young woman,” Ahsoka cut Obi-Wan off with a smile. “And let’s leave it at that for now. You still haven’t told me your theory.”

Obi-Wan nodded, his voice rushed and strangled as he began, eager to change the topic of conversation. “I think it’s safe to assume that the accident that closed down the main thoroughfare to the Legislative House was arranged. If this Culling Blade is as ruthless as Satine says they are, I’m sure they wouldn’t bat an eye at killing civilians in their pursuit of power.”

“That is a logical conclusion,” Ahsoka agreed and stepped over to another vendor’s stall to buy them both a bottle of tea. “Vor entye. So Culling Blade creates a distraction that forces the Duke and his convoy to take another way towards the building. How do they know which route the security forces will take? There has to be at least four different approaches to the building and that doesn’t include simply flying up and over the traffic in the air speeder.”

“If there was a mole within the security forces then they would know which one was the preferred secondary route,” Obi-Wan explained, taking a long swig of his tea and waving to a clutch of Mandalorian children who were pointing at Ahsoka and giggling with delight. “You’re quite popular with children.”

“It’s the stripes,” Ahsoka laughed, waving at the children before she reached out with a tendril of the Force to float a few fruits from a nearby stand into the children’s outstretched hands. They let out squeals of glee and ran back down the street while she walked over to the seller and paid for the fruit before they continued on. “So you suspect a mole in the security forces?”

“It’s the only thing that makes sense,” Obi-Wan said, his arms folded over his chest. “I know the Duchess believes they’re loyal but… it doesn’t add up. If we could get access to the crime scene, examine the evidence of the attack and watch the holo footage, we might be able to get a better idea of what happened. It might even lead us to whoever is behind the threat on Satine’s life.”

Ahsoka nodded. “I agree. I’ll ask Count Vizsla for the footage tomorrow.”
Count Tiber Vizsla was only too happy to oblige Ahsoka’s request. “If there is a traitor in our midst I want them found immediately,” the Count said, jabbing in his instructions into a data pad as Ahsoka stood in his office. “These monsters must be caught. If it hadn’t been for an illness, Satine and Bo would have been in that speeder as well! I cannot believe my fellow Mandalorians would stoop to murdering children!”

“Some people find change terrifying,” Ahsoka sighed, shaking her head sadly. “Fear and anger are a dangerous combination.”

“Isn’t that what you Jedi are always saying?” Tiber asked, looking exhausted. “Fear leads to the Dark Side?”

Smiling weakly, Ahsoka nodded. “Pretty much. Are you making any headway with the Culling Blade?”

“Not as much as I would like,” Tiber groaned, leaning back in his chair and pinching the bridge of his nose. “As near as we can tell, it’s a small, fanatical group that is dedicated to the old ways. They all have helmets and armor so it makes identifying them and the Houses or Clans they serve all the more difficult.”

“I thought Mandalorians painted their armors to reflect their loyalties,” Ahsoka asked, remembering the many designs from the 501st and Sabine’s own brightly colored second skin. “Are you saying they’re hiding their allegiance?”

“It’s possible,” Tiber said, pulling the datapad from the terminal when the download was complete. “I’m sure there is more than one House that is trying to play both sides of the fence. They’re waiting to see if House Kryze falls in the chaos of a civil war.”

“And who stands to benefit most if House Kryze falls?” Ahsoka asked, accepting the datapad and heading to the door.

Tiber Vizsla let out a heavy sigh. “Unfortunately, I do. If the ducal line of Kryze is extinguished, then House Vizsla is next in line for the throne.”

“Oh,” Ahsoka murmured, remembering the hard and angry face of another Vizsla from her past. “Count Vizsla, forgive me for asking but, do you have a son?”

“Yes,” the count replied with a proud smile. “My son’s name is Pre. He is Satine’s cousin. Why? Do you need to speak with him?”

“No,” Ahsoka shook her head and keyed open the door. “I was just curious. I think Obi-Wan mentioned him a few days ago. That’s all. Thank you for the evidence, Count Vizsla.”

“You’re welcome, Master Jedi,” Tiber Vizsla said, standing up as Ahsoka left the room.

A week past their second month on Mandalore found Ahsoka and Obi-Wan traveling with the Duchess and her entourage to a hospital, where security forces and civilians were recovering from
injuries relating to Culling Blade attacks. The hospital had recently been renamed the “Duke and Duchess Kryze Memorial Hospital” after Satine’s parents and there was going to be a public dedication ceremony held a little bit before noon.

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan spent the morning going over the route the Duchess would be traveling with Tiber Vizsla and his lieutenants. Once everyone was assured that the route was protected from every possible angle and that “Ben” would be riding in Satine’s speeder as an extra precaution, the group broke up to prepare for the event.

“I’m not sure how I feel about this, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured as he watched Ahsoka secure his arm holsters for his sabers. “I don’t think the Duchess will approve of lightsabers in her immediate vicinity.”

“Well, she’ll just have to make an exception for you,” Ahsoka replied, leaning backwards to inspect her work. “Put your coat on and make sure it works.”

Obi-Wan did as his master instructed, carefully sliding his arms into the sleeves before buttoning the whole thing up. He took a step back and with a sharp flick of his arms downwards, his two sabers fell into his hands, ready for action.

“That’s… most impressive,” he flushed a little, grinning down at his hands. “I feel like I’m in a holo drama.”

“You better get used to it,” Ahsoka chuckled as she hooked her sabers to her belt and called her robe from its peg. “C’mon, Ben. It’s time to go.”

“Yes, Master Jetii,” Obi-Wan winked as he slid his sabers back up into his sleeve holsters and followed his master out the door. “How do you think my accent sounds, Master? I’ve been working on trying to sound more natural.”

Heading out into the bright main courtyard of the Kryze compound, Ahsoka smiled back at her padawan. “I think you sound much better than I do. But then again, languages weren’t really my thing. That was always something my grandmaster specialized in.”

“The one who looked like me?” Obi-Wan asked as they came to the edge of the crowd preparing for the visit to the hospital.

“The very same,” Ahsoka replied and gave Obi-Wan a little salute as she gave her a bow and seemed to vanish into the crowd of pages, servants and guards. Ahsoka headed over to the speeder that held Tiber Vizsla, which was going to be first in line in the convoy heading to the hospital. “Is everything ready to go?”

“Yes,” Tiber said, looking up at the dome overhead. “Every access point is covered and there’s been no chatter lately from Culling Blade so I think we’re safe. And we have twice the guards we did when Satine’s father was attacked, for an extra measure of security.”

Ahsoka nodded and took her seat to the right of the Count. “I’m sure everything will be all right.”

“Is that your Jedi senses talking or just wishful thinking?” Tiber smiled, his pale blue eyes crinkling warmly.

Taking a moment to close her eyes, Ahsoka reached out and felt a stillness in the Force. While her nerves were jangling with worry and anxiety, there was nothing obvious that she could sense.

“Probably a little bit of both,” Ahsoka replied, opening her eyes. “When are we heading out?”
“As soon as Satine joins us,” Tiber explained, turning back to the landspeeder his niece would be riding in. “We’ve sent Bo to visit with my wife’s family for the weekend. There’s been talk of sending her to stay on Kalevala until our current strife is over.”

“That’s on the outer edge of the system, isn’t it?” Ahsoka asked, watching Satine arrive in her full regalia, blue headdress and peace lilies included. Obi-Wan held open the door for the Duchess and offered the back of his arm for her to hold onto as she climbed into the vehicle. Once she was inside and seated comfortably with two of her guards, Obi-Wan lightly hopped into the passenger seat and the convoy was ready to move.

Obi-Wan had not seen a great deal of suffering and trauma in his short life but he was convinced that no matter what happened in his future, he would never forget touring the halls of the Duke of Mandalore Memorial Hospital.

One wing of the building was filled entirely with victims of attacks by Culling Blade and other partisans who disagreed with the Duchess and her government. There were men and women of various ages, some in bed covered in bandages, some assisted by nurses and the others by medical droids. As they passed down the line of wounded, Obi-Wan noticed that they all bore the scars of surprise attacks: broken bones, blaster wounds, and some were missing their limbs. There was a young man, only a few years older than Obi-Wan and Satine, who was struggling to stand upright on a new pair of mechanical legs that had recently been attached to the stumps of his thighs.

Beyond the first room was another room full of the critically injured, recovering in bacta tanks and in medical comas to spare them further suffering, and then a long row of rooms filled with wounded members of the ducal security force.

To a one, the injured soldiers did their best to smile for the young teenage ruler who came to see them, telling her jokes in Mandalorian and asking if she was free for a date. Satine laughed shyly and assured one of the more flirtatious ones that she would be happy to receive him at her palace once he was fully healed up.

“Finally! Something to live for!” the man announced to the cheers of his fellows.

A few veterans nearly broke down in tears, taking Satine’s hand and squeezing it tightly as they explained to her how much her visit meant to them.

One older woman, possibly in her late thirties confided, “Thank you for coming, my Duchess. I served in your father’s guard since I left the Academy. I just… I mean… I’m so sor…”

Satine cut the woman off immediately, impulsively hugging her and whispering. “It’s not your fault. You did everything you could. My father would be proud of you and my mother would insist you recover. Consider it an order, my friend.”

“Thank you, Your Grace!”

Obi-Wan followed behind Satine, assisting the Duchess when necessary and keeping an eye out for anyone who looked like they wanted to take advantage of her kindness to cause more bloodshed.

“Ben,” Satine murmured as they emerged from a turbolift onto the second floor of the hospital, where they were going to visit some children who were suffering from cancer and other difficult
illnesses. “Have you seen much suffering in your... line of work?”

“Not like this,” Obi-Wan replied, offering the Duchess his arm in an acceptable form of public comfort. “Like you, I have had some medical field training but those men and women on the first floor? I have never seen anything like that.”

“It’s so... it’s so barbaric,” Satine finally managed to get out, her hand curling into the fabric of Obi-Wan’s sleeve. “Those men and women only wanted peace! They wanted to protect their fellow Mandalorians and these... these...”

“Dissidents?” Obi-Wan offered diplomatically, conscious of being out in public.

“Yes!” Satine whispered. “These dissidents see no problem in slaughtering them! It’s unbelievable! Have they no compassion in their hearts?”

Obi-Wan pursed his lips as they passed a droid pushing a large crate of linens towards a freight elevator. “They are afraid, Your Grace. They fear the future you wish to bring to Mandalore. They do not understand it and so they fear it.”

Satine shot Obi-Wan a look and he sensed he had said something that set the Duchess off. He was about to apologize for his words when they were welcomed into the children’s ward and all thoughts of war were forgotten.

The entire party, including Ahsoka and Count Vizsla, spent an hour in the children’s ward, with the Duchess playing games with the children who were healthy enough to move around and reading stories to those who were too sick to leave their beds. Everyone received new toys and clothes while their parents were each given some time to speak with the Duchess, to shake her hand and thank her for her visit. By the time they were done, the tension between Obi-Wan and Satine was gone.

The party headed back down to the front of the hospital, where a large dais had been built for the dedication ceremony. There was a special platform for Satine to sit on while the Senator representing Mandalore began the ceremony and gave a speech honoring the late Duke and Duchess. Then there was a small children’s choir that sang an old Mandalorian folk song and then another speech by the hospital’s director.

Obi-Wan spent his time standing at the edge of the ducal box, looking over at Satine every now and then, admiring the way her flaxen hair curled around the peace lilies that were woven into her headress. He wondered how heavy the whole thing was and if there was another head of state who had a formal outfit quite so elaborate.

The Naboo. Ahsoka commented from where she stood at the front of the stage, the level with the public crowd that had gathered. They take their formal dress very seriously on Naboo.

Obi-Wan saw an image of a petite brunette with a headress that looked like a crest of black feathers and glowing orange orbs, her face painted white and her upper lip stained in red complete with a drop of crimson on the lower one. He nodded in agree. You make an excellent point, Master. How much longer until this is over?

Shouldn’t be much more, Ahsoka’s reply came with a gentle gust of reassurance and calm. I’m just as bored as you are, Obi-Wan. Have patience. We’re almost done.

Obi-Wan nodded and turned his gaze back to Satine, who was standing up and walking to the podium to the rapturous applause of her people. He smiled and looked back at the building where an engraved bronziuion sign showing the new name of the hospital had just been unveiled.
“My fellow Mandalorians,” Satine began, her hands clutching tight to the podium for strength. “I am honored to be here with you, today, to remember my parents, Tristan and Livia Kryze.”

“My father was a kind and gentle man, someone who wanted to use his position to serve his fellow man. He and my mother always taught my sister and I that our purpose in life was to serve the people of Mandalore. They believed in peace. They believed in cooperation. And they believed that we as a people were more than our heritage!”

“My parents believed that Mandalore could be more than the home of warriors and mercenaries! They believed we could find a new path forward, a new way of being proud Mandalorians! I know, that if they were here today, if they could see all of you and feel your support the way I have, I know they would be so proud.”

Obi-Wan bowed his head as Satine struggled with the next line of her speech.

“I miss my mother and father,” Satine said, stumbling over the words as tears filled her eyes. “But I will never forget the lessons they taught me. Nor will I abandon the legacy they left me! Let this hospital stand as a memorial, not just to my mother and father but to all Mandalorians who have given their lives and paid the ultimate sacrifice for peace and a brighter future.”

As the crowd erupted into ecstatic applause, Satine took a step back from the podium, wiping away the tears that had run down her cheeks. She nodded her head in acknowledgement to her people and allowed a small smile on her face before she turned to leave the dais.

Obi-Wan caught her eye and gave her a warm nod of approval. He held out his hand for the Duchess to take as he led Satine towards the steps.

“That was a beautiful speech, Your Grace,” Obi-Wan said, a smile in his words if not on his face.

“You’re too kind, Ben,” Satine replied, glancing over at him shyly. “But I’m glad you approved all the same.”

They were nearly to Satine’s speeder when the north wing of the hospital exploded.

A fiery ball shot outward, throwing shrapnel, debris and ash into the shocked crowd. The harsh wail of sirens and alarms rising filled the air as people fled in a blind panic.

“NO!” Satine cried out trying to rush past her guards to help evacuate the wing that had been attacked.

Obi-Wan hurried after her, grabbing her hand and trying to pull her back to the safety of the speeder.

“No! Let me go, Ben!” Satine shouted, breaking Obi-Wan’s hold and shoving him backwards. “My people are helpless! I have to do something! There are children in there!”

_Master, where are you?_ Obi-Wan frantically called out to Ahsoka, who he had lost track of in the terror and tumult of the attack. He hurried after the Duchess, trying to keep her in sight. _I am trying to get Satine back to her speeder but she won’t go!_

Obi-Wan got a very clear image of smoke and fire and knew instinctively that his master was trying to help the security forces and first responders get to as many survivors as possible. _Make her, Obi-Wan. We have to get Satine to safety!_

Nodding, Obi-Wan inhaled sharply and caught up to Satine. He grabbed her by her waist and bodily
hauled her back to the speeder. “Satine, we have to get you to secure location. There’s nothing you can do for them now!”

“No! Please, Ben! I can’t leave them there! I cannot leave them to die in there!” Satine sobbed, struggling in vain. “You don’t understand! Please, Ben! Please let me go!”

“I can’t!” Obi-Wan grunted and managed to heave Satine fully into his arms and hurried back to the speeder. He handed the Duchess to the waiting security guards and vaulted on board, ordering the driver to activate the blaster shields. “Get us out of here! Now!”

They sped away, followed by other security vehicles and speeders, as the smoke in the background billowed ever higher.

Chapter End Notes

Oh dear. Oh dear oh dear oh dear...

Well this was a terrible downer ending of a chapter. It looks like the Mandalorian Civil War is about to heat up and Ahsoka and Obi-Wan are stuck in the middle of it. I hope Satine is all right and that this all gets wrapped up soon!

Right? >___>

Anyway, thank you for reading and for commenting and y’all have a wonderful week!

P.S. You can find me ranting and raving about Galaxy of Heroes at FireflyFish.
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Assigned to protect the Duchess of Mandalore, Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi have spent two months working to uncover the mastermind behind the assassination of the late Duke and Duchess Kryze. But the peace of Mandalore is brutally shattered by an attack on a hospital by the insurgent group Culling Blade.

“We have to go back! Please, Ben! Make them turn around and go back!”

“Duchess, we can’t! We have to get you to safety!”

Satine pleaded with Obi-Wan and her guards for the entire speeder ride back to turn around so that she could help her people. Tears ran down her cheeks as she beat her fists against Obi-Wan’s chest, begging him to understand and have compassion for the victims.

“They need me!” Satine cried, gesturing to the ever-growing black plume of destruction overhead. “They need to see me! To know that I am there with them! That I am fighting with them!”

“They need to know you are safe so that they can do their jobs.” Obi-Wan’s answer was short and to the point, masking his own fears and worries. “Forgive me, Your Grace, but my orders are clear.”

Almost hysterical with grief, Satine whirled around on Obi-Wan, her cheeks flushed, finding a safe harbor in righteous fury. “Orders? I am the ruler of Mandalore and I demand you turn this speeder around and return me to my people!”

“Pardon me, Duchess Kryze, but when last I checked, a Jedi Padawan is only beholden to his master, who ordered me to get you to safety! And that’s what we’re doing!” Obi-Wan shot back before he could think better of it, immediately regretting the words the second they slipped past his lips. He was opening his mouth to apologize when Satine cut him off, trying to rise imperiously from her seat.

“How dare you! You, you jetii! I opened my family’s home to you and your master and this is how you repay my kindness?” Satine shouted, taking all of her terror and grief out on Obi-Wan, who blinked up at her, confused by her anger with him. He was only trying to protect her. “I want you and your master gone! Do you hear me? Gone! Immediately! You and your vaunted Jedi senses are worthless! You’re… you’re… worthless…”

Satine collapsed back into her seat, hugging herself as denial gave way to the horrors of reality.

Too stunned to be angry, Obi-Wan wrapped his arms around her and barked at the driver to hurry up as they soared over the Sundari traffic.

“Shh…,” Obi-Wan murmured to Satine, holding her close against his shoulder as she began to cry in
broken, heaving sobs. He numbly pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and gave it to the young ruler, who took it in her hands and twisted it around her fingers. “It’s all right. You’ll be all right.”

When the speeder finally arrived back at the compound, Countess Vizsla was waiting and Satine rushed into her arms. The Countess wrapped her niece up in a tight hug before thanking Obi-Wan for returning Satine safe and sound to her family. “I will take care of her from here. If you want to communicate with your master, use my husband’s office.”

And in a rustle of silk and the faint sounds of Satine’s anguish, they were gone, followed by her guards.

Obi-Wan watched them go, feeling hollow and ashamed that he had been unable to prevent such a terrible loss of life. And to make matters worse, he hadn’t been able to comfort Satine in her time of need and his short temper and sharp tongue had only made matters worse.

She had called him *worthless*, said that his abilities as a Jedi had done nothing to prevent such a catastrophic loss of life.

That he had failed at the one thing a Jedi was supposed to do above all else, to save lives and prevent harm.

Bowing his head, Obi-Wan hurried off to Count Vizsla’s office, to contact his master and see if she needed him to return to the scene.

“No, I don’t think that’s a good idea,” Ahsoka told Obi-Wan once he was finally able to get ahold of her. She looked dirty and exhausted, as if she had been up for three days already. “Is Satine safe? Is she resting?”

“Yes, but she said that we’re worthless. That she wants us to leave, immediately!” Obi-Wan fretted, chewing on his thumbnail. “We can’t leave now, Master! Satine is in danger! And we haven’t found out the identity of her parents’ killer! We can’t go back to the Temple like this!”

Ahsoka nodded, her gaze drifting away to something just off camera before she brought her attention back to Obi-Wan. “I’m sure that was the Duchess’ grief talking, Obi-Wan. We’re not going anywhere. We’re here to protect Satine and that’s what we’re going to do.”

Obi-Wan felt relief pour over his spirit like a balm and he remembered to breathe again. His master was right, of course. Satine had just seen her parents’ legacy destroyed right before her eyes and then been whisked away before she could do anything about it. It was no wonder the Duchess reacted the way she did. “I’m sorry, Master.”

“Don’t be,” Ahsoka murmured, shaking her head slowly. “Fear, grief, and anguish can make even the most level-headed of people say horrible things. But I have to go now, Padawan. I’m assisting the recovery efforts. I want you to write down everything that happened and relay it to the Council for me right away. Can you do that?”

“Yes, of course, Master,” Obi-Wan nodded as he sat up a little, happy to have a task to focus on. “And then what?”

“Stay safe there until I get back,” Ahsoka said, pointing a finger at her padawan. “Do not come back here. That is a direct order, Obi-Wan Kenobi. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, Master,” he replied with a bow of his head. “Be careful, and may the Force be with you.”

“May the Force be with you as well, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said as she cut the communication from her
end of the line. Sitting back in Count Vizsla’s chair, Obi-Wan looked up at the ceiling and wondered just what kind of people they were dealing with.

As Sundari was reeling from the shock of such a brutal attack, reports came in the same day of two other coordinated attacks on Feldari and Naldari, sister cities to the capital of Mandalore. All three were soft targets, a popular park in Feldari and a major transportation hub in Naldari. All three were designed to take as many innocent lives as possible.

All three attacks absolutely devastated Satine.

Once the Duchess calmed down and gained control of her grief, she asked for Ahsoka and Obi-Wan to visit her in her private rooms. Obi-Wan was nervous but Ahsoka assured him that Satine’s words in the speeder were spoken in haste and from a place of fear.

Obi-Wan bowed his head outside the door and murmured softly. “They certainly felt like the truth. What is the point of being here if I can’t prevent an attack like that?”

Ahsoka sighed, reaching out to stroke the back of her padawan’s bowed head. “We are Jedi, little one. Not miracle workers. You got Satine to safety and in the end, that’s what matters. And when we find out who’s responsible for those attacks, we’ll put them in jail and throw away the key.”

Obi-Wan blinked up at Ahsoka, momentarily shocked by his master’s words. “Shouldn’t we try to rehabilitate them, Master? Isn’t that what the Order believes?”

Ahsoka inhaled sharply before forcing a weak smile on her face. “I don’t agree with the Order on everything. Come on. Satine is waiting for us.”

She reached out to activate the door lock and the two were ushered inside. They found the room quiet, Satine and her sister watching something on a datapad with an attached holo display. Tiber Vizsla was in a corner, talking in low tones with his wife, while their son Pre was reading at a desk, his pale blue eyes darting over to the Jedi before returning to his reading.

Ahsoka gave Pre one glance and then turned her attention to the Count and Countess walking over to her and Obi-Wan.

“Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi,” Count Vizsla said, a relieved look on his face. “I cannot thank you enough for the heroics you both displayed yesterday. We are truly lucky to have you here to help protect Satine.”

Both Jedi bowed as one, Ahsoka giving the Vizslas her full attention while Obi-Wan peered around the Countess to look at Satine, who met his gaze and then looked away, her eyes lowered.

“There’s no need, Count Vizsla,” Ahsoka said, her hands clasped in front of her. “We’re here to help in any way that Mandalore requires.”

Count Vizsla nodded and looked at his wife before turning his gaze back to his nieces. “Yes, well, I hope you will continue to stay and protect our Duchess from those who would see her harmed. I’m afraid this is only going to be the first of many such actions.”

“Do you have new intelligence?” Ahsoka asked, suddenly concerned that she and Obi-Wan weren’t
taking enough precautions.

“Not yet,” the Count replied, looking weary as he reached out to thread his fingers through his wife’s hand and squeeze it, clearly taking strength from her presence and support. “But the last time troubles like this started up, they followed a pattern. One large assault on a public place, sometimes coordinated, and then more, smaller attacks on important people within the government until we manage to catch the cell that’s carrying out the violence.”

“The cell?” Ahsoka echoed, confused. “So you mean you don’t know who the head of the opposition is?”

“There are representatives, heads of Houses, and some Clans within Mandalorian society that would like to see a return to our warrior ways, but if they are connected to Culling Blade they’ve worked very hard to hide it,” Count Vizsla explained.

“But I’m sure this can wait,” the Countess interrupted with a strained smile. “Satine would like to speak with you both.”

“Yes, of course,” Tiber Vizsla said, looking at his wife with soft eyes. “Forgive me, my dear. We’re going to retire to our suite but if you need anything, just com and I’ll have it sent to your rooms.”

“Thank you,” Ahsoka replied, bowing to the Count and Countess before stepping back and letting them pass out of the room. Pre Vizsla hurried out after them, his datapad tucked under his arm and his eyes darting up to Ahsoka’s and then Obi-Wan’s as he left.

_I don’t like him, Master._ Obi-Wan commented and Ahsoka managed to keep her agreement to a safe and neutral tone.

_Agreed. It’s a pity his parents are so nice._

“Bo?” Satine’s voice interrupted their mental conversation. “Do you mind if I have a word with our Jedi visitors?”

Bo-Katan watched Ahsoka and Obi-Wan approach, her brows furrowed over green, distrusting eyes. “Do I have to go?”

“We won’t take up too much of your sister’s time, I promise,” Ahsoka offered to the younger girl. “I’m sure she would much rather spend time with you than talking to us. Isn’t that right, Your Grace?”

Bo’s eyes immediately darted to her sister, round and hopeful and Satine returned her expression with one of utter love and affection before speaking. “We’re going to talk about boring things like etiquette and diplomacy. I promise you, Little Bo-Kat, I’ll be done shortly.”

Seemingly appeased by her sister’s promise, Bo-Katan hopped off the sofa, gave the Jedi another suspicious glare before she turned her gaze on Obi-Wan and stuck her tongue out at him. He blinked, confused, as the child ran off, hurrying over to a door that blended into the far wall. With another backward glare at Obi-Wan, Bo was gone.

“I don’t think she likes me,” Obi-Wan observed in the silence left in the wake of the younger Kryze sister.

Satine let out a sigh and shook her head, gesturing for Obi-Wan and Ahsoka to take a seat. “Please forgive my little sister. It takes some time for her to warm up to strangers.”
“It’s fine, Your Grace,” Ahsoka said as she sat down. “It’s perfectly understandable. She doesn’t want to share her big sister.”

“Yes, well,” Satine gave them a weak smile. “Truth be told, I don’t spend enough time with her. There are days when I feel like she spends more time with Pre and Aunt Julia than she does with me.”

“I’m sure she understands that it’s not your fault,” Obi-Wan said, his hands clasped in his lap.

Satine looked over at Obi-Wan, their eyes meeting as she scanned his face before she turned away. “I hope she does. I love her so much and she is my only family left to me. It would break my heart to lose her trust and faith in me.”

Ahsoka looked away for a moment, the knowledge of the future suddenly heavy on her shoulders and bitter on her tongue.

I want to tell her, to warn her about Death Watch but I can’t. I don’t have any proof and no one would believe me, anyway.

“I’m sure that will never happen, Your Grace,” Obi-Wan murmured, leaning forward a little, his hands opening in his lap, as if he wanted to take Satine’s hand in his to offer her comfort.

Satine looked back at Obi-Wan, at his hands and his earnest expression, and her calm expression crumpled and she bowed her head. “I invited you both here to… to apologize. I behaved abominably yesterday. I said things I did not mean and took out my grief on you, Obi-Wan. You are the least deserving of my anger and cruel words.

“I am so sorry, both of you. Please forgive me.”

Ahsoka said nothing, having already forgiven the younger girl for her sharp outburst against her padawan. She understood how grief and fear could warp a person, perhaps better than most. Her mind drifted back to Barriss and she wondered whatever happened to her dear, lost friend in the end.

Besides, it was Obi-Wan that had been hurt by Satine’s words. While Ahsoka had been included in the invitation, she understood that it was in truth only a nod to propriety.

Satine had wounded Obi-Wan and so the forgiveness needed to come from him and him alone.

Obi-Wan bowed his head, his fingers twining in his lap for a moment. Ahsoka watched him think things through, watched the muscle in his jaw clench for a moment before it relaxed and he sat up.

Satine leaned a little closer to Obi-Wan, her eyes practically pleading for him to say something, anything.

“Apology accepted, Your Grace,” Obi-Wan said, meeting Satine’s gaze with his own, steady and sure. “If you will forgive me for so rudely manhandling you in the speeder.”

As relief flooded into the Force from Satine, she let out a nervous and watery giggle as she attempted to stop a relieved sob from breaking free. Swallowing, she nodded, reaching out impulsively to squeeze Obi-Wan’s hands. “Yes. Of course. I will always forgive you for your appalling manners, Padawan Kenobi.”

Ahsoka looked off to the side, her lips quirked in a knowing expression. Well done, Padawan. That took a lot of maturity and compassion.
“If you think my manners are appalling, you should meet my friend Quinlan,” Obi-Wan chuckled, happy to see Satine smile again after such a terrible twenty-four hours. “He is positively uncouth. Once, on a dare, he ran through the Room of a Thousand Fountains wearing nothing but a Temple guard mask!”

Ahsoka whipped her head around to gape at Obi-Wan. “Is that who that was?!?”

“Scandalous!” Satine giggled, still rubbing away the tears at the corners of her eyes, grief and sorrow hard to lift from a broken heart. “Who dared him to perform such a brazen act?”

Obi-Wan suddenly turned bright red, his mouth pulled into a thin line. He scratched at the roots of his padawan braid as he realized he had not thought this train of thought through to its logical conclusion. “Oh… another padawan. No one of any importance.”

“Obi-Wan Kenobi!” Ahsoka gasped, her eyes round in shock and quite a bit of proud delight. “You didn’t!”

“Master Jedi!” Satine gasped, now fully distracted from her misery by Obi-Wan’s tale. “I thought all they taught you in that Temple was how to meditate and look dashing in cloaks.”

“Well, they do teach us that but even padawans get bored, Your Grace,” Obi-Wan mumbled, giving her a sheepish smile before he remembered that this confession of malfeasance had taken place in front of Ahsoka. “Er… And, yes, Master. I did.”

Ahsoka let out a warm laugh as she shook head, resting her forehead on her hand. “I cannot believe you did that. Master Skywalker would be so proud.”

“Who is Master Skywalker?” Satine asked, curious and desperate to stay in shallow and safe waters, far from anything that would remind her of the painful present.

“He is my grandmaster,” Obi-Wan said with pride. “He trained Master Ahsoka out on the Outer Rim where she fought pirates and helped the weak and defenseless. He was a great man.”

Satine let out a gasp of awe as she turned to Ahsoka. “You fight pirates, Master Ahsoka?”

Ahsoka nodded with a chuckle. “When I was younger. Master Skywalker and I were pretty busy.”

“Master is just being humble,” Obi-Wan said and then proceeded to regale Satine with the tale of how they survived their encounter with Mama Ohnaka and her son, Hondo. About a third of the way through, Satine begged to let Bo-Katan come back and hear the story and Obi-Wan, a natural born storyteller, was only too happy to oblige. Once the youngest Kryze was ensconced against her sister’s side, Obi-Wan began his tale again, embellishing here or there for the younger audience and Ahsoka offering a few helpful details as needed.

It was a quiet and peaceful end to a brutal two days.

After the hospital bombing, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan traveled everywhere with Satine, and were moved into the Kryze family suite within the compound. There were no more carefree strolls through well-manicured parks or attempts at clever deception. Obi-Wan started wearing his robes again and Ahsoka retired her Jedi habit for Fulcrum’s armor. They were defiantly and proudly Jedi whenever
they accompanied Satine to visit the Forum or other places within Sundari.

At first, it seemed that Tiber Vizsla’s prediction was wrong, that the angry partisans had melted back into the shadows of Mandalorian society without a trace.

Satine spent her time either in the Kryze compound or being shuttled back and forth between the other hospitals within Sundari that took on the victims of the bombings and the other patients who had to find a new place to seek treatment.

For a few days, there was the faintest hope that perhaps the attacks on the three Mandalorian cities had been suicide bombings, that perhaps the attacks were the work of a cell of nationalist partisans who had lost their nerve.

That hope was dashed when there was an attack on the Judiciary building, killing ten and wounding scores more. Things continued to degrade as the weeks wore on, with more attacks on public spaces and even assassination attempts on the heads of those Houses loyal to House Kryze.

When that didn’t get the message across Culling Blade attacked the Royal Academy of Government, the school for training future leaders of Mandalore, claiming in a statement that there would be no mercy for those who turned their backs on the old ways, for those who tried to follow the “false path” of peace.

In a scrambled and garbled message featuring a lone figure in Mandalorian armor with a helmet and voice changer, Culling Blade made their aims clear.

“We are warriors. We do not make peace. We do not cower in fear within our fortresses while our brother and sister Mandalorians die in our name. We fight. And if we die, we die with glory and honor.” The masked spokesperson held up their hands and curled them into fists before pointing at the camera. “But we will not lose! We will be victorious and when the child queen is done away with, when the line of Kryze is extinguished, a new Mandalore will rise! Glory to Mandalore!”

Satine was enraged.

“Children!” She spat as she paced back and forth in her suite of rooms.

Obi-Wan was seated on the sofa, reading a story to Bo-Katan, who was finally starting to come around to the *jetii*, while Ahsoka leaned against a window ledge and gazed out at the city skyline. “They are murdering children now! Those… animals! How dare they? They can wage all the war they want and burn down every last memory of my parents but no one has the right to harm a child!”

Obi-Wan glanced down at Bo-Katan, who met his gaze and then ran over to her sister, the soft pained sounds of her tears lost in the folds of Satine’s skirt as Satine kneeled to wrap her arms around her.

Standing up, Obi-Wan walked over to Ahsoka, whose arms were folded across her chest. “Master? Isn’t there something we can do?”

Shaking her head, Ahsoka looked over at Satine and Bo-Katan, now being comforted by their Aunt Julia, before she met Obi-Wan’s gaze. “No. Our mission is clear. We are to protect the Duchess, not to fight her people’s war.”

“But they’ve attacked a school!” Obi-Wan insisted, doing his best to keep his voice down. “Surely the Council can make the Senate understand?”

“Don’t you think they’ve tried?” Ahsoka replied, looking at Obi-Wan with sorrow on her face.
“Mandalore has always had a testy relationship with the Republic and there are those who would like to see this generation of Mandalorians pay for their ancestors’ bloody actions.”

“But that’s monstrous!” Obi-Wan hissed, risking a glance back at the Satine and her family before turning back to Ahsoka. “What are we supposed to do? Keep the Duchess safe while Mandalore burns to ashes around her?”

Ahsoka frowned and looked out at the city, her face hard. She hated being a Jedi in moments like this, where she had a duty and responsibility to something other than doing what she thought was right. Her heart ached to be out there, looking for the insurgents and bringing them to justice, to make them pay for their murderous attacks.

The part of her that was Anakin Skywalker’s padawan demanded blood for blood.

_Revenge is not the Jedi way and, like it or not, you’re a Jedi again._

Ahsoka closed her eyes and let out a sigh, trying to release her anger into the Force. She sought for a way to convince Obi-Wan and herself that the best thing to do was to wait, to do as they were instructed and protect the Duchess. “As long as Satine lives, there is a chance for peace. She is the rightful ruler of Mandalore and the more heinous Culling Blade’s attacks, the stronger her position becomes. No one with any real power attacks a school.”

Obi-Wan’s jaw clenched and he rolled his eyes, glaring off into the distance as he inhaled sharply. “I don’t agree, Master. We should be assisting Count Vizsla. We should be doing something.”

“I don’t like it either, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka grit through her teeth. “But we’re needed here.”

That statement did not sit well with either Jedi.

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Soon Sundari and her sister cities were under martial law with curfews and restricted travel to and from the planet. Even lines of communication were cut, leaving Ahsoka small irregular windows of time to connect with the Temple on Coruscant and apprise Master Plo Koon of the developments on Mandalore.

“And those attacks are just in the last week,” Ahsoka sighed as she finished her report. Obi-Wan was with Satine and Bo-Katan in the small terraced garden hidden within the private Kryze family suite. “Obi-Wan and I have been with the Duchess day and night and while her security forces seem up to the task, I can’t help feeling that something isn’t right.” _And I know it’s not Pre. Not yet. He’s too young to be involved in something like this._

“Have you had a chance to meditate on this feeling?” Plo Koon asked, his ghostly holo-form floating in midair.

Shaking her head, Ahsoka held up her hands. “Yes but, nothing came of it. Obi-Wan agrees that there is more at work here than we know but I’m afraid we’re unable to investigate because of our duties to the Duchess.”

“Yes, I understand your frustration, Ahsoka.” Master Plo nodded, his gaze focused off camera as he steepled his hands. “How is Obi-Wan handling the situation?”
Ahsoka smiled down at her hands, her heart filling with pride. “He’s indispensable, Master Plo. He and the Duchess have developed a strong friendship. She is willing to listen to his advice and even take it from time to time. And that’s saying something for Satine.”

“According to your reports, she is a most singular young lady,” Plo Koon replied with approval in his low voice. “Keep us informed, Ahsoka. While the Senate has not authorized further action, we have been sending Chancellor Valorum regular updates on your actions. The minute we have permission to send further support, we will.”

“Thank you, Master Plo,” Ahsoka said, letting out a sigh. “I’ll do my best to keep the Council updated but with all the extra security measures being taken, I don’t know when exactly that will be.”

“We will await your findings. May the Force be with you and Obi-Wan, Ahsoka,” Plo Koon answered and then his image flickered out as the com went silent.

Time passed, anxious and fraught with tension and fear.

Culling Blade continued their attacks on Mandalorian society, always somehow a step ahead of the Security Forces. Trips away from the Kryze compound grew few and far between but Satine insisted that she be allowed to keep up one long-standing appointment, to a veterans’ home on the outskirts of Sundari. It had been founded by her mother and she refused to let her uncle and her Ruling Council bully her into staying at home.

The visit went well and they were returning to the covered speeder when an open one flew overhead, spraying blaster fire and missiles at the ducal party.

“Everybody down!” Ahsoka ordered, leaping to deflect the rain of angry red fire as Obi-Wan covered Satine with his body and robe.

“I swear we won’t let anything happen to you, Satine,” Obi-Wan whispered as he prayed to the Force to make his words more than mere platitudes.

The assault was over almost as soon as it began, the assassins’ speeder vanishing around a corner, and the convoy scrambled together and fled back to the security of the Kryze compound.

Later that night, once the adrenaline had worn off, Obi-Wan asked Ahsoka what had been on his mind all day. “Do you think there is a mole? An informant in the Duchess’ household? How else would they have known her schedule?”

Ahsoka frowned, her arms crossed over her chest and her mouth hard. “I don’t know, but I’m starting to lean that way.”

The next morning Bo was sent away with Countess Vizsla to the Vizsla family estate on Kalevala. She sobbed bitterly at being separated from her sister and Satine swore again and again that she would com Bo every day, that there wouldn’t be a minute when she would not be in Satine’s heart.

“I swear to you, Bo,” Satine whispered as she hugged her dearest sister tight. “I swear, my Little Bo-Kat. We will be together again. I promise you!”
“I don’t want to go!” Bo pleaded. “Please don’t make me go, Satine! Please don’t make me leave you!”

“You must go, Bo-Kat,” Satine said, her heartbreak almost swamping Ahsoka and Obi-Wan with its power. “I love you so much and I cannot bear the thought of losing you too.”

“No!” Bo shouted, stomping her foot and glaring hard at her sister. “I want to stay and fight! I am a good Mandalorian! I don’t run and hide like a coward! Let me stay here and fight!”

“You are ten years old!” Satine exclaimed, tears falling down her cheeks. “You are too young to fight. Please… please, my dearest. You are all I have left in the galaxy. Please do this for me.”

Bo took a step back away from Satine, and then another, her face red and tears staining her blue dress. Her chin quivered with unshed tears and she nodded once before Countess Vizsla placed a hand on her shoulder and whispered softly. “Say goodbye Bo-Katan.”

“I love you,” Bo said instead, scrubbing at her cheeks. “When I come back, I’m going to protect you. I swear it!”

Satine tried to smile, to be proud of her fierce little sister, but her resolve failed her and she rushed back to her side. Both sisters cried again before their aunt gently but resolutely parted them.

“I love you, my dearest Bo-Kat!” Satine cried as the Countess led Bo away.

Tiber stepped up to Satine’s side and wrapped his arms around her, holding her close as she cried.

Frustrated but unable to help, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan could only stand in silent witness to the family’s heartbreak.

After another assassination attempt on Satine’s life while visiting the Forum resulted in the death of fourteen people, six of which were civilians, Count Vizsla and the Ruling Council decreed that Satine would not be allowed to travel out in the open anymore. She was confined to her family suite of rooms and was no longer allowed to hear petitions from her subjects. She gave speeches to be played in public squares and on the holonet but the slow and steady shrinking of her world was driving her mad.

Only Obi-Wan seemed to brighten her mood and they would spend long hours together, he trying to teach her Jedi history and Satine helping him work on his Mandalorian.

“Oh honestly, Ben,” Satine murmured, as they came to the end of another circuit around the garden. “I don’t know what you’re worrying about. Your accent is quite natural and your grammar is vastly improved. Soon you and Bo can trade insults over the com.”

Obi-Wan smiled as he reached over to pat Satine’s hand on his arm. “How is she handling life on Kalevala?”

“She’s lonely,” Satine sighed, unconsciously leaning closer to Obi-Wan. “And she misses me but Aunt Julia is with her and Pre has recently gone home to pay a visit so I’m sure she’s quite happy. He is her favorite cousin.”
“Is that so?” Obi-Wan said, holding up a low-hanging flowering branch, allowing Satine to pass under. “Well, please convey my greetings to her next time you two speak and tell her my life is considerably more boring without my preferred Mandalorian foe.”

Satine laughed softly, taking Obi-Wan’s hands in hers and bringing them both to a stop, hidden from view behind a lush potted bush that was carved into a twisted rectangle. “Ben… Obi-Wan, I cannot thank you enough for everything that you and your master have done for me. We have dragged you into a war you were not a part of and yet you spend every day protecting me. And you are not even Mandalorian!”

Obi-Wan bowed his head, gazing down at his hands in Satine’s, marveling at how delicate hers looked against his, how soft and warm they were. With a turn of his wrists, Satine’s hands were in his and he swallowed a lump in his throat as he spoke. “I would protect you even if I were not a Jedi, Your Grace. And I feel quite strongly that…”

The Force let out a loud and clear chime of warning before Obi-Wan heard the telltale wail of an incoming missile.

“Get down!” Obi-Wan shouted as the projectile hit two stories above them, Satine’s private quarters exploding in flame and thunder.

He pushed Satine against the nearest wall, shielding her with his body. A sudden torrent of rocks, glass and durasteel plummeted from overhead to crash where they had just been standing.

Obi-Wan and Satine cowered against the side of the building as more fragments of rock and debris from the assault rained down on them, the acrid scent of smoke choking out the scent of the flowers around them. Covering them both with his robe, Obi-Wan called out to Ahsoka. Master! There’s been an attack!

I’m on my way, Obi-Wan!

In the distance, an alarm began to wail as the sound of explosions outside the compound reached the frightened teenagers. They were far too close for comfort, Obi-Wan thought as he guided Satine to the large glass doors back into the interior of the compound, huddling them as close to the garden walls as he could.

By the time they had picked their way to safety, Obi-Wan narrowly diverting another tumble of deadly rubble before they made it inside, Ahsoka was there, her sabers out and ready and the ducal security forces circling around the Duchess and Padawan. “What happened? Are you two okay?”

“There was a missile of some kind,” Obi-Wan explained as he pulled off his robe and shook out the dust and debris. Satine stood to the side, her arms wrapped around herself as she stared at her garden, not paying attention to Obi-Wan as he continued. “It landed a few stories above us, and it blew up her quarters, I think?”

“But you’re both alright?” Ahsoka asked again, looking over Obi-Wan and then Satine for injuries. “Duchess, are you alright?”

Satine looked up at Ahsoka, a little dazed. “Ah, yes, yes, I’m fine. Ben? Are you alright?”

Obi-Wan offered Satine his robe, which she accepted, wrapping it tight around herself. It was only then that he noticed that the alarms from outside seemed to have followed them inside. “Master, what is that?”

“The compound is under attack,” Ahsoka said, in between ordering a security guard to report to
Count Vizsla that the Duchess was safe. “I think Tiber can hold them off but we need to get Satine to safety.”

“Is my uncle safe?” Satine asked, stepping forward with fear in her eyes. “Please, I won’t go without him.”

“Last time I checked, he was leading the defense,” Ahsoka said as she put an arm around Satine. “Come on, Your Grace, we have to get you to a secure location.”

Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine hurried down the hallway, the ducal security guards running in front and behind them and the sounds of fighting growing louder all around them. Moving quickly but silently, the small group made it to one of the larger halls that fed into the public areas of the complex.

Ahsoka and a guard peered around a corner and jerked back just as quickly.

“Insurgents,” Ahsoka frowned and looked back at the group as Satine huddled close to Obi-Wan. “I’ll hold them off while you make a break for the other side. The door to the safe room is just over there and around the corner, right?”

“Yes, but we can’t hide the Duchess in there, not while those traitors could see us! She’d be a sitting duck,” the head guard protested.

Ahsoka peered back around the corner into the hallway, Obi-Wan joining her this time before they both retreated back to the safety of their hiding place.

“What if we hid the Satine in another room, someplace quiet where they wouldn’t think to look for her?” Obi-Wan suggested. “Our room is right around the corner. No one would think to look for her there.”

“And it would give Tiber and the rest of the security force time to repel the invaders,” Ahsoka nodded as she ran over the plan in her mind. “Half of you will come with me to create a distraction and the other half will stay with Obi-Wan and Satine. Any questions?”

The guards shook their head before they split up into two smaller parties, Ahsoka taking the larger group with her.

Before they left, Ahsoka put a hand on Obi-Wan’s shoulder and squeezed. “You’re ready for this, Padawan. May the Force be with you.”

Obi-Wan nodded solemnly. “May the Force be with you, Master.”

And with that, they parted ways, Ahsoka and her group faking a flight to the safe room while Obi-Wan and his group crept off to hide Satine away in the Jedi’s suite of rooms.

The assault on the Kryze compound took a mere twenty minutes but it left seven men dead and thirty wounded. The public areas of the compound were ruined, with shattered glass everywhere, bent and buckling durasteel exposed by jetpack missiles and stone and duracrete rubble covering the floors inside.
Tiber Vizsla had taken a blaster bolt to the shoulder and was being treated in the medic room when Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine came in, the Duchess rushing over to him. “Uncle! What happened? Please tell me!”

Shaking his head, Tiber took one of Satine’s hands in his and smiled at her, his expression strained and tinged by a grimace of pain. “Don’t worry about me, Satine. Are you alright? Did Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi keep you safe?”

Satine nodded, giving them both a thankful look. “We were attacked on the southern garden terrace but Obi-Wan protected me and Master Ahsoka played decoy while Obi-Wan and I hid with my guards in the Jedi’s suite.”

Letting out a long exhale, Tiber seemed to relax. He patted his niece’s hand in his before turning his gaze to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. “You have my thanks, and that of Mandalore as well. But I’m afraid I must ask even more of you in this dangerous time.”

“What do you need?” Ahsoka asked, glancing down at Obi-Wan and proud of the clear-eyed determination she saw on his face.

“I need you to take my niece to Coruscant,” Tiber Vizsla said, drawing a gasp from Satine. “Please, Master Jedi, take the Duchess to the Mandalorian embassy on Coruscant, where she will be safe.”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan exchanged looks but the answer was clear the minute the request was made. “Of course, Count Vizsla. We would be happy to.”

“No!” Satine said, her expression hard and defiant. “I will not go. My fight is here with my people! I cannot let them think I would prize my safety over theirs!”

Tiber frowned, nodding as he listened to his words. “Satine, my dear niece. I don’t think I have ever met a Mandalorian who loves our people as much as you do. I know that if it were in your power, you would stay until the bitter end.”

Satine nodded, opening her mouth to speak but her uncle cut her off.

“But that is what it will be, if you stay,” Tiber continued, reaching up to stroke his niece’s cheek. “It would be the bitter end of everything. Bo would be orphaned and your family’s dream of a new Mandalore, of a peaceful future, would be destroyed. You must live, Satine.”

“But… but…” Satine looked away, trying to find a reason to stay, to stand in defiance against Culling Blade. “But I cannot abandon Mandalore! I cannot abandon my people and my family! That would make me no better than the cowards who attacked us!”

A Mandalorian need not be on Mandalore to be brave,” Tiber Vizsla murmured, leaning over to kiss his niece’s temple. “Go. Go to the Senate and plead our case. Make them understand our people. If anyone can convince the Republic to help us, it is you and your jetii allies.”

Obi-Wan watched Satine as she slowly came to terms with her uncle’s request and gave a teary, slow nod of assent. He swore to himself that he would do everything in his power to aid her in her time of need, no matter what the cost.

*I will protect you, Satine. I swear it.*

Chapter End Notes
And now we leave Mandalore and head back for Coruscant, where everything is safe and nothing bad will happen.

Right? Nothing else is going to happen to them, RIGHT??

Hmmm... let me check my notes...

If you'd like to exchange silly gifs and shrieking about Star Wars, you can find me at FireflyFish on Tumblr.
Safe Passage

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After the assault on the Kryze family compound, Count Tiber Vizsla asks Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi to take his niece and flee with her to Coruscant, where the Duchess can request help from the Republic Senate. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan promise to bring the Duchess to safety, a promise easier said than done.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Therrata 4, one month after leaving Mandalore.

“Jumping back into realspace in three, two, one, now!” Obi-Wan said as Ahsoka maneuvered the ship through the jump. He looked through the viewscreen, expecting to see the blue-green world of Therrata 4 and its three moons hovering in the darkness of space and not the swarm of single-seater and snub fighters streaking towards them. “Fighters, Master! Nearly a dozen!”

“I’m taking evasive action!” Ahsoka cried out, taking command of the ship and pulling it into a spinning dive as the fighters flew past them, the shrieking sounds of their guns far too close for comfort. “How did they find us again? I thought we lost them after Taris!”

“I don’t know!” Obi-Wan exclaimed, frantically pulling up the shielding and deflector arrays as Ahsoka worked a small miracle flying them away from the small horde of ships chasing after them. “Shields are up!”

“Just in time!” Ahsoka cried as one of the fighters managed to lock onto them and fire off a shot before she could shake it free.

A large explosion rocked the ship, nearly knocking Ashoka from the pilot’s chair as she struggled to maintain control. Obi-Wan let out a yelp as a circuit from the navicomputer started to spark and alarms let out a wail as their small, damaged light cruiser struggled to out-maneuver the bounty hunter ships that had somehow found them. Again.

“Duchess,” Ahsoka grunted as the ship shuddered with another blow to its shields. “You know I support your beliefs but Obi-Wan I could really use your help here on the guns.”

“They don’t extend to self defense. Where are they?” Satine asked, standing up and heading to the door. “And how do they work?”

“Ever played the Fifth Russan Fleet hologame?” Obi-Wan asked, jumping up from his seat to lead Satine to the gun turret. “It’s a lot like that only this is real life and if you miss, we’ll all be blown to pieces.”

In times of extreme stress, Obi-Wan found a safe haven in black humor. It he could joke about their impending death, it somehow didn’t seem quite as likely to happen.
“Charming,” Satine gave Obi-Wan a half-smile as she stepped up into the turret, peered into the viewfinder and fired off the first barrage of blasts that was quickly echoed by a loud explosion from outside the hull of the ship.

Ahsoka let out a loud and relieved shout at the lucky shot. “Thank the Force!”

“I’ll leave you to it then,” Obi-Wan replied, impressed, and then ran back to the cockpit to help Ahsoka get them out of this firefight. Flinging himself into the co-pilot’s chair, Obi-Wan activated the override on the other gun turret and started firing on the small pack of enemy ships trying to shoot them out of the sky.

“Your girlfriend is a nice shot,” Ahsoka flashed a smile over at Obi-Wan as she pulled the ship into a tight roll. “You think you can take out the ships she disables?”

“The Duchess of Mandalore is not my girlfriend!” Obi-Wan fired back, emphatically targeting and finishing off the fighter Satine had damaged a moment ago. “We’re not going to be able to make it to Coruscant at this rate.”

“No, We’re not,” Ahsoka agreed with a frown. “Pull up the navicomputer. Find us another stop. Hopefully we can lose these bounty hunters in the process.”

Obi-Wan scanned the navicomputer, eyes flicking over the readout. “Lucazec. We have enough fuel to get us there and I think the hyperdrive will hold.”

“You think??”

The ship rocked, the shields taking another hit and red warning lights flashing over the consoles. Both Jedi let out a sharp curse and Satine’s voice crackled over the ship intercom as another shower of sparks flew out of the overhead paneling for the water reclaimer.

“Far be it from me to criticize a Jedi Knight, but I think it would be best if we left this sector of space as soon as possible!” Satine grunted as she took aim at another smaller ship and let out a soft “Yes!” when she got in a glancing blow on its rear stabilizer.

“Lucazec is the best shot we have, Master,” Obi-Wan said, peering into his own viewfinder to open fire on the ship Satine had crippled.

“I don’t even know where that is!” Ahsoka protested, diving under an attacking snub fighter as the comm echoed with Satine’s slightly panicked shriek at the sudden force of their turn. “I’m sorry, Duchess!”

“No need to worry, Master Ahsoka!” Satine answered as the sounds of the gun turret echoed through the ship. “I’m sure Ben is to blame!”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and plugged in the coordinates for Lucazec. “This is the only chance we have.”

“Fine, fine!” Ahsoka said, trying to swing the ship around to give them a better position against the swarm of bounty hunters. “We’ve almost lost our rear deflector and the front won’t take much more damage. How soon to the jump?”

“I need three minutes,” Obi-Wan answered as the navicomputer’s processors started to snarl and whirl through the computations. He swiveled back to the controls of the second turret and started firing, working with Satine to take down two more single fighters as Ahsoka dove and twisted their small ship through the black void of space.
They took another hit and the ship lurched to their left, nearly knocking Obi-Wan out of his chair as the alarms, constant and in the background, screamed louder, smoke coming out of one of the panels.

“We’ve lost the rear deflector,” Ahsoka said, reaching out to kill the energy running to the deflector, redirecting it to the front and side shielding arrays. “We need to make that jump now, Obi-Wan.”

“Just another few seconds,” Obi-Wan mumbled, working as fast as he could to get the departure vector calculated and input into the system. “Almost there…”

“My gun’s jammed!” Satine’s voice rang out over the intercom, immediately followed by the sound of her tearing up the hallway to the cockpit. “Why aren’t we jumping to hyperspace?”

“Just a second!” Obi-Wan shot back, as Ahsoka did her best to keep them flying on a straight vector that wouldn’t reveal their exposed flank. Satine held onto the back of Obi-Wan’s chair, letting out a yelp as another fighter got too close for comfort.

“Got it!” Obi-Wan shouted and hit the button, the calculations and coordinates spooling into the hyperdrive command line before Ahsoka fired the engine and pulled back on the throttle, flinging them all into hyperspace and away from their pursuers.

“I never want to have to do that again,” Satine gasped, collapsing back into a chair behind Ahsoka and wiping a thin sheen of sweat from her brow. “Where are we heading? I hope in the direction of Coruscant this time?”

The tips of Obi-Wan’s ears turned bright red and he swiveled around his chair to give the Duchess a weak smile. “Ah… we’re headed towards Lucazec, Your Grace.”

“Lucazec?” Satine repeated, her eyebrows raised in disbelief. “That’s nowhere near Coruscant! Are they even part of the Republic?”

“Yes?” Obi-Wan shrugged, looking over at Ahsoka who was busy shutting down the alarms flashing on her console. “It’s a quiet planet on the edge of the Outer Rim. We should be safe there. We might even be able to get a message to the Temple and perhaps some reinforcements, Master?”

Ahsoka looked up from the fires she was putting out to glance at Obi-Wan and Satine’s nervous faces. She took a breath and tried to scour her memory, trying to see if she or Anakin had ever made it to Lucazec during the Clone Wars or during her time as Fulcrum.

“I don’t know if there are any Jedi in the sector but I’m sure we’ll be fine,” Ahsoka offered, relaxing back into her chair and trying to tell herself that they were safe. That they weren’t going to come out of hyperspace into a shrike-wasp nest like they had just stumbled into. “But we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it. Obi-Wan, will you check the hyperdrive and make sure it’s stable enough to get us to Lucazec?”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan sighed, pushing himself upright. He bowed to Satine, just a movement from his hips and a half-smile on his face, eyes still bright with adrenaline from the fight. “Would the Duchess care to accompany me back to the hyperdrive? I might require someone to hand me my tools.”

“How can I refuse when you asked in such a charming manner?” Satine returned Obi-Wan’s bow with an affectionate smirk and took his outstretched hand as she stood up, happy to have something to take her mind off of the narrow escape they had just made. “Knight Tano? Will you be alright without us?”

“I’ll manage,” Ahsoka said, waving the two teenagers off as she turned back to her console,
frowning at the warning lights and more than a few scorch marks from their very short visit to Therratta 4. “But if you get bored with watching Obi-Wan dig into the guts of a ship, I could use a cup of caf.”

“I’ll see if that is in the pantry,” Satine nodded, and let Obi-Wan lead her back into the ship, laughing at something witty he said in a voice too low for Ahsoka to catch.

Once the two teens were gone, Ahsoka let out the breath she had been holding, collapsing back into the pilot’s chair and staring at the ceiling for several minutes as she felt the adrenaline and stress of the ambush drain out of her body.

*I don’t know how much longer we can keep this up. Are we finally safe?*

The Force was silent on that front and all Ahsoka could do was focus on the task in front of her and hope for the best while she, Obi-Wan and Satine prepared for the worst.

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*Mandalore, a month prior.*

When Tiber Vizsla asked Ahsoka and Obi-Wan to take his niece Satine to Coruscant to plead for assistance from the Republic Senate, he had planned to have her travel on the ducal yacht with a full contingent of guards. The idea was to have the Duchess to arrive on the capital of the Galactic Republic in the style of a visiting head of state, as opposed to a refugee from a war-torn system, desperate for any kind of help the Senate was willing to give.

While there were many things the Kryze family hoped to change about Mandalore, it seemed their famous pride was not one of them.

That idea had blown up in their faces, literally, when a member of Culling Blade somehow snuck into the Kryze family hangar bay and blew up the luxury yacht, killing three people and injuring a dozen more.

After that the plan switched to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan smuggling Satine out on their Republic cruiser in the dead of the night but after an assault on the public hangar bay where the ship was housed ended up destroying their ship and confirming the suspicions that Ahsoka and Obi-Wan were already starting to develop.

There was a mole inside the Kryze administration leaking vital intelligence to Culling Blade and putting not only the Duchess’ life at risk but the lives of everyone around her.

Late one night, Tiber Vizsla came to the rooms where the Jedi were staying, to tell them to take Satine.

“Just go, tonight if you can,” Tiber said, collapsing into a wing chair emblazoned with the Kryze family crest. “I’ve done everything I can but this mole has access at the heart of my organization. I swear I am loyal to Satine but all of these attacks put my advice and my handling of security in question. I don’t know what else to do to protect Satine, short of taking her myself to Coruscant. The Countess of Seeres is already calling for me to step down from my position and I can’t bring myself to argue with her.”

Ahsoka frowned from where she and Obi-Wan sat opposite of the heartbroken man. “I’m sorry,
Tiber. Everyone knows how deeply you care for Satine.”

Tiber let out a weak chuckle, pushing his white-blond hair back from his face. “Her father was my best friend. We both fought for his vision of a peaceful future for Mandalore, one without war or the brutality our people have been known for in the past.”

Bowing his head and rubbing the back of his neck, Tiber murmured, “I just didn’t realize how much it would cost us. There are days when I worry that that I spend more time fighting for Tristan’s dream than with my family. My son has even said as much.”

Ahsoka inhaled softly and glanced over at Obi-Wan, who returned her gaze with the faintest quirk of his eyebrow.

_Doesn’t the throne pass to the Count if Satine and Bo die?_ Obi-Wan thought, his words cool and measured even within the Force.

_And Pre is his heir,_ Ahsoka observed before speaking again to the Count. “We’ll do as you ask. Should we just… steal a ship?”

“I’ve had one of my own ships scrubbed clean,” Count Vizsla explained as he handed over the keys and the pertinent data sticks. “It’s located in a private hangar near the southern terminal. It’s farther from the compound than I would like but it’s also such a busy gateway that I don’t think anyone will notice your escape. Please. Go tonight. I am the only one who knows about this plan.”

Ahsoka agreed to the plan and things moved quickly from there. While Satine protested sneaking out of her home in the middle of the night, she also understood the need for secrecy. She agreed but only after she made her uncle promise to bring her back to Mandalore himself when the civil war was over.

“Nothing would give me greater joy, Satine,” Tiber swore to her with a solemn bow.

Obi-Wan packed for the Jedi while Ahsoka and Tiber helped Satine gather a few things for the journey. Their bag was lighter than when they had arrived on Mandalore six months ago but he made sure to include their long range coms and the datapads his master looked over late at night when she couldn’t sleep. One of them had been active when he gathered them up and he found his eyes scanning over some kind of entry or article about pod racing of all things, specifically Outer Rim pod racing and the gambling surrounding it.

_I wonder what that’s about_, Obi-Wan mused to himself before he zipped up their go bag and met the others in the hallway.

Satine was teary-eyed as was to be expected and she gave her uncle another tight hug before stepping backwards and vowing to return to home as soon as she could.

“Keep her safe,” Tiber commanded as he turned to face Ahsoka. “You will contact me when you have arrived in Coruscant?”

“Yes,” Ahsoka replied as she stepped forward. Obi-Wan took Satine’s hand in his and hurried her down the hallway and out of sight. “And forgive me for this, but it’s the safest way for us to leave.”

Tiber looked a little confused as Ahsoka circled her hand in front of his face, her fingers splaying out as she spoke. “You did not see us. We were not here.”

A wave of confusion washed over the Count’s face before an entranced daze set in. “I… I did not see you. You were not here.”
The Force moved around Tiber Vizsla and Ahsoka, slow and thick, like a sunhoney from Arcadia. It urged Tiber to forget, for the new and fragile memories of the last few minutes, possibly the last hour, to fall out of his consciousness and to be swept away by the words Ahsoka spoke.

“You want to return to your rooms and go to sleep,” Ahsoka continued, her hand moving in a slow arc before Tiber, who nodded slowly and turned away from the Jedi.

“I want to return to my rooms and go to sleep.”

Ahsoka frowned as she watched the Count shuffle back to his rooms and wondered how long the mind trick would work. Master Obi-Wan had always said the trick worked best on the weak willed and while she had had the advantage of surprise on her side, weak-willed wasn’t a phrase she would use to describe any Mandalorian, let alone Tiber Vizsla.

After sneaking out of the Kryze compound, it had been relatively easy for Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine to borrow a speeder from the bay and take off across the sleeping city of Sundari. They kept to the streets that still had traffic at such a late hour and Satine spent the time in the back seat, pretending to be asleep beneath Obi-Wan’s robe. No one noticed them and by the time they got to the southern terminal, which was still handling incoming and outgoing ships, it was three-thirty in the morning.

They found the ship easily enough and were able to get on board without issue. The ship was small and cozy, something clearly designed for jaunts between planets within a same or nearby system. While there was an outside chance the vessel’s hyperdrive could make it to Coruscant in one piece, Ahsoka didn’t want to risk it.

“We’ll jump to Taris, refuel there and take the Hydian way to Coruscant. We’ll have to make a few stops but I think this is the safest way,” Ahsoka informed Obi-Wan and Satine, who both agreed to the plan.

One week after leaving Mandalore.

The plan lasted until they got to Taris.

While they were refueling their ship and taking a moment to stretch their legs, a quartet of bounty hunters attacked Satine as she and Obi-Wan were purchasing some food at a stall in the market just off the spaceport.

They were able to make it back to the ship before the mercenaries caught up with them and scrambled on board, shouting at Ahsoka.

“We have to leave now, Master!” Obi-Wan gasped, already cutting off the refueling from the cockpit terminal. “There are bounty hunters after us!”

“Are you serious?” Ahsoka asked, turning from Obi-Wan’s tightly controlled panic to Satine’s full bore storm of worry and fear. “Did they follow you?”

“I don’t think so?” Satine stammered as she let Ahsoka guide her into a seat before the Jedi Knight hurried back down the boarding ramp. There was a moment of tense silence as the fueling hose was retracted from the ship’s exterior before the sounds of blaster fire and explosions ricocheted outside.
Satine jumped in her seat and leaned around Obi-Wan to peer out the viewing window, gasping as she heard the snap-hiss of Ahsoka’s lightsabers and the familiar bass hum of the weapons as the Jedi knight put them to work.

“What is she doing out there?” Satine gasped, looking back towards the boarding ramp. “We have to go!”

“She’s coming,” Obi-Wan grunted as the ship’s engines kicked to life. “Buckle up, Your Grace. I’m afraid we’re being forced to make a hasty departure.”

“But Knight Tano is still out there!” Satine protested even as she did as Obi-Wan commanded. “We can’t leave without her.”

“We won’t,” Obi-Wan assured the Duchess, slowly turning the ship around within their landing bay. He flicked on the thrusters but didn’t adjust the throttle and the ship’s engines whined in protest.

A warning chime went off, letting Obi-Wan know his handling of the ship was not approved of by its creators.

Higher and higher the ship climbed, Satine protesting the whole way before she heard a loud thump at the back of the ship and then the familiar sound of boots pounding against a metal floor and heavy groan of the boarding ramp locking back into place.

“What are you waiting for?” Ahsoka asked as she flung herself into the pilot’s chair. “Let’s get out of here!”

---

Two weeks after leaving Mandalore.

They jumped to another system, less populous than Taris in the hopes of losing the killers on their trail, and for a little while it seemed to work. While letting the hyperdrive charge, Ahsoka was able to get a link open to the Jedi Temple that she and Obi-Wan were attempting to bring Satine to Coruscant and that bounty hunters were on their tail.

Master Shaak Ti assured them that any Jedi in the area had been notified of their situation and were authorized to offer them whatever assistance they could provide.

They spent a half day in the local spaceport before the bounty hunters appeared once again, sending them off in another desperate escape that sent them further away from Coruscant, their sudden appearance suggesting a pattern that Ahsoka had a sinking feeling would haunt them for some time to come.

Days turned into weeks and they bounced from planet to planet, never enough time to search the ship properly for trackers as they tried to lose what felt like every bounty hunter in the Outer Rim.

On Draboon, one sent an assassin droid after them in the hangar bay they were crossing through to return to their ship. Though Ahsoka killed the mother droid, it released a swarm of venom mites with its dying act and Satine fell and twisted her ankle as they fled across the duracrete. Without hesitation, Obi-Wan scooped her up into his arms as Ahsoka covered their retreat and finally slapped the blaster doors shut on the other side of the bay.
“Thank you, Ben!” Satine gasped in relief, looking back out a small window at the crawling, skittering droids that were flinging themselves at the thick durasteel wall between them and their prey.

She shivered and turned to him with a smile before impulsively taking his face in her hands and giving him a happy kiss of relief.

*Oh*, Obi-Wan found himself thinking in surprise. *This.. this is nice.*

“Is everyone alright?” Ahsoka asked, turning away from the doors when she saw they would hold.

Startled out of the kiss, Satine gasped and covered her mouth with her hands as she took in Obi-Wan’s wide eyes. “I’m sorry! Forgive me! It was the adrenaline! I did not mean to accost you so, Padawan Kenobi.”

Obi-Wan merely blinked and turned a shade of crimson his master was fairly sure could not be found in nature.

Ahsoka, for her part, said nothing, knowing drawing attention to it would only make things even more awkward.

*Later. We’ll talk about that later when we’re safe.*

---

*Melausta, Two months after leaving Mandalore.*

The next set of jumps were thankfully uneventful and for a moment it seemed Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine could finally relax a little.

They landed in a quiet spaceport where no one looked at them twice, and, after renting a room in a local inn, Obi-Wan volunteered to stand guard over Satine in their room so that Ahsoka could go send a coded message back to the Temple from the roof of the inn.

Pulling out her personal communicator, Ahsoka set the signal to one of the Jedi Order scramble codes, chewing on her lower lip as she waited to receive confirmation from the holo-net relay system that would bounce her message around from satellite to satellite before it reached the communication specialists working for the Order.

“This is Jedi Knight, Ahsoka Tano, scramble code three, care of the primary school,” she spoke into the com. “Our guest is still with us. We’re currently on Melausta and trying to find a way to get back to Coruscant. We’ve been chased all over the Mid-Rim and the Expansion area by bounty hunters, I am almost certain are being sent by an informant within the Duchess’ supporters. I have my suspicions on who the mole might be but it’s nothing I can say here.”

Ahsoka’s com let out a fifteen-second warning beep to signal she was going to be cut off so she hurried on. “It seems our own ship is too well-known at this point, so we’re going to attempt to trade for passage on a ship to Coruscant or a friendlier planet. But if there’s anyone in the vicinity, we need your help. BADLY. Tano out.”

With five sharp beeps, the holo-relay system cut Ahsoka off and she hit send on her message, hoping it would reach its destination soon enough for a friendly Jedi to catch wind of it.
The next day, after a plain breakfast and some caf that had more in common with Anakin’s favorite brand of engine degreaser than an actual beverage, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan went looking for someone to sell their ship to. They were hoping to make enough money to buy tickets on a modest passenger ship that was heading directly to Coruscant but, as they soon learned, all the ships that traveled through Melausta made stops at Tanaab, Toydaria, Bothawui or other larger ports of call along the way. The trio agreed they wouldn’t really be safe until they got to either Coruscant or a planet like Alderaan and Chandrilla and, as it stood, there were no direct flights there either.

“Could we simply repair this ship and continue on as we have?” Satine asked, throwing her disappointing tea into a nearby garbage receptacle as they returned to the battered yacht. “Ben is quite handy with repair work.”

“We need a new converter and power cells,” Obi-Wan shook his head. “And this hyperdrive has already been rebuilt once before. I’ve found several patch jobs in there that I’m not sure can take much more abuse.”

“And we don’t have any credits to purchase what we would need to repair it with.” Ahsoka frowned, her hands over her chest. “That ship is all the wealth we have since we can’t access your funds without letting the informant know where you are.”

Satine’s brows furrowed over her blue eyes, icy with anger. “I hope my uncle has found the abominable traitor and locked them away so they can harm no one else. I cannot believe they have managed to sneak past my own security forces and put my friends and family at such risk!”

“I’m sure the Count is doing his best,” Ahsoka sighed as she looked up at the ship, a new idea forming. “Maybe we should catch a ride on a freighter instead of a passenger ship.”

“We can’t take Satine on a freighter!” Obi-Wan gasped, staring at his master in horror. “That’s too dangerous!”

Ahsoka pursed her lips, feeling a little chastised. “It’s not that dangerous and I’m sure the bounty hunters would never think to look for us there.”

“Perhaps we might consider that as a last resort?” Satine offered, placing a gentle hand on Obi-Wan’s arm. “I am certain Knight Tano would not try to book us on a spice freighter or something equally disreputable.”

Ahsoka gave Satine a thankful smile before she walked into the ship. “C’mon, Padawan. Let’s get this hunk of junk cleaned up and see how much we can get for it.”

After an hour of cleaning and light repair work, and another two hours wandering the local market, two things became clear.

They were never going to get what the freighter was worth.

And somehow, despite their every effort, the bounty hunters had managed to track them down to Melausta.

“I think our first set of friends have found us again,” Satine whispered to Obi-Wan as they trailed behind Ahsoka through the busy market. “They’re at the end of this road on the left hand side.
They’re wearing the colors of revenge.”

Obi-Wan found it odd that the Mandalorian color for revenge was green, but who was he to criticise another people’s culture? Especially ones who were trying to kill him. “Master, it seems we are about to be reunited with some unwelcome acquaintances.”

“Again?” Ahsoka muttered as she took a hard right back to the spaceport. “These guys are relentless. No wonder the Emp...s wanted to hire them.”

“Who are the Emps?” Obi-Wan asked, confused as he and Satine picked up their pace to keep up with Ahsoka’s longer stride.

“I’ll tell you later,” Ahsoka said, waving Obi-Wan’s question away as they turned down a new row.

Satine stayed close to Obi-Wan’s side and he did his best to stay in Ahsoka’s wake as she wove the Force around them, silently urging the passing civilians to get out of their way without drawing any more undue attention.

Their way off the planet and out of the situation they found themselves wasn’t far away.

They just had to get to it without being seen. She was sure of it.

“Are they following us?” Ahsoka asked, closing her eyes to reach out, to see if she could more clearly locate their destination through the Force. It felt like it was only a few hundred meters away at most.

“I don’t think…” Obi-Wan peered around a garishly colored stall that was selling outrageously expensive shawls and let out a Mandalorian curse before he pulled his head back around. “Yes. They’re at the top of the hill and headed this way.”

“They’re relentless!” Satine gasped, attempting to peer around the stall as well before Obi-Wan reached out to stop her. “Let me go! I should be allowed to see the men sent to kill me!”

“You can see them when we capture them and lock them away in jail, Your Grace,” Ahsoka said, her mind finally zeroing in on the source of the call from the Force. “We need to run. Now.”

“Run?” Obi-Wan asked in confusion but had no more time to argue as his master took off down the road. Grabbing Satine’s hand, Obi-Wan followed her, weaving in and out of stalls and past shops as they fled, the Force rushing past them like they were riding a speeder through a crisp Coruscant morning.

For a minute, it seemed they would get away without incident but then the sounds of shouts and screams broke out, making it clear the bounty hunters had given up all pretense of subtlety.

“Keep up!” Ahsoka ordered as she looked back over her shoulder at Obi-Wan and Satine, who were scrambling to match her longer strides. “We’re almost there!”

“Where are we going?” Satine asked, Obi-Wan by her side. “Master Ahsoka, where are you taking
Behind them the sounds of chaos and shrieking grew louder as the bounty hunters tried to barrel their way through the market; one fired off several rounds into the air, sending the panicked crowd into a wild frenzy as they tried to get away.

A passing skiff loaded with crates was crossing the last road between them and the spaceport and in a flash of sudden insight, Obi-Wan reached out with the Force and yanked one of the repulsor lifts clean off of one of the corners of the machine, sending the whole vehicle and droid into an emergency stop right in the middle of the street.

The resulting commotion hid their flight and gave them the cover they needed to skid into the spaceport, unnoticed by the city authorities hurrying in the other direction to deal with the rogue Mandalorian bounty hunters antagonizing their primary business district.

“What are we doing back here?” Obi-Wan gasped for air as he came to a stop next to Ahsoka and Satine.

“Getting out of here,” Ahsoka said, pulling out the key and data sticks to their battered freighter. She followed the soft whisper of the Force, moving quickly past a flurry of sentients and droids as Obi-Wan and Satine struggled to keep up.

They came to the port’s larger docking bays and found one freighter was just about done loading up its goods as a Twi’lek stood out front, scanning a datapad.

Ahsoka walked up to him and put her best smile on. “Excuse me, but how much for passage on this ship?”

The Twi’lek blinked in surprise, peering at Ahsoka and the two humans behind her. “You want to book a ride on this ship?”

“Yes,” Ahsoka said, holding up a holo projector of their ship. “Will this get us seats?”

The Twi’lek frowned at the trio before he took the projector and examined the ship. “Where is this?”

“Landing spar Grek, Bay 15,” she replied smoothly. “It’s all yours if you’ll let us on that ship.”

The Force hummed loudly, pulsing and coursing against Ahsoka’s mind, suddenly moving through Obi-Wan’s blood as if pumped by his heart. There was no way Satine could feel the mounting tension in the Force and yet she twisted her fingers together just inside the long sleeves of her outer garment.

“Do you have the papers for this vessel?”

Ahsoka held them out in the palm of her hand. “Do we have a deal?”

Punching something into his datapad, the Twi’lek turned it around to see that three berths had been purchased for “Mol Eliza” and her two children. “Does that work for you, ma’am?”

Ahsoka nodded and handed over the datasticks. “A pleasure doing business with you.”

“And you as well, Madame Eliza,” the Twi’lek said with a bow. “I’m Captain Ivel. Welcome aboard the Distant Haven.”

“Thank you,” Ahsoka sighed and hurried Obi-Wan and Satine onto the ship without a backward
glance, the Force ebbing away as they climbed aboard the ship and were shown by a droid to a small corner of the main storage room, where they would be staying during their flight to freedom.

“What are we doing?” Satine asked, horrified that Ahsoka had just given away their only valuable in an attempt to hide from some bounty hunters that were likely already in police custody. “Why are we here?”

“The city security forces aren’t going to be able to hold those mercs for long,” Ahsoka explained, sitting down against a bulkhead and trying to find a comfortable position as she watched an old droid shuffle the last bit of cargo onto the ship. “And by the time they get out, we’ll be long gone, with possibly a full day or two’s head start on them.”

Obi-Wan pursed his lips and inhaled sharply, working over his master’s logic before noticing a very large flaw. “But we don’t know where we’re going. What if this ship is heading deeper into Hutt Space or back towards Mandalore?”

Satine paled at that, her lips thinning at the thought.

“We have to trust in the Force, Obi-Wan.”

“That’s everything, Sal!” came the shout from the boarding ramp as Captain Ivel pounded his way up into the ship. “Let’s get those engines going! We have a deadline to meet!”

The low purr of the engines coughed and sputtered to life before they finally settled into the muted roar of lift off. As the Twi’lek passed by their corner of the ship, Ahsoka called out to him. “Excuse me, Captain Ivel? Where is this ship headed?”

“Don’t you think you should have asked me that before you traded your ship?” the green Twi’lek smiled, his hands resting on his hips. “We’re on a direct flight to Tatooine.”

Chapter End Notes

You see?

Tatooine.

^_^b

I wonder if Gardulla the Hutt is still big into gambling?

You can find me on tumbler at Fireflyfish.
Tatooine

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Desperately fleeing the relentless pursuit of the bounty hunters sent by Culling Blade, Ahsoka Tano and Obi-Wan Kenobi have fled with the Duchess of Mandalore, Satine Kryze, across the Outer Rim. Out of time and with nowhere else to run, Ahsoka makes a bold decision to trade their starship for passage on a freighter.

A freighter bound for the desert planet of Tatooine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Melausta on the Outer Rim.

A Republic cruiser flew through the atmosphere, smoothly gliding over the spaceport of the planet’s capital city.

Hovering in place for a moment as the landing gear deployed, the vermilion ship slowly sank down into its assigned landing bay. White, billowing clouds of steam jetted out of the ship’s exhaust vents, nearly obscuring the boarding ramp that was quickly lowered.

A humanoid figure strode out, hard-soled boots ringing against the duracrete walls of the landing bay. He stepped into the warm midday sunlight and pulled off the voluminous hood that covered his brown hair and blunt features. Taking out his personal communications device, the man keyed in a frequency. “This is Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn and I have landed on Melausta.”

There were several minutes of silence as the message bounced through the express relays of the holonet system before the reply came back.

“Understood, Master Jinn,” Mace Windu’s voice crackled over the com, low and serious. “Please inform the Temple when you have located the Duchess of Mandalore, Knight Tano, and Padawan Kenobi. May the Force be with you. Windu out.”

The line went dead and Qui-Gon tucked his com back into his belt and took off into the bustling city with one thing on his mind.

I’m coming, Obi-Wan.

Three days later it became clear that while Obi-Wan, Knight Tano, and the Duchess had been in the capital city of Melausta, they were no longer there and most likely hadn’t been there for two weeks, maybe more. The local magistrate helpfully explained that there had been a bit of a scuffle with some
Mandalorian bounty hunters about three weeks back but no one had been able to charge them with anything more onerous than disturbing the peace.

“Some of those boys work for Jabba and the Hutt Syndicate,” the magistrate explained, showing Qui-Gon the footage of the fracas in the market district. “So there wasn’t a lot of push from the judiciary to indict them. And nobody’s seen a Jedi on Melausta in years! Truth be told, the Hutts are the law out here, Master Jedi.”

Qui-Gon frowned at the holo footage with his arms folded over his chest. “The citizens of this planet are content to let known criminals and bounty hunters walk free on their streets?”

“You’re mighty far away from Coruscant, Master Jedi,” the magistrate shrugged, pulling out a data stick and handing it over to Qui-Gon. “People here are just glad they won’t be kidnapped and sold into slavery on Nar Shaddaa. I’m sorry we can’t be of more help to you.”

Qui-Gon took the data stick with a brusque gesture and thanked the local law enforcement officer for his help before marching out of the building and back to his ship.

He would use the onboard computer to process the data stick in the hopes of finding some clue to Obi-Wan’s whereabouts. The footage was the only real lead he had, what with the Force silent and still on the subject of the boy. No matter how deeply he meditated, nothing seemed to spark in his awareness and there was a growing, cold dread in his heart that he would find him too late.

*I knew Tano would lead you into danger, Obi-Wan. I only hope I can find you before she carelessly gets you hurt.*

---

Two days later, he still had not found anything that would help.

“And you’re positive there’s nothing?” Qui-Gon frowned at the hologram of Master Jocasta Nu hovering above his ship’s onboard holoprojector. “Nothing at all?”

“I’m sorry, Qui-Gon,” Master Nu shook her head, frowning. “I have been over the footage twice myself, as have Masters Plo and Windu. Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi are nowhere to be found. The droid analysis reports the same finding.”

“But there has to be something there!” Qui-Gon insisted, leaning back in his chair and folding his arms over his chest. “They couldn’t have just vanished!”

“All we can do is trust in the Force and wait for them to contact us,” Master Windu said, his face appearing in the flickering blue light of the projector. “I understand your concerns, Qui-Gon, but the Senate has an assignment for you and I cannot put it off any longer. You must return to Coruscant. Another Jedi will take over the search for Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi.”

Qui-Gon grit his teeth and bowed his head to Master Windu, the Master of the Order. “Yes, Master Windu. I understand. Who will be taking over the search in my absence?”

“Master Tinn is on his way as we speak,” Mace said, hoping that the mention of a sitting member of the Council being dispatched to find two lost Jedi would soothe Jinn’s hackles. “We are all worried about Ahsoka and Obi-Wan, but you are needed here, Qui-Gon. Once we have located them and assured the Duchess’s safety, you will be the first person I call.”
Nodding, Qui-Gon bowed to the hologram. “Thank you, Master Windu. I will depart shortly.”

And with that he cut off the feed to the Temple and let out a particularly florid curse in Bacchi. He rested his hands on the communications console in his ship, unable to help calling out into the Force. *Where are you, Obi-Wan?*

---

To say that Tatooine was hot would not do it proper justice.

Obi-Wan couldn’t really think of a word that could do the desert planet on the Outer Rim justice but “hot” just didn’t seem up to the task. He liked “blistering” or “scorching” but they didn’t quite encompass the blinding, searing light of the twin suns of Tatoo 1 and Tatoo 2. While the length of the day was similar to that of Coruscant with only a few extra hours of sunlight added, those hours seemed brutally exhausting and cruel to Obi-Wan, who just wanted some peace from the heat and the stark brightness overhead.

And that didn’t even begin to cover what all this sun and ultraviolet radiation was doing to his skin. If he got out of this mess without third degree burns, he told himself, he would consider it a miracle.

“Thank you for letting me borrow your robe, Ben,” Satine murmured from where she stood next to him as they waited for Ahsoka to emerge from the cantina she had stepped into looking for information. If there was any consolation to Obi-Wan’s suffering on Tatooine, it was that he had spared Satine further misery, like a true Jedi Knight.

“You are more than welcome, S-Satine.” Obi-Wan stumbled over the Duchess’ given name, feeling scandalously informal. They had decided on the flight to Tatooine that it would be dangerous to refer to Satine by her titles and Obi-Wan had spent most of the flight stammering over her name and feeling even more like an idiot than he usually did.

Ahsoka finally had to step in and suggest with a smile, “You could always call her ‘my lady’. Then you’re still being respectful but a stranger might simply think you’re being extra romantic with your girlfriend.”

Satine had been in the refresher at the time and so Obi-Wan felt free to hiss at his master. “The Duchess is not my girlfriend, Master! I am a Jedi and she is the leader of the Mandalorian people! A relationship between us is impossible and against the Jedi Code!”

Ahsoka nodded solemnly at her padawan’s observation. “I agree. Those are all very good reasons why Satine should not be your girlfriend.”

Obi-Wan watched Ahsoka out of the corner of his narrowed eyes. “I sense a ‘but’ is coming, Master, and I do not think I am going to like it.”

“But if you do decide to make a go of it, I support you,” Ahsoka grinned, pulling out some ration bars and offering one to Obi-Wan who refused in a mortified huff. “Satine is a lovely young woman and I don’t think you could do better than the ruler of a planet.”

“Master!” Obi-Wan groaned, covering his hands and wishing they were on a planet so he could beg the Force to open up a bottomless pit and swallow him whole.

In the end, Obi-Wan chose to stumble his way through Satine’s name in the interest of her safety and
also because a small part of him was secretly thrilled at the prospect at being allowed to cast aside his propriety for the mission.

But only for the mission. Once they were safely back on Coruscant, Obi-Wan was fully prepared to go back to using the proper and more respectful “Your Grace”.

Still, it is nice to call her by her name, Obi-Wan thought.

“Who in their right mind thought it was a good idea to colonize this hellish planet?” Satine grumbled, pulling the hood of Obi-Wan’s robes further down to give herself more shade. “And why haven’t they built any kind of protection from the suns? Mandalore is a desert now but we don’t live exposed to elements like this. It’s barbaric!”

Obi-Wan chuckled softly and rummaged around in his go bag lying slung over one shoulder. He pulled out a small metal canister filled with cool water that Ahsoka had given him earlier that morning.

They each had one and he knew for a fact that Satine had already gone through hers. “Thirsty?”

Satine let out a gasp of delight and took the canister and was unscrewing the cap when she stopped and turned to look at Obi-Wan, her brows furrowed and her expression worried. “Were you just going to let me drink all your water without saying anything?”

Obi-Wan flushed, which was hard to see under his sunburn, and looked away. “I… thought something cool might take your mind off this sandy hellscape we find ourselves in.”

“Ben Kenobi!” Satine said, looking horrified as she reached out to give Obi-Wan a good swat on the arm. “You… you… stupid boy! Take your water back! I will not be responsible for your death by dehydration.”

Obi-Wan took the drink canister back from Satine and tucked it back into his bag with a guilty relief. “Thank you, Satine. I shall endeavor not to expire today.”

Satine nodded, mollified. “Good. I should hate to have to explain that to Master Ahsoka.”

“Explain what to me?” Ahsoka asked as she emerged from the cantina, a smile on her face as she tucked a handful of credits into a pouch on her hip. “What did I miss?”

Obi-Wan was going to explain his chivalrous actions but Satine got to them first. “Ben was going to gallantly give me the last of his water because I was childishly complaining about this accursed heat,” Satine announced, her head high. “And I made him take it back as I do not relish the idea of him dying from dehydration or the having to explain his untimely demise.”

Ahsoka blinked in confusion, her gaze jumping from Obi-Wan to Satine and back again as she arched one brow. “Right. Well, the good news is, I’ve got enough money for an early dinner. Bad news is, there’s a big podrace coming up and there’s no place to stay.”

Pulling her hood up over her montrals, Ahsoka moved forward into the busy central thoroughfare of Mos Espa with Obi-Wan and Satine at her side. Since it was the main artery of traffic and business in the city, the street was lined by stalls and shops, each one selling something different and the merchants calling out in a wide variety of languages but predominantly in Huttese.

Satine stayed close to Obi-Wan’s side as they walked, asking softly what different sellers were saying, and he happily translated for her. They passed a stand selling exotic food from as far away as Corellia and one stand that offered what it was calling traditional Mandalorian “Fire Food” once Obi-
Wan translated it back into Basic.

“Oh! It’s trac’lo’ras!” Satine smiled as she drifted over to the stall. “It smells heavenly.”

Ahsoka followed Obi-Wan over to Satine and the Jedi agreed that the skewers of spiced meat looked and smelled divine. She fished out the credits necessary for two skewers and handed them over to the seller, who bowed his head in thanks and said something in a language she wasn’t very familiar with.

Continuing on their way, Satine let out a happy sigh at the little piece of home. “Oh this is delicious! When I was younger and my mother would take me to the market, she would always buy one and share it with me.”

“Master, would you like the rest of mine?” Obi-Wan offered, having eaten about a third of his skewer and unwilling to let Ahsoka starve if he could help it. “It’s quite good but I’m not sure I should put so much on my stomach with all this heat.”

Smiling back at her padawan, Ahsoka took the offered food. “Thank you, Obi-Wan.”

You won’t be too hungry? she thought as they stepped out of the way of an oncoming landspeeder. And why is Satine wearing your robe?

Obi-Wan glanced up at Ahsoka and bit his lower lip. I… I wanted to protect her from the sun.

Obi-Wan! Ahsoka shook her head and pulled off her robe, with a swirl and draped it over Obi-Wan’s shoulders. “There. That’s better.”

“But what about you?” Obi-Wan protested but allowed his master to pull the hood up and hide him in its shadows anyway. She could sense his relief in the Force, cool and sweet.

“I’ll be fine,” Ahsoka promised as they came to a stop at the corner of another street, watching the ambling, colorful crowd of Outer Rim civilization pass them by.

Ducking under a nearby awning, it was startling to see how much a difference simple shade made in the omnipresent heat and blinding haze of the Tatooine sunlight. Ahsoka hadn’t really understood her master’s hatred of his home planet, but she was starting to get an inkling.

The three of them paused under the protective shade of a droid merchant’s shop as they watched the chaotic swirl of Mos Espa pass them by. Beings from all corners of the galaxy were there but it was easy to tell the natives from the visitors.

People from off-planet had a faint pink softness about them as their bodies began to adjust to the relentless heat and dryness. They were the ones throwing back expensive canisters of water and dousing themselves or their necks in an attempt to beat the heat at its own game and they left far too much delicate skin bared to the elements.

The natives were the ones covered up in the light colors of sand and dunes, their skin dark, faces sharp and in some, prematurely aged. They stuck to the shade as much as they could, their loose robes flowing and allowing what breeze there was to help stave off the heat.

The Force seemed particularly riotous on Tatooine, as if the sheer variety of people and purposes gave a new dimension to it that Ahsoka had rarely experienced and Obi-Wan had never felt before.

“Are you gonna buy something or just take up space?” the owner of the stall muttered as he stepped out from the cool shadows of his shop. “I’m not running an inn!”
Ahsoka held up her hands and gestured for Obi-Wan and Satine to move on ahead of her. “My apologies, friend. We’ll be on our way.”

“Lazy off-worlders,” the man grumbled, shuffling back inside. “Bunch of no-goods and gamblers making everything a mess for the Boonta.”

Frowning, Ahsoka hurried to catch up to Satine and Obi-Wan, who were now standing on the side of the road watching something up ahead.

When she stepped up next to her padawan she saw what had frozen the two teens in place.

A Nikto and a Weequay were laughing loudly as they stood on either side of a young human woman who was holding a package close to her chest and trying to get away from them. There was a growing circle of space around the trio as people backed away from the scene of the young woman and her harassers, who were picking at the braids in her hair and the protective cloak she was wearing.

“Sarela! Did you boss give you the day off?” The Weequay grinned as he leaned in closer. “You should come spend it with me! I’ll take real good care of you.”

“Don’t listen to that chuta!” The Nikto sneered, wrapping an arm around the girl as he tried to guide her away from the front of the large shop she was trying to purchase goods in. “Everybody knows Trazz is all talk and no meat if you catch my drift!”

“Let go of me!” the girl shouted, trying to break free. “Get your hands off of me!”

There were mutters from the crowd around Ahsoka, whispers about how “Someone should do something,” and then replies of “Won’t matter. They’re Gardulla’s men. Nobody messes with Gardulla.” Anger, frustration, and defeated resignation colored the Force around them.

Obi-Wan seethed at the sight and Ahsoka found it hard to disagree with him. He looked up at his master, his expression pleading for permission to go break a few bones to protect the young woman being accosted.

Minutely shaking her head, Ahsoka reluctantly tried to lead Obi-Wan and Satine past the thickest part of the crowd.

We can’t put Satine in danger like that. If we act, her identity might be revealed and I really don’t like our chances on Tatooine of all places, Ahsoka explained to Obi-Wan, who bristled with outrage as he followed his master, his jaw clenched.

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan managed to grind out, trying to guide the Duchess through the crowd. “We’re going, Satine.”

“We can’t!” Satine hissed, keeping her voice low as they struggled through the crowd mesmerized by the ongoing scene. “We can’t let those brutes hurt that poor woman!”

“Master says we cannot risk the danger of exposing you,” Obi-Wan explained, even as he struggled to accept his master’s logic. While he knew it made the most sense and would keep the three of them out of danger, it went against the very fiber of his being, of the Jedi Code and his own morals and what made it even worse was that he could sense his master hating her decision just as much as he did.

“But.. but that’s wrong,” Satine said, looking back at the poor girl. “What if something happens to her?”
Ahsoka closed her eyes and tried to tell herself that she was doing the right thing. That it was more important to keep Satine and Obi-Wan safe.

“Maybe we’re just not being convincing enough,” the Nikto sneered as he patted the blaster on his hip as his friend snickered at his side. “Now why don’t you come with us, Sarela. Me and Trazz just wanna show you a good time. What’s wrong with that?”

“Be a good girl and we won’t tell Gardulla that your folks are behind on their water taxes,” the other thug said, picking up on his buddy’s odious suggestion. “If you’re really nice to us, we’ll forget all about ‘em for a while.”

“No! Please! Let me go!” Sarela pleaded, as the crowd started to disperse, already knowing the endgame of this little overt display of bullying. Things like this happened every day in Mos Espa and all over Tatooine and sometimes it was just better to turn your head and accept it than hope for something more. Something better.

Ahsoka closed her eyes and took a deep breath. *I can’t let this go.*

“You know, I don’t think she wants to go anywhere with you,” she called out, the crowd quickly pulling away like the tide rolling out. “In fact, I think you two should leave the girl alone and go about your business.”

The thugs turned slowly to stare at Ahsoka in a kind of dumb-struck, bug-eyed shock. “What did you say?” the Nikto asked.

“I said, you should leave her alone,” Ahsoka replied, striding out toward the men, her head held high, her gaze calm and level and her hands loose at her side. She could feel Obi-Wan’s fierce pride radiating in the Force and Satine’s relief, weaker but still there. She was glad to know that they were all agreed that there were just some things they couldn’t ignore.

“And who the hell are you?” the Nikto spat, jabbing a finger at Ahsoka’s chest.

Ahsoka canted her head ever so slightly and smiled. “A concerned citizen. Now I suggest you and your friend leave... Sarela? It’s Sarela, right?”

The girl nodded, her eyes round in surprise.

“A concerned citizen. Now I suggest you and your friend leave Sarela alone.”

The girl nodded, her eyes round in surprise.

“Good,” Ahsoka’s gaze never left the two thugs. “I suggest you and your friend leave Sarela alone.”

“Are you gonna make us?” the other man sneered, arms folded over his chest. “Sarela’s a real good friend of ours, aren’t ya?”

“I d-don’t want any t-trouble,” the girl stammered, looking frantically from Ahsoka to Gardulla’s men. “P-please! I just… I just want… to go home.”

Ahsoka glanced at Sarela, at the panic taking over her spirit, and her lips pulled into a thin line. “You heard her, gentlemen. Let Sarela go home.”

“Kark you, you headtailed bitch!” The Nikto snarled and lashed out with a fist, no doubt hoping to catch Ahsoka by surprise. The crowd, drawn back by Ahsoka’s actions, let out a gasp.

“What the hell?” The Weequay stammered as Ahsoka stood there, as solid as the rocky bluffs of the wastes, her blue eyes bright with anger and the Nikto’s fist caught neatly in her hand. “No way! There’s no karking way!”
The Nikto let out another curse as Ahsoka used his fist and his arm to unbalance him and fling him to the ground. “My arm! That bitch broke my arm!” he howled in pain.

“You’ll live,” Ahsoka sniffed and looked at the Weequay still standing in front of her.

She could feel Obi-Wan’s spirit shifting through the Force to whisper to Sarela, telling her without words to slip into the crowd and run away back to her family, which she did.

“Do you want to try your luck too, friend?” she asked the Weequay.

Enraged this strange woman was making a mockery of him and his buddy, the Weequay pulled out a knife and lashed out at Ahsoka in a wide arc.

She dodged it easily, hopping backwards as the thug advanced. His eyes were wide as he stared at her, caught somewhere between fury and fear. She could tell that he didn’t really want to be in this fight but he couldn’t let the challenge to him and his friend stand. Not when Ahsoka had humiliated them in public like that.

No one would ever respect them again if word got out about this.

He advanced with wild swings, once, twice, and then a third before Ahsoka blocked his right arm with her left, twisted it over and around, pinning it against her side.

The Weequay cried out in pain and dropped his knife.

With her opponent’s torso exposed, Ahsoka pummeled him with a few hits to the guts before she gave him a proper upper cut and let him fall over backward to lie gasping on the ground as he spat red blood into the dust.

Ahsoka stared down at the thugs, her blue eyes brighter than the sky overhead. “Go back to your boss. And never bother that girl again. Do you understand me?”

Compulsion was laced thick through her words, and the Nikto and the Weequay slowly shambled upright and stumbled back into the crowd, muttering to themselves as the curious onlookers dispersed and normalcy resumed.

Ahsoka let the crowd surge up around and past her, letting it carry Obi-Wan and Satine over to her side. She looked at them and gave them a half smile at Obi-Wan’s approving nod and Satine’s relieved and proud grin.

“That was truly amazing, Master Tano,” Satine said as she followed Ahsoka and Obi-Wan back to the edge of the street and the fringes of the crowd. “Those ruffians will certainly think twice about accosting any more innocent people after that.”

“I just hope Sarela is alright,” Ahsoka said as she slid past a large Ithorian arguing with a Rodian about a speeder part as if the entire encounter hadn’t even happened.

Every one had short memories on Tatooine.

“And I think it would be a good idea if we could find a place to stay for the night. Especially after what just happened. I don’t want those idiots to come back looking for us with more friends and even more weapons.”

“But where can we stay?” Obi-Wan asked, following his master and keeping Satine close to his side. “We haven’t enough credits for an inn and we don’t have a ship anymore.”
Ahsoka let out a sigh and came to a stop between two shops, one selling off-world fruits and vegetables and the other selling a variety of alcohol from all around the Outer Rim. She pulled Obi-Wan and Satine close as they started to discuss what they were going to do about lodgings.

“I’m sure there’s some place we can stay,” Ahsoka assured her padawan and the Duchess. “Mos Espa is big enough to have a place that we can afford somewhere and then tomorrow we can see about earning some credits to get us off this planet.”

“Perhaps we could try one of the inns near the spaceport?” Satine suggested. “I thought one of them said the nightly rent was ten credits for a room. I would be happy to sleep on the floor if it would save us money.”

“You don’t want to do that,” an accented, feminine voice interrupted their conversation, carried on the faintest breeze. “That’s where the night flowers work.”

Ahsoka looked back over her shoulder at the owner of the voice, a petite woman with dark hair coiled into a thick braid at the base of her neck. She was inside the produce stall, picking out some brightly colored sunset fruits from Corellia and setting them into a basket that was covered with a bright green cloth.

Reaching out to the Force on instinct, Ahsoka found it was silent but warm and reassuring to her senses. “Thank you, my friend. If you don’t mind me asking, is there a place you would recommend we stay?”

“What’s a night flower?” Satine asked Obi-Wan, who leaned over and whispered the explanation in her ear. She let out a gasp and turned bright red, slapping a hand over her mouth.

The woman smiled at the fruit in her hand and looked up at Ahsoka, her expression exhausted but her dark eyes kind. “Not if you’re considering the Night Flower Garden. Do you have no money?”

Ahsoka shook her head. “No. We… we didn’t plan on coming to Tatooine.”

The woman nodded, a sad smile tugging at the corner of her lips. “Most people don’t. What is your name?”

“Ahsoka. This is Obi-Wan and her name is Satine.”

Obi-Wan bowed and Satine gave a little curtsey as they chorused, “Hello.”

“Are they… your children?” the woman asked, her brows puzzled as she put the last of her shopping in the basket. She pulled a tan scarf up over her head and tossed the loose edge over her shoulder, the warmth in the Force leaving with her as she moved away.

“I protect them,” Ahsoka explained, watching the other woman as she walked up to the shop keeper and pulled back the cloth that was covering the food, handing over a few credits after he gave her the total.

“Give Gardulla my best,” the merchant said as the woman stepped out onto the street and gave Ahsoka a long look before beckoning her to follow.

They moved down the street, the woman a few feet ahead of them, weaving in and out of the crowd, gliding past clutches of people. She came to the end of the busier section of the main road and waited for Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine to catch up.

“I saw what you did for Sarela,” the woman said, holding a hand up by her mouth, her words soft. “I
saw you stand up to Gardulla’s thugs. I haven’t seen anyone stand up to my master’s men in a long
time.”

“Your master?” Satine echoed, her eyes growing wide with a dawning realization. “Oh no!”

The woman glanced at Satine but did not reply as she moved ahead, looking Ahsoka up and down.
“You are right. You will need to stay out of sight. You are very distinctive, even for a mercenary.”

“My master’s not a mercenary,” Obi-Wan tried to explain, reaching for his lightsabers when Ahsoka
stopped him.

_Mercenary works for now, Obi-Wan. Let’s not blow our cover just yet._

“Well whatever she is, she needs to hide and you do too,” the woman explained, giving Obi-Wan
and Satine a look as she folded her arms over her chest. “Your accents make you exotic here and
exotic things do not stay free for long on Tatooine. You may stay with me and my son. It is the least
I can do after what you did for Sarela.”

“We couldn’t,” Ahsoka said, sensing the anxiety and tension coming off of the woman in heavy,
swamping waves. What she was offering was clearly going to put her and her son at risk and Ahsoka
didn’t want to put anymore lives in danger than she absolutely had to. “I’m sure we’ll find some
other place to stay.”

“You won’t,” the woman insisted, shaking her head. “We don’t get many Togruta off-worlders, let
alone females capable of taking down two of Gardulla’s men. Word will get around fast. You’ll be
safer in the slave quarters.”

“The slave quarters?” Ahsoka echoed, the Force louder now in the back of her mind, urging her to
follow the woman, to accept her offer. “You’re a slave?”

“Yes,” the woman explained and stepped out into the sunlight. “Gardulla is my master. My name is
Shmi.”

_Shmi. Her name is Shmi and she has a son._

“My mother’s name was Shmi,” Anakin said one night of a long forgotten siege as they had stared
up at the stars overhead. “And I know she would have liked you, Snips.”

Ahsoka froze, her heart suddenly pounding in her chest as Obi-Wan and Satine almost ran into her.
Her mind went blank.

She struggled for something to say, what to think about this sudden revelation that Anakin’s mother
was there, right in front of her. That their long, hard flight from Mandalore had taken them to right
where they needed to be.

“Master?” Obi-Wan murmured, reaching out to touch the back of Ahsoka’s arm, his spirit brushing
hers, warm and golden with concern. “Are you alright?”

Shmi came to a stop in the middle of the road and looked back at them, confused. “Ahsoka? Are you
coming?”

_You coming or not, Snips?_ A warm memory of a voice thought long lost broke through the stunned
white noise of Ahsoka’s mind, bringing with it a wave of joy, relief, and the sudden terrified
realization that she was about to change the future irrevocably.
There was no going back.

Everything was going to change and it was going to be her responsibility to see that it was for the better.

*Why are you here, if not to change things?* The Presence whispered in the back of Ahsoka’s mind. *Don’t be afraid. You won’t be alone. Obi-Wan is with you. This is as much his destiny as it is yours.*

Ahsoka looked down at Obi-Wan, his furrowed brows and his worry radiating out into the Force, that was swirling around them both like a river about to burst over its banks. He had no idea what was about to happen, who they were about to meet, and how his life was going to change. Ahsoka wanted to pull him into a hug right then and there and shout, “It’s him! We found him! Your padawan and my master. We found Anakin! And we’ll save him this time. We won’t lose him.”

And then it felt like a knife in her heart that she couldn’t tell him, that she couldn’t share just how important and momentous this was.

“Master Tano?” Satine murmured, stepping up next to Obi-Wan. “Shmi is telling us to follow her.”

Ahsoka shook herself out of her thoughts and looked up at Shmi, whose dark eyes were narrowed in suspicion. “I’m sorry. I think the sun is getting to me.”

Shmi shook her head and continued on. “Then we need to get you inside. Come on.”

Shmi told Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, and Satine to wait in an alleyway around the corner from Gardulla’s palace on the edge of Mos Espa. She had to drop off the shopping she had done for the Hutt’s kitchen before she went home for the day.

“You don’t stay in the palace?” Satine asked, puzzled because while her family’s servants and retainers stayed within the Kryze compound, she couldn’t imagine a Hutt allowing their slaves to wander free.

Shmi shook her head with the studied patience of one who had explained this many times before. “No. I have a tracker chip embedded within me so I couldn’t run away even if I stole a ship. The minute I try to leave the atmosphere, the chip detonates, opening an artery or injecting a poison. I don’t know which. The ones who are poisoned, they call them ‘dancers’ because of the seizures the poison causes.”

Satine let out a horrified gasp. “That’s barbaric.”

“That is how it is out here,” Shmi explained, her eyes soft as she reached out to squeeze the young girl’s shoulder. “There is no slavery on your world, is there? This must be hard for you to hear.”

Satine shook her head fiercely. “There should not be slavery anywhere.”

Shmi chuckled softly. “You will get no argument out of me on that topic. Stay here while I take this to the cook. I should be back shortly.”

Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine watched her go, waiting for her to pass out of sight before speaking again, voices quiet and hushed.
“We have to save her,” Satine insisted, her cheeks flushed and eyes bright. “This is wrong! Putting an explosive chip in someone and violating their civil liberties! It’s abhorrent.”

“But we haven’t any credits,” Obi-Wan said, his arms folded over his chest and one hand in front of his mouth as he chewed on his thumbnail. “And we still need to find a way off this planet and back to Coruscant.”

“Perhaps we could barter for something,” Satine suggested as Ahsoka leaned back up against the wall and stared off into the distance, her mind whirling with thoughts and possibilities, different futures unspooling before her like bolts of fabric flung out into a river to wash downstream with the current. “Do we have anything we could sell?”

“Nothing that will free Shmi and get all four of us back to Coruscant,” Obi-Wan said, peering at the bag he had been carrying all day. “It’s mostly Master’s datapads and a few emergency rations and a medkit. Nothing that will fetch us any decent money.”

Satine groaned, rubbing her temples. “If only I could contact my uncle. If he’s found the informant, we could have the money wired here and leave in two days’ time.”

“That is a lovely thought, Satine, but we can’t risk it,” Obi-Wan said, his voice kind but brooking no argument. “I’m sure we’ll think of something. Don’t you agree, Master?”

Obi-Wan’s words startled Ahsoka out of her meditations and she turned to look at the two teenagers next to her. “I’m sorry. I was lost in thought. And there’s five of us. Shmi has a son, remember?”

“Oh, right,” Obi-Wan nodded. “I forgot about him. How old is he?”

“I’m not sure,” Ahsoka shrugged as the Force alerted her to Shmi’s return. “Here she comes!”

Shmi came around the corner and walked down the alleyway to them, pulling her scarf up over her hair. “I hope I didn’t make you wait too long. The taskmaster didn’t want to let me leave early.”

“Did we get you in trouble?” Ahsoka asked as they fell in line behind Shmi, who led them across another wide road before heading into a alleyway between two older buildings.

“No, no!” Shmi said, waving her concerns off. “He understands that I have a young son at home and sometimes he needs me. It’s part of the reason I stay in the slave quarters and not in Gardulla’s palace. They can’t stand to hear him cry.”

“Oh. How old is he?”

“Almost two in a few months,” Shmi answered with a happy smile. “He is my whole world. He has been the best thing to happen to me since I entered into this life.”

As they spoke they crossed over a smaller street and into a part of Mos Espa that had seen better days. The mud brick buildings were built one on top of the other, like a warren or a beehive.

The doors to the different homes were open to allow in the breeze and groups of children ran around, laughing and calling out to each other as they played a complicated game of tag. A quartet of women were sitting in the long shadow of a row of houses, gathered around a battered and dusty table. They were shelling beans as they talked and watched the the neighborhood children.

The youngest of the group, clearly pregnant, was the one who saw them first. “Shmi! You’re back early! Is something wrong? Who are these people?”
“These are my friends, Abarrane,” Shmi answered, gesturing to Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, and Satine. “They protected Sarela from Trazz and Drez.”

“I heard about that!” one of the older woman gasped, peering up at Ahsoka with watery eyes the color of old jade. “Of course, I heard it was a Twi’lek! Thought it was maybe Nalea. Thought she’d finally had enough of those brutes bothering her girlfriend. Well, good job, young one. It couldn’t have happened to a rougher pair of bullies.”

“Thank you,” Ahsoka said, bowing her head. “I just wanted to help.”

“Not enough people in the galaxy like you,” the old woman observed before she caught sight of one of the children up to something dangerous. “Oi! Greedo! Get down from there! You’re going to hurt yourself.”

“How is he?” Shmi asked Abarrane, trading a loaf of bread and some dried figs from the shop for her own bowl of shucked legumes and a package wrapped in waxed flimsi. “Did he give you any trouble?”

“How is he?” Shmi asked Abarrane, trading a loaf of bread and some dried figs from the shop for her own bowl of shucked legumes and a package wrapped in waxed flimsi. “Did he give you any trouble?”

“Of course not,” Abarrane replied with a wide smile. “He was an angel. He’s been napping for about an hour.”

“Oh good,” Shmi sighed, and her relief flooded through the Force.

Ahsoka thought it was strange that someone who did not possess Force sensitivity could have such a direct effect on the Force around her. But whatever that meant, she would have to think about it later, she decided as Shmi invited them into her home. “Please come in. It’s a little small but we can make it work.”

Satine and Obi-Wan entered, followed by Ahsoka, and all three happy to find the temperature dropping once they were out of the sun and protected from the oppressive heat by the stone walls around them.

Shmi came in last and closed the door, activating a small circulation system as she directed her guests into the main living area. “Please, make yourselves comfortable. I’m just going to check up on my son.”

Satine took a seat on a plasticrete chair while Obi-Wan sat down on a wooden bench. He offered it to his master but Ahsoka shook her head. “No. I’m fine. I’d rather stand.”

“I’m surprised at how cool it is,” Satine murmured her eyes taking in the details of construction and the small little decorations Shmi had added, from a colorful, if faded, wall hanging made of knotwork and beading to a thin but well-maintained blanket which was folded carefully over the one upholstered chair in the room that all three had left empty for their host.

“Mud-brick buildings are used in hot and arid climates because the bricks serve as insulation,” Obi-Wan explained to Satine. “It keeps the homes cool in the day and warm at night. The desert can be deadly cold at times.”

“I am aware of what a desert can be like,” Satine replied with a wry grin. “I do come from one, you know.”

Obi-Wan turned red. “I’m sorry! I didn’t meant to imply… Of course you would be well aware of the dangers of such an environment!”

Satine let out a giggle and shook her head as Ahsoka smiled. “I was teasing, Obi-Wan.”
“Ah, well, yes,” Obi-Wan blushed even more and looked away before he searched for a topic to hide his embarrassment. “Did we ever catch Shmi’s son’s name?”

“It’s Anakin,” Shmi said, standing in the hallway that opened onto the room where her guests were sitting, her son tucked up against her side. The little boy let out a soft yawn and tried to bury his face in his mother’s shoulder, clearly wanting to go back to his nap. Shmi shifted him around and gently kissed his forehead, whispering to him that they had guests.

*It’s him. It has to be him,* Ahsoka thought in amazement. *After all this time.*

“These are friends, Ani,” Shmi whispered to her son, rubbing her hand down his back as he slowly woke up and took in the people around him. “This is… Satine, right?”

“Yes,” Satine nodded, wiggling her fingers in greeting. “Hello, Anakin!”

The small boy blinked at her, his little face wrinkled with confusion before his mother turned toward Ahsoka, who stepped away from the wall to walk over to Shmi and Anakin and smile down at the young boy. “This is Ahsoka and she is a Togruta. Can you say ‘Togruta’, Ani?’

Anakin could not say Togruta but he did let out a delighted giggle as he reached for one of Ahsoka’s lekku, his chubby fist grasping in the air. His face lit up, as did the Force around him, filling the room with such a pure, radiant happiness it almost made Ahsoka cry for joy.

Ahsoka gently stroked Anakin’s cheek as Shmi told him it was very rude to pull on someone’s lekku. “Hello, Little One.”

*Hello, Skyguy. I found you.*

And finally, Shmi introduced the last guest. “This young man is Obi-Wan. Say ‘hello’ to Obi-Wan, Ani!”

Obi-Wan gave Anakin a wide grin and bowed his head, meeting the boy’s gaze with his own. “Hello, Anakin. It’s a pleasure to meet… you,” he said, trailing off in wonder and awe at the boy’s brilliant presence in the Force.

Anakin just smiled and shyly mumbled, “Hello.”

Chapter End Notes

**WELCOME TO TANO AND KENOBI, SHMI AND BABY ANAKIN!!!!!**

I am SOOOO excited that Shmi and Anakin have made their first appearance! Everything's going to be just fine now. Totally fine! NOW it's all down hill from here. Yup! We're on easy street now!

¬____¬ Right?

Thanks for reading and commenting and if you'd like to read more of my particular brand of ridiculousness you can find me at [FireflyFish on Tumblr](http://fireflyfish.tumblr.com).
Honest Money

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Stranded on the desert planet of Tatooine on the Outer Rim, Ahsoka Tano, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Satine Kryze are taken in by the generous and compassionate woman named Shmi after she witnesses Ahsoka's defense of an innocent young woman in the Mos Espa marketplace. They discover that Shmi is a slave, owned by Gardulla the Hutt and the mother of a young two year-old named Anakin, a boy both Master and Padawan feel a powerful and immediate connection to.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Obi-Wan stared in wide-eyed shock at the young boy cuddled up against Shmi, a brilliant supernova disguised in the form of an angelic, chubby-cheeked toddler. For him, Anakin glowed, no, radiated in the Force like a newborn star, his aura taking up the entire alcove they were sitting in and most of Shmi’s small apartment. In fact, if Anakin had been awake when they arrived, Obi-Wan was confident he would have been able to sense the boy from outside the building.

Never in his life had Obi-Wan met anyone who had such raw and blinding power in the Force. Not even the masters at the Temple could compare with the purity of the light coming from the small two year-old in Shmi’s arms.

And somehow, beyond all logic and reason, somehow Obi-Wan knew him.

Obi-Wan knew this child.

Anakin...

Shmi cooed at her son, who looked away from Obi-Wan for a moment to receive a kiss on the forehead from his mother and conversation in the room started up again between the women as Obi-Wan sat in his chair, dumbstruck by just how magnetic the boy was. He could hear Satine talking about something, no doubt important and pertinent to their current troubles but Obi-Wan paid it no heed, mesmerized by blue eyes peeking out from under wispy blond bangs that were just starting to curl.

I… I know you. Somehow, I’ve always known you.

A smile blossomed on Anakin’s face and he reached out to Obi-Wan, the brightness of his spirit intensifying. It was clear he wanted to move closer to Obi-Wan but Shmi held him fast against her side, laughing at something Ahsoka said as she quietly shushed Anakin. Ahsoka didn’t seem to be as affected by the boy, and Obi-wan wondered if she couldn’t sense Anakin’s power in the same way he did.

Watching in befuddled amazement, Obi-Wan saw Anakin’s brows furrow he tried to reach out over his mother’s arm for Obi-Wan where he sat on the far side of the room. Obi-Wan waved his hand but
he sensed that it would not be enough for the boy, who decided that maybe wiggling would get him
closer to his intended target.

Satine, Ahsoka and Shmi just laughed at Anakin’s antics as Obi-Wan stared.

Deciding that brute strength wasn’t getting him what he wanted, Anakin went limp and tried to slide
out of his mother’s grasp and down her leg like a stick moving downstream with the flow of the
river.

That got Shmi’s attention and she turned her head to look down at Anakin, surprised. “What are you
doing, Ani? That’s dangerous!”

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to hesitantly ask if he could hold Anakin but he needn’t have worried.

Anakin made his desires quite clear with a very enthusiastic and full body flail in Obi-Wan’s general
direction, happy nonsense sounds filling the room to another soft sigh of delight from Satine and a
broad grin from Ahsoka.

“Alli? What is it?” Shmi asked, confused as her son resorted to bouncing against her hip in between
straining toward Obi-Wan. “Do you want to see Obi-Wan?”

Anakin wiggled with greater strength and let out a plaintive wail. “Waaaa!”

“M-may I hold him, Shmi?” Obi-Wan asked, a little embarrassed that a mere child had affected him
so but he could sense Anakin’s desires so clearly it seemed more expedient to simply ask than wait
for Shmi to decipher Anakin’s intentions.

“Oh, of course,” Shmi said, a little confused as she handed Anakin over to Obi-Wan. “He can be a
bit fussy with new people, so if he starts crying it isn’t your fault.”

Obi-Wan nodded solemnly as he accepted Anakin into his arms and settled the boy on his lap. Shmi
stepped back with a worried expression on her face, but Ahsoka offered to help her cook dinner for
the five of them. Satine offered to help as well, leaving Obi-Wan and Anakin alone together.

Looking down at Anakin, Obi-Wan felt a familiar warmth blossom in his chest as the boy peered up
at him, his eyes round. “Hello there, little one. Aren’t you a bright little star?”

Were you what I felt on that pirate ship? Is that even possible?

Anakin canted his head to the side and stuck his thumb in his mouth, sucking on it as he marveled up
at Obi-Wan. His eyes darted over the older boy’s face before lighting on his padawan braid and he
reached for it with one chubby hand, immediately giggling as he gave the braid a good solid yank.

“Oh! Yes! That’s my braid, Anakin,” Obi-Wan grimaced at another tug on his hair, deftly retrieving
the symbol of his apprenticeship from the boy in his lap who was now trying to snuggle into his
robes. “Ah… are you still tired?”
“No,” Anakin mumbled, closing his eyes and letting the full might of his spirit unfurl to greet Obi-Wan, to give his new and favorite friend an enthusiastic greeting in his special place where everything was bright, shiny and full of energy. His new friend was there, cool, quiet and still, like his mother’s hands when he was sick or a cup of water from Abarrane. Obi-friend was new and different and Anakin wanted to see more and more and…

There was a wall!

Something had stopped Anakin and he recoiled backward, offended. Nothing had ever stopped him before. This was his special place!

His and now Obi-Friend’s.

“Gently, little one,” Obi-Wan murmured as he carefully guided Anakin’s overwhelming Force presence out of his mind, letting out a sigh of relief when the boy’s sheer power was gone from the forefront of his awareness. “Sweet Force, you’re powerful.”

Master? Did you feel that?

Yes, but we’ll talk about it later. I don’t want Shmi thinking we’re here to steal her child. Ahsoka said, sending Obi-Wan a funny image of Satine painstakingly dicing a melon with Shmi’s help.

Nodding, Obi-Wan turned his attention back to Anakin, who was still broadcasting his spirit like a boundary beacon, and smoothed Anakin’s hair back out of his eyes and smiled. “I guess I’m on crèche duty then, young one. Shall we play a game?”

Anakin frowned up at Obi-Wan, his screw up in concentration. He watched Obi-Wan reach down into his bag and rummage around before pulling out small piece of flimsi that he proceeded to crumple up into a little ball.

Obi-Wan could sense the boy’s almost overwhelming curiosity in the Force and he gently pushed Anakin back to the edges of his physical form. “This game is called ‘How High’. And it’s a game that I played when I was your age.”

Picking Anakin up and moving to the bare but clean floor of Shmi’s living room, Obi-Wan held out his hand and reached out with the Force, slowly and steadily levitating the small ball of flimsi up into the air before letting it fall back into his palm.

Anakin was mesmerized and he watched intently as Obi-Wan repeated the process several times. By the time Obi-Wan was done demonstrating how to play, Anakin had fully receded back into himself and the overwhelming radiance was gone.

After a few failures and one wild horizontal Force push, Anakin eventually started to get a feel for how to properly float the flimsi ball up and off of Obi-Wan’s palm. Utterly delighted with his success, Anakin let out a peal of happy laughter, drawing his mother’s attention from the kitchenette.

“Ani, no! Stop that!” Shmi gasped, hurrying over to her son, gathering him into her arms and trying to hide him. “What are you doing?”

“I… I’m sorry!” Obi-Wan gasped, standing up as Ahsoka and Satine rushed back to see what happened. “It was just a game! I promise I meant Anakin no harm!”

“What happened?” Ahsoka asked, her gaze going from Shmi and Anakin to Obi-Wan. “What were you doing, Obi-Wan?”
Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, pleading for understanding. “I was just teaching him ‘How High’! That’s all I swear! I didn’t do anything, Master! I promise!”

Shmi held Anakin close, smoothing his hair back and kissing his forehead, whispering softly to him. “It’s alright, Ani. Shhh… small and still, my little dragon. Small and still.”

Satine frowned, her hands on her hips as she gazed back and forth between the two Jedi and Shmi and Anakin.

Trying to calm the worried mother, Satine stepped forward, gesturing to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. “They’re Jedi, Shmi. I promise you they mean you and Anakin no harm.”

Ahsoka gazed over at Satine with wide eyes, caught off-guard by her forthrightness. “Ah… yes, we are. And like Satine said, I swear to you on my honor as a Jedi that Obi-Wan and I mean you and Anakin no harm at all.”

Shmi looked back over her shoulder at the two of them, doubt and suspicion on her face as she tried to soothe her son, who did not appreciate being unceremoniously removed from the most interesting game he had ever participated in. “You are Jedi? Prove it.”

Obi-Wan and Ahsoka shared a glance and each removed a lightsaber from where they had hidden their blades, Ahsoka’s in the shaft of her boot and Obi-Wan’s tucked behind his back under a tabard.

Ahsoka held her blade out to Shmi. “Here. Take it. Take both of them if you would like.”

Please trust us. We’re not here to hurt you. Ahsoka’s chest constricted with worry and fear that Shmi would kick them out and not only would they have no place to stay but she would forbid them from seeing Anakin again, thus ruining her best chance to save him, and his mother, from a life of slavery.

Shmi took a step forward, and then another, reaching out to take Ahsoka’s lightsaber and snatch it back to her chest. She examined the smooth hilt, the connector from where she hung the blade from her belt, and the activation button. Shmi held it out in front of her, pointing it at Obi-Wan and Ahsoka, her arm shaking. “How do I know you didn’t steal it from a Jedi? How do I know I can trust you?”

Obi-Wan stepped forward, holding up his hands. “Because we’re just like he is. He knows things, doesn’t he? Things he shouldn’t know. He knows who is untrustworthy before anyone else does. Things move around the room when he’s happy or the lights flicker, don’t they?”

And with a slow, steady motion, Obi-Wan held out his hand and lifted the small ball of flimsi off the floor and into his hand. Anakin, squirming to break free of his mother’s hold, reached out with a chubby hand towards the flimsi, grunting with exertion to lift the small, mangled ball into the air with the Force. Shmi watched the small object hover a few inches off of Obi-Wan’s hand before it shot up at the ceiling and fell back to the floor in a rough arc.

Shmi swallowed and thrust the saber hilt forward. “Do that again. Prove to me that Ani didn’t do that.”

Obi-Wan glanced back at Ahsoka, who nodded and gave him permission to do whatever he felt was necessary.

Prove I am a Jedi? If my saber didn’t do it what will?

Obi-Wan straightened his robes and let his eyes wander around Shmi’s living area, trying to breathe through his nervousness and fear. How could he prove to Shmi that they were Jedi, that they weren’t
just two strangers with lightsabers?

His boot brushed against the flimsi ball from before and a bolt of inspiration struck him.

Taking a seat cross-legged in the middle of the floor, Obi-Wan closed his eyes and began to breathe slowly and deeply as his spirit unfurled, mixing and flowing with the Force around them. Ahsoka could feel the warmth of her padawan, like liquid sunlight as it moved past her and Satine, and swirling around Shmi and Anakin.

The Force hummed softly and then, as if it had been given a command no one else could hear, every piece of furniture in the small living area began to lift up off the ground. Slowly, carefully they inched higher and higher, the blanket floating free from the chair it had been draped over, Obi-Wan’s bag bumping gently into the leg of the stool he had been sitting on. Even the rug hovered over the floor, throwing a shadow over Shmi’s foot as she gaped in amazement and Anakin giggled in delight.

_Master, I can’t… hold all of this…_

Ahsoka closed her eyes and took over, steadying out Obi-Wan’s control, smoothing out the weaknesses in his technique. He was still young and while his display of power and control was amazing and a testament to his growing prowess, there was still much he had to learn.

Even so, Ahsoka was so proud of Obi-Wan and he could feel it as they worked together to just as slowly and methodically lower the floating furniture back to the floor.

Anakin found the whole thing delightful and Satine let out a softly murmured curse in Mandalorian. Shmi, however, looked like she wanted to cry. “Jedi… Real Jedi…”

Turning away from the Jedi, Smi let out a soft sob as she hugged Anaking tightly, kissing his forehead and whispering to him in a language the others didn’t know. She pressed a hand to her mouth before nodding and turning back to face Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. “Take him. Take my Ani. Please! Take him before Gardulla can legally claim him. Please, save my son!”

“What?” Obi-Wan blinked, confused and almost exhausted from all the effort he had been expending into the Force. “But he’s not old enough.”

“Please!” Shmi begged, gesturing to Anakin. “He’s special and once Gardulla knows, she will take him away from me. She will sell him to people who will do terrible things to him. You must take him back with you to the other Jedi. Please!”

“We won’t let Gardulla take Anakin away from you, Shmi,” Ahsoka said, taking a step forward to reclaim her saber from Shmi, who was holding Anakin tight. “And we’re definitely not taking him and leaving you behind either.”

“What!” Shmi gasped, watching Ahsoka as she reached forward to ruffle her son’s hair. “What are you talking about? I am a slave and you have no money. You must leave me behind. It is the only way!”

“Nonsense,” Satine huffed, her arms folded over her chest and her mind made up. “We will find a way to free you, Shmi. You have my word of honor as a Mandalorian. Won’t we, Master Jedis?”

Ahsoka turned to smile at Satine and nodded. “Yes, we will.”

_We won’t leave your mother behind this time, Anakin. This time we’re taking the whole Skywalker_
Dinner was a happy affair with Anakin making a sloppy mess of his food and Shmi’s stunned reaction to have two Jedi in her home and eventually learning that Satine was the Duchess of Mandalore.

“A duchess?” Shmi gasped, her expression delighted. “How did you come to be on Tatooine, so far from home?”

“It’s a long story,” Satine said but she and Obi-Wan worked together to regale Shmi with a condensed and lightly dramatized story of their escape from Mandalore and their flight around the Mid and Outer Rim.

Anakin found it exciting but he was also sitting on Ahsoka’s lap, happily playing with her lekku as she tried and failed to get him to eat more of his sweet melon soup. By the time the meal was over, she was wearing more soup on her front than Anakin got into his mouth but Shmi only laughed and said, “He is a picky eater to begin with, so anything I can get in him is good. And he almost never eats tusk melon soup. You did a great job.”

Shmi reached forward to take Anakin out of Ahsoka’s arms and she reluctantly handed him over, feeling cold and bereft as he was carried off to a bath by his mother. While it was strange to think of the small child in Shmi’s arms as the same person as her master, his Force presence was so hauntingly familiar that it almost felt like Anakin was standing behind her, quietly watching over her and her attempts to save his future.

It only made her miss him all the more.

*Oh, Skyguy… if only you were here. If only you could see how amazing Obi-Wan is. I wonder if you ever knew, how much you two really had in common. I… I don’t think you did.*

Ahsoka closed her eyes and bowed her head, the grief for her lost masters pooling in her throat and behind her eyes.

“Master?” Obi-Wan spoke up, his voice quiet and low. “Shmi wants to show us where we can bed down for the night.”

Ahsoka opened her eyes and turned toward her padawan. “That’s good. I don’t know about you but I’m exhausted.”

“You’re not the one who had to play ‘How High’ with Anakin for nearly forty five minutes while you were cooking,” Obi-Wan grumbled with a half-smile as Ahsoka wrapped an arm around him and pulled him close, a grin on her face.

“Oh, how you suffer, Obi-Wan Kenobi. Your life is just filled with endless trials and tribulations, isn’t it?”

“Well, at least it’s not boring.”
After a night spent tossing and turning as she tried to figure out a way to earn the money necessary to get everyone off of Tatooine, Ahsoka woke up early and headed out into Mos Espa to search for work. Shmi was already up, quietly brewing some tea as she spotted Ahsoka heading towards the door.

“Master Jedi!” she whispered, not wanting to wake any of the children still asleep.

Ahsoka stopped and came back into the kitchenette. “It’s Ahsoka, Shmi. You don’t need to call me ‘Master Jedi’.”

Shmi smiled. “I still cannot believe it. There are two Jedi staying in my home. It’s… It’s like a dream.”

“It’s the will of the Force,” Ahsoka replied, reaching out to squeeze Shmi’s hand. “I was getting ready to go out into Mos Espa and see if there was any work I could do. Any recommendations?”

Shmi frowned, her head bowed. “No. Not that I know of. Any kind of protection work would be for Gardulla and her men have no doubt already told her about you. I don’t suppose you can fix moisture vaporators? Or droids?”

Shaking her head, Ahsoka accepted a cup of tea, letting out a sigh as she leaned against the wall. “We’re well and truly stuck, aren’t we?”

“Don’t you Jedi say ‘the Force will provide’?” Shmi teased gently as she picked up her own cup of tea. “I’ll ask my friends before I leave for Gardulla’s palace. Perhaps they know of some honest work for you.”

Bowing, Ahsoka thanked Shmi for her help, and for the lovely cup of tea, before she headed out into Mos Espa.

After her sixth failed attempt at finding a job, any kind of job, Ahsoka was ready to admit defeat, at least for the moment. She stepped out of the relentless heat and light of the twin suns, into the cooling shade of a cantina, moving through the midday crowd to an empty spot at the bar. Her stomach rumbled but she didn’t have the credits for food and settled for ordering some muja juice. At least it was cold and had some calories and enough sugar in it to keep her from collapsing before she made it back to Shmi’s home. Which it looked like she was going to return to in defeat.

Ahsoka closed her eyes and rubbed the back of her neck, the stress of the past few days making the muscles there tight, which was starting to give her a headache. She wasn’t sure how they were going to get out of this mess, not without the Force smiling benevolently on them and sending a random Jedi out to Mos Espa on a completely unrelated trip. And considering Tatooine wasn’t a part of the Republic, the chances of that happening were almost infinitesimally small.

_I don’t know what to do! I’ve found Anakin and his mother but she’s a slave! I don’t have enough money to buy her freedom, let alone the credits needed to get us all back to Coruscant in one piece and this doesn’t even include Satine! I’m responsible for her as well!_

Ahsoka let out a groan and let her head fall forward onto her arms, resting on the bar top.
Closing her eyes against the dry breeze barely moving a wind chime hanging in a far window, Ahsoka allowed herself a few moments of real fear and despair as she sat there, her hands wrapped around the cooling glass of juice. Life continued on around her, the soft murmur of conversations drifting in and out of her mind as bad idea after worse flashed into her awareness only to be tossed out again.

While Ahsoka was confident she and Obi-Wan would be able to survive for an extended period of time on Tatooine, if it came down to that, she was positive that it would end badly for Satine and there was no guarantee that Gardulla wouldn’t try to sell Shmi and Anakin. Yes, Qui-Gon Jinn found them on Tatooine when Anakin was nine but Ahsoka had already fundamentally altered the timeline and that meant anything was possible now.

*What do I do? How do I get us all off this dustball if we don’t have a ship or credits?*

“Hey! Turn it up! I want to hear the odds on the race!” a voice called out through the crowd, creating a soft swell of agreement from several of the cantina patrons. The bartender walked past Ahsoka and turned up the volume on the holodisplays.

“This is Fodesinbeed Annodue with all the latest from Tatooine and the upcoming Boonta Eve Classic!” the obnoxiously cheerful announcer said to a crowd that had suddenly quieted down. “Here is your race report!”

Ahsoka lifted her head up and peered over at the holodisplay, watching as racers’ portraits flickered across the blue-white light of the projector. Explaining the pertinent stats of each pilot, the announcer went on to give the current odds on them. She watched as the list of names rolled past her and lamented the fact that there was no Anakin Skywalker to bet on when a memory came to her.

“What was it like, in the podrace?” Ahsoka asked Anakin as they waited for the Shadow’s overheated power couplings to cool down. “If you don’t mind me asking?”

It had taken her almost a year and a half of serving at her master’s side to work up the courage to ask him about it.

Anakin glanced back over his shoulder at Ahsoka and shook his head, a small smile on his face. “For you, Snips? I’ll tell you the whole story.”

And he did, telling Ahsoka about meeting Padme and Qui-Gon Jinn, about the bet the Jedi Master made without telling anyone and of how he won the Boonta Eve Classic in spite of Sebulba’s best attempt at sabotaging his pod.

“It wasn’t the biggest upset in podracing history,” Anakin laughed, managing to find a picture of his win deep in the archives of the holonet. “But it was close.”

“What was the biggest upset in podracing history?” Ahsoka replied, marveling at how young her master was.

“That was before my time,” Anakin explained, putting the holo projector away. “A Dug named Tavel Glint was the odds on favorite but he lost out to an Aleena racer by the name of…”

And then Ahsoka’s memory failed her but she quickly scanned over the roster of pilots and nearly let out a shout.

At the top of the list, in pole position was a familiar name, “T. Glint, Dug”.

Quickly reading through the rest of the list the list of pilots, Ahsoka felt the air rush out of her lungs
when she saw that there were two Aleena pilots, both with equally long odds. The announcer and the audience in the cantina was laughing as he speculated on the likelihood of either racer winning.

“But if you’re going to hold a blaster to my head, I would put my money on Rostig Pharr,” the Troig in the holoprojector advised, winking at the screen. “Three hundred to one odds are better than five hundred to one, no?”

Ahsoka let out a soft groan and rolled her eyes. Frantically trying to recall anything from that distant fragment of her memory, she focused on the two names, repeating them over and over in her mind as the chatter of the announcer washed over her.

“So if you’re in the neighborhood, stop by the Mos Espa Grand Colosseum! The racers will be tuning up their vehicles and taking some practice laps! Ladies, you might even be able to get Tavel Glint’s autograph!”

Gasping as another idea struck her, Ahsoka jumped up out of her seat, tossing her credits on the bar and hurrying out of the cantina.

She had to get to that race track.

Obi-Wan and Satine spent the day in the neighborhood, helping the women babysit the local children. Satine and her blonde hair was enormously popular with the children, who marveled at her pale, silken curls. They had never seen people like Obi-Wan and Satine and asked them every question that came into their little heads.

“Are you two married?” one little child asked, marveling at a scattering of tiny freckles on the back of Obi-Wan’s hand.

Blushing, he shook his head. “No, we are not married. I am Satine’s protector, her guardian.”

“Why aren’t you married?” the older woman, Jaffe, cackled as she carefully darned up a hole in her husband’s sock. “She seems pretty enough. A bit skinny but a few babies will take care of that.”

“I’m… I’m…” Obi-Wan gaped at Jaffe, which only made her laugh harder as Satine rolled her eyes.

“If anyone is too skinny, it’s Ben,” Satine said, bouncing Anakin on her hip with a smile. “I bet you can’t even grow a beard.”

“Excuse me!” Obi-Wan huffed, glaring at Satine as two charming, giggling girls ran their fingers through the messy fringe of his hair that had been growing out all this time. “I am perfectly capable of growing a beard. I simply choose not too. It’s… too hot and messy. I would look like a Wookie.”

Satine laughed and turned to Anakin, who was sucking on his thumb and quietly observing the fracas. “Do you hear that, Anakin? Beards are ‘too hot and messy’! Why I’m positively insulted. My father had a beard and he looked ever so charming.”

Anakin’s only response was to yawn and curl a hand tighter around Satine’s collar.

“See? He agrees with me,” Satine grinned, letting out a shriek when Obi-Wan stood up and chased after her, grumbling, “He does not! He’s two. He doesn’t even know what a beard is!”
Jaffe leaned in to elbow Abarrane. “See? They should exchange the three cups in front of Azul’ir and make it official.”

Rolling her eyes, Abarrane called out to the squabbling teens. “Satine? Ben? It’s time for Anakin’s nap.”

And as if to prove her point, Anakin let out another yawn and went back to sucking his thumb.

After they laid Anakin down for a nap, leaving him Abarrane and Jaffe’s care, Obi-Wan and Satine decided to walk back to the main street of Mos Espa and search for a way to make some money to get them off the sandy hellhole that was Tatooine and back to blissful climate control and safety.

“I shall never, ever complain about the temperature control again,” Satine groaned as she held up the hood of her robe over her head. “The heat is positively stifling. And the sand is everywhere!”

“Well there’s no windbreak to stop it from blowing in,” Obi-Wan sighed as he walked alongside the Duchess. “It’s almost as bad as no wind.”

“No, nothing is as bad as no wind,” Satine said, shaking her head emphatically. “I’m just glad we haven’t had to deal with a sandstorm.”

“Do they have those on Mandalore?” Obi-Wan asked as they stepped around a small dice game. “I’ve never really thought to ask you about the planet outside of the bio-domes.”

Satine shrugged, the topic of conversation painful but she was learning to live with it. “They exist and sometimes they can be so large that they cut off Sundari from the other cities on the surface. My aunt told me that there was once a sandstorm so large, it nearly buried Feldari. Now, mind you, she told me this when I was five but I had nightmares about it ever since.”

“That’s terrible,” Obi-Wan said, stepping aside to let a particularly angry-looking Besalisk storm past him. “I had no idea the weather could be that dangerous on Mandalore.”

“I wonder if my ancestors had known what was going to happen to their planet, if they would have stopped their warmongering ways,” Satine murmured, her voice low. “My family would often visit my uncle’s estate on Kalevala, where I would spend all day outside, running through the gardens and the woods, so happy to be surrounded by life and plants. I loved climbing trees.”

“If you ever get the chance to visit the Temple, I think you would love the Room of a Thousand Fountains,” Obi-Wan said as they came to the first major intersection of the main road of Mos Espa.

Taking a moment to allow a landspeeder to pass them by, the two crossed over in front of a large grey duracrete building. Its windows were barred and there was one entrance with a few disreputable looking humans lounging in the cool shade. They were sporting heavy blasters and cheap knock off Mandalorian armor, according to Satine.

“How can you tell?” Obi-Wan asked as they turned the corner of the building, coming to a row of flickering holo posters embedded in the outer walls. Each holoposter displayed a different bounty target, their faces rotating slowly as information flashed underneath the portrait. The amount of money placed on each head flashed in bright red, demanding to be noticed by people passing on the street.

“It’s not fitted properly,” Satine laughed, her voice low as she whispered to him. “Those lopsided plates must leave such a rash! And no true Mandalorian warrior goes anywhere without his helmet.”

They laughed at this until the posters flickered to a new set of heads and Obi-Wan saw something
out of the corner of his eyes that drew his attention.

Glancing back over his shoulder, Obi-Wan his heart stop and his blood freeze in his veins as Satine’s face gazed back at him from the blue-white haze of the holoposter. It was an older poster, showing the Duchess in her formal headdress and robes of State.

“Ben, what are you staring at?” Satine asked, laughter still in her voice until she too turned around and saw the poster advertising a bounty on her head of three hundred thousand credits. Her hands darted out for Obi-Wan’s arm and she clung to him in a moment of blind panic. “What… what does that mean?”

Obi-Wan tried to swallow the hard knot in his throat as he forced air in and out of his lungs, trying to clear the fear from his mind. He was a Jedi and he had to think rationally, to let his emotions pass through him like a wave and find his equilibrium in their wake.

According to the poster, an anonymous party based out of the Mandalore System was searching for the missing head of state, the Duchess Satine Kryze who was most likely in the company of a Jedi, possibly two. The bounty specifically instructed that she was not to be harmed and to be returned to a Guild detention center in order to collect the full bounty on her head. The last line was bolded in terrifying crimson.

Injuries will result in a reduced pay out and disintegrations would result in a non-payment.

They were trapped in place, watching the death threat on Satine’s life hover in midair before them until the posters flickered to a new set of bounties and the spell was broken.

Suddenly their cheerful walk to the market of Mos Espa felt like a dangerous passage through enemy territory. Satine pulled her hood further down over her face as Obi-Wan pulled his up and turned them away from the holoposters.

They crossed the road in front of them, ignoring an angry honk from a Ithorian in a beat-up landspeeder, and turned back around. Silently they made their way back to Shmi’s home, praying that no one noticed them as they passed.

Ahsoka did not seem to be all that surprised at the price placed on Satine’s head when she returned before sunset, accompanying Shmi back from Gardulla’s palace.

“But Master! Three hundred thousand credits is a fortune!” Obi-Wan insisted, as he took a large package from Shmi, following her and Ahsoka into the kitchenette. “It is more than enough to make anyone think twice about keeping our secret!”

Satine was playing with Anakin in the living area, helping him make a tower with a set of old wooden blocks that had been bleached by the suns. She did not get up to join Obi-Wan in impressing upon his master that they were all in danger, knowing that it was useless.

They were going to be betrayed. It was inevitable.

Three hundred thousand credits was a lot of money in the Republic and she could only imagine how much more that was worth out on the Outer Rim where the economy seemed to driven by the twin engines of greed and cruelty.
It wasn’t like Satine could blame whoever their eventual betrayer was. Three hundred thousand credits was the kind of money that could free someone from a life of poverty, could free a family, free a beloved in bondage or start a new life on a faraway planet, safe from the nefarious clutches of Gardulla the Hutt and the Hutt Syndicate.

“Oh, Anakin,” Satine sighed, handing him a long skinny block that he used to promptly knock over his tower with a laugh. “What are we going to do?”

Looking up at Satine’s long exhale, Anakin frowned. He pushed himself upright and toddled over to Satine and offered her the one block that still had a bit of color on it, a lovely faded turquoise. He held it out and very shyly mumbled her name, or rather what he considered her name to be. “For ‘Tine.”

Satine smiled at Anakin’s generosity and took his favorite block into her hand, reaching out to brush the back of her hand against his cheek. “Thank you, Ani. That was very sweet of you but this is your favorite block. Don’t you want to keep it?”

“No,” Anakin shook his head. “For ‘Tine.”

“Oh!” Satine felt a sudden rush of love and heartache wash through her. Here was a little boy, who had nothing, not even his own freedom and yet all he cared about was making her happy, comforting her in a dark time. He watched her expression with a solemn face, his lower lip quivering as he watched her place the block in her lap.

“Oh you sweet boy!” Satine said, pulling Anakin into a tight hug and kissing his forehead, which made him giggle a little as he hugged her back. She held him tight, reminded of how Bo-Kat had been the same when she was his age.

*I miss you so much, my dearest sister. I hope you are safe and happy with Aunt Julia and Cousin Pre.*

“Happy?” Anakin asked as he gazed up at Satine, his blue eyes round. “Happy ‘Tine?”

Satine nodded. “Yes. I am happy. Thank you, Anakin.”

Late that night, as Obi-Wan was trying to meditate his way to some peace of mind or at least get some rest if he couldn’t find sleep, Satine rolled over and hissed at him. “Ben? Are you awake?”

“I am attempting to meditate, your Grace,” he grumbled, glancing over at Satine. “What is it? And keep your voice down. You’ll wake Anakin.”

“He’s in the next room,” Satine whispered. “He can’t hear me.”

“Fine,” Obi-Wan rolled onto his side and faced Satine, her eyes luminous in the moonlight coming in from the window. “What did you want to speak to me about?”

“I have an idea on how to save us,” Satine announced, her expression nervous and excited. Her eyes scanned Obi-Wan’s face as she continued on. “I know how we can get enough money to purchase Shmi and Anakin’s freedom as well as get us off this planet! Within a week.”
Obi-Wan blinked, leaning back a little, suddenly very worried. He hadn’t been able to think of a way for them to leave in the next year, let alone within a week. “What is this plan of yours?”

“It’s simple,” Satine said, her aura radiating with conviction. “You turn me in and collect the bounty on my head. You saw that poster. They’ll give you three hundred thousand credits. That’s more than enough money to purchase Shmi and Anakin’s freedom. That’s even enough money to buy a ship to fly off this sandy hellhole.”

“Are you mad?” Obi-Wan horrified at the very suggestion that he and his master would put Satine in danger like that. “Absolutely not! We are not turning you over to bounty hunters!”

“It’s the only way!” Satine insisted, peeking back over her shoulder to make sure that no one else could hear their argument in the cold blue radiance of moonlight. “I’ll be perfectly safe there, Ben! No one would dare attack the detention center and then once you and Ahsoka have executed the rest of the plan, you can break in and rescue me!”

“No!” Obi-Wan refused, pushing himself up on his elbow to glare down at Satine, trying to remember to keep his voice down. “You are not some… some… piece of jewelry we can sell to a pawn shop and then recover when we have money again! This is insane. It would never work!”

“Oh no?” Satine huffed, sitting up so that she could properly return Obi-Wan’s scowl with her own, her arms folded over her chest. “Do you have a better idea, oh mighty Jedi?”

“Better than selling you to bounty hunters?” Obi-Wan gaped. “Yes! I do! And none of them involve risking your life at the hands of unsavory, dangerous criminals!”

“Well then let’s hear them,” Satine threw a hand up, gesturing wildly.

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to illustrate his plan but then he remembered that he didn’t have a plan and felt his cheeks burn with shame and frustration.

“Well?” Satine egged him on, her voice carrying an edge of hauteur to it. “You don’t have one, do you?”

“No plan is better than your foolishness!” Obi-Wan shot back. “Satine, they could hurt you! And there’s no guarantee they’ll pay out the bounty to me. Especially if they think I’m the Jedi that’s supposed to be protecting you. They might throw me into a cell with you.”

“Then we’ll disguise you!” Satine said, warming to her own idea. It made perfect sense and if everything went according to plan, it would take Culling Blade at least a week to get to Tatooine and by that time they would all be on a ship, winging their way to safety on Coruscant. “Admit it. This is the best course of action.”

“It is not,” Obi-Wan fumed, folding his arms over his chest. “I refuse to aid you in this… this… idiotic nonsense!”

“Idiotic nonsense?” Satine repeated, offended and hurt. “I am trying to do the right thing, to save an innocent family and my friends, and this is how you react?”

“Yes!” Obi-Wan said, suddenly very worried that if he couldn’t shut Satine’s plan down now, she was going to enact it anyway, while his back was turned. “Please, Satine! Be serious! There is no guarantee those bounty hunters are… that they will… Oh! Be reasonable!”

Sensing she was finding a way past Obi-Wan’s resistance, Satine pressed her advantage. “Culling Blade wants me alive. No one would dare hurt me in there. I shall be safe as houses.”
“I cannot believe I am hearing this!” Obi-Wan groaned, covering his face with his hands. “I am telling my master when she wakes up and I assure you, she will not be pleased.”

“No need,” came an exhausted but amused chuckle from the other side of the spare room where Ahsoka was supposed to be sleeping, facing the wall. “And Obi-Wan’s right, Your Grace. That is a very bad plan. I’m not even sure my master would approve and his favorite attack plan was ‘shoot first and hope someone’s alive to ask questions of later’.”

“Master…” Obi-Wan groaned, burying his face in his hands. “I’m sorry, Master. I didn’t want to wake you.”

“It’s all right, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka exhaled as she sat up, putting her back to the wall. “And I admire your willingness to sacrifice yourself, Satine, but I’m not letting you risk your life like that.”

“But I won’t be in danger!” Satine insisted, a sinking feeling blossoming in the pit of her stomach. They were going to reject her plan and doom them all because they prized her temporary comfort over Shmi and Anakin’s freedom. “And besides, this is more important than me. I cannot leave Shmi and Anakin here in bondage while I am free to swan about Coruscant like some kind of spoiled royal!”

“No one is leaving anyone anywhere,” Ahsoka yawned, covering her mouth with her hand. “Besides, I already have a plan to get us out of here.”

“You do?” Satine said, exchanging a look with Obi-Wan who peered up at his master, confused, wondering why she hadn’t told him about her plan. “When were you going to tell us?”

“Tomorrow at breakfast, but I suppose I’ll have to move the time table up,” Ahsoka smiled wearily at two teenagers. “The Boonta Eve Classic is coming up in two days.”

“Yes, I’ve seen the banners,” Satine said, exchanging another glance back at Obi-Wan.

“Abarrane and Jaffe told us all about it when we were watching the children this morning. Lots of people come from out of the system to watch the race and gamble,” he added.

Ahsoka nodded, yawning again as she turned to gaze out the window, a grin dancing at the corners of her mouth. “Yes. So I went to the track, consulted the Force, and made a few wagers.”

“With what money?” Satine asked, confused. “We don’t have nearly enough money for you to earn even half of what we need!”

“I wagered enough,” Ahsoka said, turning her gaze back to Satine and Obi-Wan. “Trust me. If everything goes the way I think it will go, we’ll have more than enough money to get us all off of Tatooine.”

Obi-Wan frowned at his master as a sudden wave of foreboding overcame him, his senses stretching out to find the twin pinpoints of starlight that were his master’s weapons. His own blades glowed in the Force, like banked coals waiting to be called back to life, but his master’s?

They were nowhere to be found.

“Master? Did you sell your sabers?”

“Yes, Obi-Wan. I did. I don’t suppose I could borrow one of yours for a little while?”
Hello!

So we have two more chapters left after this and the Tano and Kenobi will go back on a season break. So... two more chapters to go! Woohoo!

Boy, I hope Ahsoka knows what she's doing. I mean, I'm sure she and Obi-Wan can survive with one saber each but... I don't know about you but I would be kind of nervous.

If you'd like to hear more regular babbling about Star Wars and my cats you can reach me at FireflyFish on Tumblr
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and her Padawan Learner have arrived on Tatooine in the company of Satine Kryze, the Duchess of Mandalore. Stranded, without credits or anything to bargain with, their immediate future seems truly grim until they are saved by the compassionate Shmi Skywalker, a slave woman owned by Gardulla the Hutt, and the mother of a very powerful Force sensitive, Anakin Skywalker. Desperate to rescue the boy who will grow up into her master, as well as his mother, Ahsoka does the unthinkable to get the credits necessary to help them all escape Tatooine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You sold your lightsabers?!”

Ahsoka let out a heavy sigh and nodded, giving another exhausted yawn. “Yes. I did. I’ll explain everything tomorrow morning. I promise.”

“Tomorrow morning?!” Obi-Wan squawked as Satine looked on in equal shock, his eyes round and nearly glowing in the moonlight as Shmi and Anakin slept on in the other room. “Master, we have to get them back! Those sabers are your life! You can’t just sell them to some… some… disreputable person on a street corner!”

Perhaps it was the exhaustion, or perhaps it was the new low-level anxiety of not having her sabers playing tricks on her, but Ahsoka could have sworn for a minute that Master Obi-Wan himself was in the room, yelling at her for her reckless behavior. She would have smiled if she wasn’t worried that Obi-Wan was going to work himself into a fit and wake up Shmi. She could already feel Anakin’s spirit stirring through his growing bond with her padawan.

“I didn’t just sell them to somebody on a street corner,” Ahsoka sighed, looking down at her hands, which felt very empty now. “Technically, I pawned them. When my bets pay out, we’ll go back to the pawn shop and retrieve them and then we’ll buy Shmi and Anakin and get us passage off this planet to some place safer, like Naboo or Denon or maybe even Corellia.”

“Naboo?” Satine said, puzzled and glancing at Obi-Wan, no doubt starting to wonder if Ahsoka’s padawan was the sanest person here. “Is that even on the Corellian Trade Spine?!”

“No, but it’s a loyal member of the Republic,” Ahsoka replied, yawning again. “Listen, I know my plan doesn’t seem like it makes a lot of sense now but I promise I’ll explain more tomorrow morning, okay? And no one is turning anybody into bounty hunters. Is that clear, Your Grace?”

Satine folded her arms over her chest and gazed at the far wall, a mulish pout on her face. “Yes, Master Tano. I understand.”

And with that, the Duchess laid back down, pulled her blanket up to her chin and attempted to fall
asleep.

One down. One to go. Ahsoka thought as she looked over at Obi-Wan, whose horrified expression did not help ease her worries as she met his gaze.

Why? Why didn’t you tell me before all of this? Obi-Wan’s mental voice was full of anxiety and a low level of fear that hadn’t been there before. Surely there was another way! You can’t just sell your lightsabers like they’re a pair of boots you don’t need! What if we’re attacked and we have to defend Satine? You can’t do jar’kai with one blade!

We don’t need jar’kai to defend Satine, Ahsoka said, sending as much calm and peace through their bond as she could. And I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want to upset you.

I’m your Padawan Learner! We’re a team! You’re supposed to tell me things like this, Master! Obi-Wan protested, sending a mental image of himself gesturing wildly, as if he could express all of his anger and fear through movement instead of words. Do you not trust me?

I trust you with my life, Obi-Wan. Ahsoka groaned softly, scrubbing a hand over her face, wondering how a seventeen-year-old boy could sound so much like the man he was still two decades away from becoming. But you have to trust me on this. There’s no way we’re getting off Tatooine with Shmi and Anakin without something drastic.

Obi-Wan frowned at her, his expression hard and his jaw clenched. Master, I want to free Shmi and Anakin just as much as you and Satine but… I… I wish you had told me first.

A wave of disappointment washed from Obi-Wan to Ahsoka, so hurt and worried it nearly took Ahsoka’s breath away. This was the first real disagreement she and Obi-Wan had had during their time together and to have it at a time like this, when they all needed to be working together to get out of this place in one piece, made it all the more difficult. She closed her eyes.

“I’m sorry, Obi-Wan.”

Ahsoka’s apology hovered in the dark air, silence stretching out between Master and Padawan like a rift between the plates of two continents, threatening to pull apart into a dangerous chasm. She watched her padawan think, watched his gaze unfocus as the muscle in his jaw twitched and Ahsoka prayed that Obi-Wan would understand, would see past the sabers to the wisdom of her plan.

She hoped she wasn’t asking too much of Obi-Wan.

“You should have told me. Good night, Master.”

And with that, Obi-Wan turned away from Ahsoka and settled down for bed, pulling his robe up over his shoulder, his back turned to her.

Burying her head in her hands, Ahsoka spent another hour or so going over her plan, trying to convince herself she had done the right thing and hadn’t doomed them all.

It has to work. It just has to! I am not leaving this planet without them both. I’m not!

I’ll save you, Master. I swear it.
“You did what?!?”

As it turned out, Shmi was not a fan of Ahsoka’s plan either.

“You can’t! You have to get them back,” Shmi insisted as she collapsed into a chair, staring at Ahsoka as if she had grown another head. “Who did you take them to?”

“Zeta Naser,” Ahsoka answered, helpfully providing Anakin with a bit of toasted flatbread she didn’t have the stomach to eat. Obi-Wan had been cool and polite since he woke up and she felt lost, as if stranded on a planet with no map or compass. To not have her padawan’s support at such a difficult time was far more devastating than Ahsoka was willing to admit to.

And it didn’t help that Shmi had taken his side in the debate as well.

“Zeta Naser?!” Shmi gaped, her eyes going wide. “You have to go, right now! He works for Gardulla! She’ll have those sabers off-planet the minute the Boonta is finished running!”

Ahsoka let out a sigh. “I have my loan chit and as soon as I… get the money we need, I’ll free you and Anakin and we can go pick up my sabers.”

Shmi was about going to continue berating Ahsoka about her reckless choice when she turned her head and widened her eyes just a bit. Obi-Wan and Satine glanced over at her and then turned their gazes back down to their simple meal, deciding it was better to stay silent.

“What do you mean ‘get the money’?” Shmi said, her eyes now narrowed and focused on Ahsoka with a lazer-sharp intensity and a simmering anger she hadn’t seen since the last time Anakin lost his temper. In fact, the furrow of her brows could have been an exact imitation of Anakin and if that fury hadn’t been turned on her, Ahsoka would have been filled with a bittersweet longing for her old master.

But now?

Now it just made Ahsoka feel incredibly naive about her decision.

“I… placed a bet on the podrace,” Ahsoka admitted, folding her arms over her chest and glancing away. “A bet that will pay off, Shmi. I promise.”

“You sold your lightsabers to gamble on the Boonta?!” Shmi almost shouted, a hand going to her face as she turned away, groaning. “I cannot believe it. I thought Jedi were supposed to be wise and rational! How could you do something so foolish? How will you protect Satine and Obi-Wan without your sabers?”

Ahsoka grimaced, wishing she had a better answer than she was from the future and was fairly confident she knew who was going to win. She wondered if telling Shmi that she had a Force vision would work, if that would manage to convince her that Ahsoka’s plan had some validity.

It wouldn’t work on Obi-Wan, but that was for another time when they were all safe and they could spend as long as it would take to work through what had happened. It had never occurred to Ahsoka that Obi-Wan would interpret her actions as her not trusting him. She had simply assumed that once she explained the details of her plan her padawan would grumble but ultimately come to see the wisdom in her decision, like he had in the past.

“Hopefully, Obi-Wan will let me borrow one of his,” Ahsoka said, glancing over at the boy in question, who reluctantly met her gaze and nodded before turning his attention back to his meal. “And besides, I have survived without them before. I’ll manage somehow.”
That seemed to catch Obi-Wan’s attention and his eyes darted back to Ahsoka, puzzled. “You have?”

Ahsoka shrugged, a weak smile on her face. “Yes. After my master died. I’ll explain it to you when we get back to the Temple.”

Obi-Wan nodded and Ahsoka had to content herself with the fact that at least he was still speaking to her and not giving her the silent treatment, which she was starting to suspect was the reason behind Satine’s uncharacteristic shyness.

Shmi let out a groan and buried her face in her hands, shaking her head. “I cannot believe this. Azul’ir take you all!”

Anakin, sensing the rising tension in the room, looked from his mother to his Obi-Friend to ‘Soka and ‘Tine and decided that he did not approve of any of it. He screwed his face up and took up a piece of flatbread, letting out a strong and forceful “No! Bad!” as he threw it.

The piece of flatbread flew through the air, bounced off the table and landed on the ground by Satine’s feet. She looked down at the half-eaten piece of food and then immediately turned her attention to Anakin, as did everyone else, hoping to prevent a full-blown tantrum.

They were too late.

Dissolving into tears, Anakin worked himself up into the heights of fury, waves of anger and fear buffeting Obi-Wan and Ahsoka’s spirits as he struggled to make his desires clear to everyone around him. Shmi was already up and pulling Anakin out of his high chair, hugging him and bouncing him as she tried to assure him that everything was fine. “Hush, little dragon. Shhh… everything’s fine. Small and still, little dragon. Small and still.”

Satine rushed over to Shmi’s side, following her instructions to get Anakin’s favorite toy from his crib and rushing back with the item to coo soft promises in Mandalorian that she would punch those mean Jedi in the nose for him.

Ahsoka watched Anakin cry, felt his desperation in the Force and looked over at Obi-Wan, who looked equally miserable. Her padawan made eye contact and he bowed his head.

I do not agree with this plan, Master. But what’s done is done. To argue about it further won’t help anyone.

Ahsoka nodded in gratitude, trying to suffuse their bond with as much thanks, gratitude, and affection as her reticent padawan would allow. I am so sorry, Obi-Wan. I didn’t mean to hurt you. I promise that when we get out of this, you can yell at me all you like.

Glancing up at Ahsoka, Obi-Wan managed a half-smile for her. “I’ll hold you to that, Master.”

“Oh, would you two stop doing that?” Satine groused, making Anakin’s ragamuffin dragon toy dance for him as Shmi hummed a song for him. “If you’re both so keen on using the Force, why don’t one of you use it to comfort poor little Ani here?”

“He’ll be fine,” Shmi said, looking down at his son’s red face and furious pout. “Oh my little dragon… You don’t like it when people are upset do you?”


Shmi let out a gentle chuckle and nodded. “That’s right, Ani. We should all be nice and sunny.
Wouldn’t you agree, Satine?”

Satine agreed emphatically, still making the little krtyt dragon toy hop around for Anakin’s amusement. “Completely, Shmi. And that’s why I think Obi-Wan and Master Ahsoka should apologize to Ani. For upsetting him.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes as Ahsoka laughed. “We’re very sorry, Anakin. We will be nice and sunny for the rest of the day. I promise.”

Anakin’s narrowed gaze flickered from Ahsoka to Obi-Wan, waiting.

Glancing back and forth between Shmi, Satine and Anakin, Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and stood up, bowing formally to the sniffling toddler. “I humbly apologize, dear Anakin. Can you ever forgive my callous behavior?”

“Yes!” Anakin giggled and reached out for Obi-Wan with chubby hands. “Obi!”

“Well, it seems Anakin had decided who is going to be taking care of him this morning,” Satine teased as Shmi handed her son off to Obi-Wan. “When is the Boonta?”

“Tomorrow,” Shmi explained as she gathered up her headscarf and bag, getting ready to head to Gardulla’s home. “I’ll be at the palace late tonight because of it. Please watch over Ani until I return and don’t pawn anything else.”

Ahsoka held up both hands as everyone glanced back at her. “I won’t! I promise I’ve learned my lesson.”

“Good,” Shmi said as she finished wrapping her scarf around her shoulders and headed towards the door. “If you have the time, would you help Abarrane and Jaffe with the children?”

“Of course, we will,” Satine promised as she saw Shmi to the door, Obi-Wan following her as he carried Anakin on his hips, the two of them waving goodbye.

“Bye-bye!” Anakin called out, resting his head on Obi-Wan’s shoulder as Shmi passed into the weak, cool light of dawn and made her way to Gardulla’s palace.

Ahsoka spent most of the day wandering around Mos Espa, researching the ships that were coming and going out of the space port. It looked like they were going to have to hire a ship to take them back to the Core instead of booking seats on a passenger ship. She spoke to several ship’s captains and got a feel for a good price before she made her way over to the Grand Coliseum where the pilots were working out the last minute kinks on the open track before the race tomorrow.

Making her way to a seat further back from the track itself, Ahsoka watched the pilots and their crews moving around the pods in their different staging areas. In theory the racers weren’t allowed to make any more changes to their pods but that didn’t seem to be the case as she peered down at the figures buzzing around the pods. Ahsoka took note of Tavel Glint and his orange pod, complete with matching orange engines. He was talking with a small swarm of fans, posing for pictures and signing autographs.

Letting her gaze drift over the crafts, Ahsoka found the red pod of Rostig Pharr, the Aleena racer
with three hundred to one odds on him. His engines were running at a low purr that was occasionally interrupted by what sounded like a guttural cough. The pilot yelled at his pit crew and shut off the engines, hopping out of his pod and throwing his helmet at one of the droids.

Ahsoka shook her head and looked up at the sky, not sure quite sure if she was glad she wasn’t betting on Rostig Pharr. When she had come to the coliseum the day before, she had spent hours in the stands, watching the racers work their way around the track, trying to reach out with the Force and get a sense for which one felt right.

For a while, it would seem as if the Force was leaning in the direction of Pharr and then something would happen and it would nudge Ahsoka in the direction of the true long shot, the Aleena in the turquoise pod by the name of Vessa Epllo. His pod looked like it had been in one too many races and his engine wasn’t nearly as flashy as Pharr’s or as big as Glint’s but it ran smoothly every time the pilot took it out on the track. He never averaged the fastest time and the pod came into pit lane with its engines smoking twice.

But there was something about the bright blue pod, something that tugged gently but insistently on Ahsoka’s senses and in the end, she had placed the lion’s share of her money on Vessa Epllo to win. When she made her bets at the window, the Twi’lek taking her money burst out laughing and said, “If you want to throw away money, I’ll be happy to take it off your hands, honey.”

Ahsoka resisted the urge to punch the man in the face. “Just give me my ticket.”

With two tickets in hand, one betting on Epllo to win and the other betting on Glint to lose, Ahsoka had returned home, confident in her choices.

But now, doubt was starting to creep in.

Epllo was having trouble getting his engines to start and with balancing the repulsors that held the whole thing off the ground. He was crawling around the rig with help from a fellow Aleena and a droid that looked like it had seen better days as well. Compared to Pharr’s set up, Epllo looked like he was taking an antique out for an afternoon drive that would end up stalled on the side of the rode.

Looking toward the sky, Ahsoka made a faint prayer to the Force.

_Please… please don’t punish Shmi and Anakin for my failure to listen to my master. Please don’t abandon us now, when we need you._

_Please, help us._

Ahsoka didn’t leave the coliseum until it grew too hot and all the pilots, crew and spectators went home for the day, leaving her alone with her worry and fears.

_Force, I hope I made the right choice._

When Shmi returned home that night after a day spent angry over the Jedi’s recklessness, she was surprised to hear laughter and warm voices coming from the door of her home, to feel a cloud of happy, billowing warmth rush out to greet her in spite of the night’s growing cold.

She stepped inside and slipped off her headscarf, hanging it up on a peg by the door and stepping
into the living area where she found her new friends sitting around a cleared space on the floor as small objects floated overhead. Anakin was sitting in Ahsoka’s lap, a bright smile on his face to match the delight in his eyes and Obi-Wan sat across from him with Satine perched on a stool to his side. It was such a lovely scene she felt her anger begin to thaw, if not completely melt away.

“No! No! You’re dropping that one over there!” Satine shrieked, pointing to a large, wind-smoothed rock that was plummeting to the ground. At the last moment it stopped and floated back up to join its brethren hovering above Obi-Wan’s tawny head.

“Honestly, I do not see how this is fair,” Obi-Wan grumbled, his hands moving with slow, practiced gestures that Shmi was beginning to understand meant he was using the Force to levitate something. “Anakin has my master assisting him and you’re back-seat Force-wielding over here. It’s any wonder I haven’t hit my head twice tonight.”

“You’re doing just fine, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka smiled, leaning down to ruffle Anakin’s hair and gently push the floating ball of flimsiplast back toward the ceiling. “Isn’t he, Anakin?”

Anakin giggled and nodded. “Yes. Obi, good. Ani, good too!”

“Yes, you are,” the trio agreed and continued their little game, oblivious to Shmi’s quiet presence in the hallway.

This was a foreign world to Shmi, this laughter and warmth. It had been so long since she had seen her family, since she sold herself into slavery to save her mother that she could barely remember what it felt like. Even now, Shmi could only remember the feel of her mother’s cold, dry hands on hers, and terrifying rattling sound of her chest as she coughed. Her memories of her home, of the seas of grasses that surrounded her village would forever be marred by that sound of death.

She never found a home after that, moving from owner to owner, moving from the fields, to the house and to serving in the kitchens. Shmi had been training with a mechanic at her previous owner’s residence when he died unexpectedly and his greedy family sold every last one of his slaves at an auction on Klatooine. Shmi hadn’t known she was pregnant at the time but in a way, she was thankful. Once she was sold offworld, she and her child became a single unit and no one could take him away from her until he was older. It seemed wrong to be thankful to a Hutt but Shmi had managed to survive this life by treasuring small mercies and kindnesses where she found them.

But the happy tableau in front of her?

This was like walking into a dream. It did not seem real somehow. And yet, it was.

*These people... I don’t know how but... Ani is meant to be with them. I’ve never seen him so happy.*

Shmi closed her eyes, the last of her anger gone, and offered up a prayer of thanks to her family gods in her native tongue. She hadn’t thought they could hear her prayers, so far away from her homeworld, but it seemed they had and sent her and Anakin these wonderful off-worlders with their compassion and their Force and a marrow-deep desire to save her and her son.

Trying hard not to think of the future, Shmi couldn’t help but muse that if her Ani could grow up to be like Ahsoka and Obi-Wan, she would be content.

*My Ani... my little Jedi.*

“Oh! Shmi!” Obi-Wan called out, a wide grin on his face. “Welcome back!”

“Mama?” Anakin called, pushing himself up out of Ahsoka’s lap and staggering around the corner
until he saw her, joy suffusing his face. “Mama! Mama’s home!”

Kneeling, Shmi held her arms open and caught Anakin up in a tight hug, kissing his cheek. “Oh what a warm welcome, my little dragon!”

Anakin gave her a series of sloppy kisses before explaining as best he could the exact nature of the game he and Obi-Wan had been playing. Ahsoka leaned around the corner, quietly waving as Satine hopped up from her stool, immediately taking charge and directing Shmi to the eating area where something of a feast was waiting for her. There was some kind of fragrant meat on the table as well as cooked tubers and exotic green vegetables from a planet Shmi did not know. And there were fruits, honest to goodness fruits from as far away as Corellia sitting on her worn and threadbare table.

It was ridiculously expensive and foolhardy and it only made Shmi love them all the more.

“Oh, you shouldn’t have done this!” she gasped, allowing Satine to push her into a chair. “This must have cost a fortune.”

“It turns out we had a few extra credits,” Satine explained with a delighted expression, looking over at Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. “And we wanted to thank you for giving us a safe haven and shelter.”

“And apologize for upsetting you this morning,” Obi-Wan murmured, his head bowed a little. “And Anakin, of course.”

Ahsoka tucked Anakin into his high chair and smoothed his golden curls before taking her seat at the other end of the table. “I’m sorry I didn’t consult you earlier, Shmi. I hope you can forgive a crazy old Jedi?”

They were likely going to regret this extravagance later, Shmi knew from painful experience. But she also knew that small moments like this were what made the cold, dark, and lean times all the more bearable.

If she had a family, if she and Anakin had a family, they could withstand anything.

“You’re hardly old,” Shmi finally sighed, smiling warmly at the people around her table. “But you are definitely touched by something.”

Ancestors only know if it’s something good or something bad but I hope it’s good.

Please let it be good.

Everyone was up at dawn the next day both to see Shmi off to work and make their way to the coliseum. After a kiss on the forehead, Shmi left Anakin with Satine and the Jedi, telling the young woman that she was in charge.

“Do not let them waste credits on expensive food in the stands,” Shmi ordered, handing Satine a basket of flatbread and the leftovers from the previous night’s feast. “And don’t waste money on the alcohol there. It’s watered down and tastes like bantha piss.”

Satine nodded, accepting their food for the day and promising Shmi that she could get their errant Jedi in line. “Take care, Shmi. I hope that when next we see you, you will be a free woman.”
Shaking her head, Shmi reached out to hug Satine. “If that is what Azul’ir wills, then I will not complain.”

While Shmi and Satine were saying their goodbyes, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan stood back, Anakin tired and dozing on the Jedi knight’s hip. Once they saw Shmi off, they were going to leave Anakin with Abarrane and head straight to the coliseum to get seats for the most important podrace of their lives. Obi-Wan had his go bag slung over one shoulder, stuffed with Anakin’s favorite blanket and toys as well as a few other items that Shmi finally admitted to feeling partial to. The Force was tense around them, vibrating with the presence and energy of the sudden influx of new beings arriving on the planet in droves.

“I have a bad feeling about this,” Obi-Wan murmured, his gaze focused on Shmi and Satine’s quiet conversation. “Are you certain this is the best course of action, Master?”

Ahsoka looked down at Anakin’s blond head curled against his shoulder and felt the comforting warmth of his presence in the back of her mind, slowly filling up the void left behind by her master’s absence and Darth Vader’s reveal on Malachor. She thought of the future, barreling towards them, of Naboo and Geonosis, of the Clone Wars and Rex and everything the galaxy and the Force was going to ask of them.

Was this the best course of action?

Would it have been better to get the three of them off the planet and then come back for Shmi and Anakin with funds from the Jedi Order?

It would have been safer for Satine, definitely, but Ahsoka would never have been able to live with herself, leaving Shmi and Anakin in bondage a moment longer than they had to.

“No, but this is the course that has been chosen,” Ahsoka finally said, dropping a kiss atop Anakin’s forehead. “I know you don’t approve, Obi-Wan, and you don’t have to. But thank you for your patience all the same.”

Obi-Wan let out a heavy sigh, angling away from Ahsoka even as he handed something over to her. “Here. I can’t in good conscience let you run around without one. Especially in a place full of scum and villainy like this.”

Ahsoka looked down at Obi-Wan’s hand, surprised to see one of his lightsabers in his hand. “Obi-Wan… you don’t have to do that. I was joking before and my sabers should still be in the pawn shop. I don’t want you to feel unprotected.”

Shaking his head, Obi-Wan gazed out over the domed buildings that made up the slave quarters of Mos Espa. “You’re going to need it, Master. I don’t know why, or how, but you’re going to need it.”

“All right, but only because you insisted,” Ahsoka said, accepting Obi-Wan’s weapon and remembering all the times Anakin or Master Obi-Wan had returned her saber to her, saying “This weapon is your life, Ahsoka. Do not throw it away so easily.”

Looking over Anakin’s head at Obi-Wan, Ahsoka felt a small burst of relief when he seemed to come around and met her gaze. “Thank you, Padawan.”

Obi-Wan let out a huff and nodded a little before turning his attention to Anakin, who was trying to sleep through their touching moment as best he could. “Do you want me to take him?”

“I’m fine,” Ahsoka replied, running her hand through Anakin’s hair. “Besides, weren’t you on babysitting duty all day yesterday?”
“I don’t mind,” Obi-Wan said, giving Shmi one last wave good bye as she turned the far corner. “Anakin is so powerful that it’s easy for me to understand what he needs.”

“Is that so?” Ahsoka mused, not at all surprised by how quickly and intensely her padawan and the boy who would grow up to be her master had bonded. “So do we have our marching orders, Satine?”

Satine nodded, carrying the basket of food Shmi had given her over one arm. “Yes. She says the best seats are on the northeast corner and that will allow us to see the finish line and we’ll be out of direct sunlight for a majority of the morning. And I am to slather Obi-Wan in this.”

Holding up a jar of something that smelled faintly of chemicals, Satine explained that it was a homemade sunscreen that would protect both fair skinned members of their party. Ahsoka let out a laugh, shaking her head. “Shmi thinks of everything.”

“Well, she is a mother,” Satine explained as they made the short walk over to Abaranne’s home. “Time to wake up, little Ani.”

I wonder what Master would think of if he could hear the Duchess of Mandalore call him Ani? Ahsoka wondered as Abarrane answered the door and happily accepted Anakin into her arms. “He’s not eaten yet. And we woke him up earlier than usual so he might be cranky.”

Abarrane nodded, tucking Anakin against her hip as she took the small bundle of food from Satine. “Are you three going to the Boonta?”

“Yes,” Obi-Wan smiled, bowing to Anakin’s caretaker. “Shall we bring you anything?”

“A winning ticket would be nice,” Abarrane smiled before she bid them farewell. “Have fun! Remember to keep your hoods up! Azul’ir does not turn his gaze for off-worlders.”

The trio promised they would do as Abarrane instructed and turned to find their way to the coliseum.

After what seemed like an eternity, Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine found themselves in line for the stands Shmi had recommended. It took nearly another hour of bumping and jostling before they were able to make their way up to seats that were currently shaded by the slowly rising twin suns of Tatooine. The race was still several hours away and their particular patch of shade was cold but their three days on the planet had already taught them to value shade and cooler temperatures where they could find them.

Ahsoka’s tickets sat tucked in a pouch on her hip and she would check them occasionally as they watched the stands fill up with a colorful assortment of beings from every corner of the galaxy.

For a while Satine and Obi-Wan were content to play simple travel games or make up silly little stories about particularly colorful spectators in an attempt to distract themselves from the gravity of the situation. Ahsoka tried to relax and enjoy the adventures of Runessa the Red, the Twi’lek Crime Boss who ran five systems and lived on a tropical moon somewhere on the edge of Wild Space.

“You should write that down and tell Anakin that story.” Ahsoka interjected, reaching down to take a piece a flatbread Obi-Wan offered her when they were only an hour out from the actual running of the race. “I think he’d like it.”
“I think Anakin is a bit young for Obi-Wan’s ribald tale of organized crime and a secret star-crossed romance,” Satine laughed, nibbling on a bit of flat bread drenched in a fragrant oil. “But if Shmi approves, who am I to say otherwise?”

“When is this thing going to start?” Obi-Wan grumbled, pulling his hood down over head as he snuck another sip of water. “I can feel my nose blistering.”

“Patience is a virtue, my young apprentice,” Ahsoka sighed as she peered at her chrono. “Forty-five minutes to the start of the race.”

And then we’ll know if my memory is as good as I hoped.

As slow as the preceding hours were, the next forty-five minutes flew by with the loud and annoying race announcer Fodesinbeed Annodue explaining the basics of the race to the crowd and introducing each of the pilots.

“Which one is our money on?” Satine asked, glancing back at Ahsoka.

Pointing to the turquoise pod and engines, Ahsoka explained that they were rooting for that pilot. “His name is Vessa Epllo.”

Obi-Wan let out a loud groan. “Master! The odds on him are five hundred to one! Are you serious?”

“Shush!” Ahsoka hissed, giving her padawan a Look. “If the Force says he’s going to win, he’s going to win.”

“How much did you bet?” Satine gasped, horrified.

“Enough,” Ahsoka grumbled, leaning back against her seat, arms folded over her chest. “I think they’re getting ready to start.”

The pods were in their places and a slow procession of flag bearers walked parallel to the finish line, followed by the presentation of Gardulla the Hutt and the last call for pit crew and spectators to leave the track.

“We’re just waiting for the signal from the illustrious Gardulla!” the announcer said, echoed in Huttese by his twin head.

Ahsoka took a deep breath and closed her eyes, acknowledging her fear and anxiety, trying to release them into the care of the Force.

Please… please let this work. There’s no other way and I won’t abandon Shmi and Anakin.

A gong sounded and the pods roared to life, blasting off through the coliseum and leaving a trailing cloud of dust and smoke in their wake.

“I can’t watch!” Satine gasped, turning away and hiding her face in Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “Tell me who wins, will you?”

“Who said I wanted to watch this?” Obi-Wan swallowed, his voice just as nervous and tense as Satines, his aura in the Force practically frozen and covered with nervous prickles. “Oh Force! Did
that one just... blow up?"

The race was truly one for the ages.

Tavel Glint was every bit the pilot that the holo announcer had said he was when Ahsoka was watching his show back in the cantina. He easily outmaneuvered many of his opponents and seemed to have the race well in hand until the middle of the second lap where the two Aleena pilots, Rostig Pharr and Vessa Epllo started to move up the pack.

When Tusken took out a slow moving Gran in a green pod, Epllo took his shot and screamed past Pharr, who followed in his wake as they raced their way back into contention.

At the start of the third lap, Tavel Glint was only five seconds ahead of the two pilots at his back but seemed to be unconcerned about their approach.

“Don’t look back,” Obi-Wan whispered, his eyes glued to a distant screen floating overhead, Satine’s head still pressed against his shoulder. “Don’t speed up.”

Ahsoka chewed on her lip, trying to remember to breathe, to stay in the present moment and open herself up to the Force. She remembered an old chant from Jedah. I fear nothing. All is as the Force wills it.

As the third loop progressed, Rostig Pharr jumped ahead of Vessa Epllo and Tavel Glint, who was so overconfident he never saw either pilot coming. The crowd roared around Ahsoka, jumping on their feet and cheering for the sheer novelty of the odds-on favorite to be caught asleep at the stick.

The two Aleena racers battled through the last quarter of the race, doing their best to outfly the other, and a horrible sinking feeling settled over Ahsoka as Rostig Pharr took the lead coming into the home stretch.

There’s no way Epllo can catch him. Not with that engine. It’s just not possible.

Ahsoka could barely hear Obi-Wan inhale, a sharp hiss of worry almost lost in the riotous cheers of the crowd. “Oh no.”

And then there was a loud bass kick and suddenly Epllo shot forward, the flames shooting out of the back of his engines as he yanked his pod around Pharr’s and dashed forward like Pharr was standing still.

What seemed like ten thousand spectators lost their minds all at once, screaming and cheering as Epllo covered the last two kilometers in under thirty seconds, breaking the record for the fastest lap in history.

Ahsoka let out a shout of glee and Obi-Wan punched one fist in the air as Satine peeled herself away to hear the good news.

“Did we win?” she asked as Obi-Wan pulled her upright into a hug. “Stars above! We won?”

“The whole thing!” Ahsoka shouted over the crowd. “Now let’s get our money and get the kriff out of here!”
Making straight for the payment window, Ahsoka, Obi-Wan and Satine tried to keep their excitement under control as they moved against the masses of beings trying to exit the coliseum. While some were going to parties in the area for the rest of the day and into the night, most of the visitors were either going back to their homes around Tatooine or leaving for their ships waiting at various spaceports around the area.

Ahsoka already had her eye on one ship that wasn’t scheduled to leave until sundown. It would take them straight to Corellia where she was absolutely confident they would be safe from Culling Blade and anyone else paid to find and kill Satine.

After waiting in line behind a very happy Nikto for what felt like forever, Ahsoka and her party made it to the window where the Twi’lek from before was waiting, looking as if someone had just punched him in the gut. “Tickets, please.”

“Here,” Ahsoka smiled, doing her best to be as polite as possible, not wanting to give the bookies any reason to confiscate her money. “How much did we win?”

Obi-Wan and Satine stood behind Ahsoka, their gazes turned toward the floor, but she could sense her Padawan’s sudden anxiety in the Force. She wasn’t sure what caused it but it put her on immediate edge.

As soon as they got their money, they were going to take the first speeder they could find to Gardulla’s palace and buy Shmi before the damned Hutt even knew what was going on.

The Twi’lek blinked at Ahsoka’s tickets and then gaped up at her. “I remember you! You bet on Vessa Epllo. Nobody bet on him.”

“Yes,” Ahsoka replied with what she hoped was a polite but professional smile. “And now I would like my winnings.”

Letting out a heavy sigh, the Twi’lek scanned Ahsoka’s tickets and let out a low whistle. “I’ll have to get authorization before I can give you this many credits. Do you want to come back later?”

“I’ll wait,” Ahsoka replied, her voice firm and unyielding. “I don’t have anywhere else to be.”

As they waited for the window clerk to return with their money, Ahsoka turned back to Obi-Wan, who was staring at the ground with his jaw clenched and his hands curled into fists. Satine stood next to him, trying to rub his shoulders and telling him to relax, but Ahsoka could tell that it wasn’t working in spite of the girl’s best efforts.

“What’s wrong?” Ahsoka asked, her voice soft as she tried not to draw any more attention to them than their success already had. “Obi-Wan, talk to me.”

Shaking his head, words tumbled out of her padawan. “I don’t know, Master. I just… We have to leave. We have to get off this planet as soon as possible. Something bad is going to happen, Master. I can feel it.”

“Oh no,” Satine mouthed, looking up at Ahsoka. “What does that mean?”

Ahsoka closed her eyes and took a breath, reaching out with the Force to see if she could locate the origin of Obi-Wan’s anxiety. There was nothing specific to be found but that didn’t mean he was wrong.

On the contrary, the Force was wound tighter than the seal on an airlock and Ahsoka could tell that all it would take was one small spark, a misplaced word here or there to ignite some kind of terrible
conflagration. Whatever it was, a fight or a riot or something even worse, Ahsoka couldn’t say but she agreed with Obi-Wan.

They had to get off Tatooine sooner rather than later.

“This is the woman I told you about, Boss.” The Twi’lek’s voice interrupted their muted conversation as he reappeared in the window with a dark-skinned human who had scarring over what had been his eyes, now replaced with cybernetic ones. He peered at the ticket and the payout before glancing over at Ahsoka.

“Well you sure do know how to pick ‘em, Miss...?” the supervisor said, punching in a code to the computer the window clerk had been sitting at. The drawer popped open and the clerk started laying out solid credit bars into a small carrying case.


“Yes, ma’am,” the Twi’lek sighed, carefully sliding the case of credits through the window. “Five hundred thousand credits. Azul’ir smiled on you today, Miss Larte.”

“He did indeed,” Ahsoka replied. She took the case and bowed her head in thanks before turning away from the window and moving quickly, but not too quickly, to the exits. Obi-Wan and Satine were right behind her, their hoods pulled up and their faces hidden.

Once they made their way out of the coliseum, Ahsoka called the first speeder hack they could find and instructed the driver to get them to Gardulla’s palace.

“And step on it,” Ahsoka ordered, sitting back against the squabs of the best seat, her body tense. Glancing over at Obi-Wan and Satine’s silent and nervous faces, Ahsoka had a sudden realization that picking the winning pod racer was going to be the easy part of the plan.

Gardulla’s palace sat on the edge of a small bluff of sandstone that marked the official edge of Mos Espa. From a distance it seemed small and squat but as they rode up in the speeder hack the walls of the building seemed to grow higher and higher.

“Do you want me to drop you off at the front gate?” the driver joked as he merged out of traffic.

“Take us around to the back,” Ahsoka instructed, reminding herself to relax her shoulders. Obi-Wan’s dread had spread to her and she didn’t know why exactly they were so tense but it had started with Obi-Wan and so she knew it was wrong to ignore it.

They needed to get Shmi and get off Tatooine as soon as possible.

After the speeder hack dropped them off, Ahsoka ordered Obi-Wan and Satine to wait for her around the corner of the main building, in the shade and out of sight. If something went wrong, she didn’t want her padawan or the Duchess of Mandalore to be involved.

“If something happens to me, I want you to take Anakin and Satine and get off Tatooine before the sun sets,” Ahsoka told Obi-Wan, her tone brooking no argument from her padawan. “This is an order, Obi-Wan. Take Satine and Anakin and get them to safety. Steal a ship if you have to, but do
not come back for me and Shmi. Do you understand?"

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, horrified. “Master, no! What do you mean ‘if something happens to you’? I am not leaving without you or Shmi!”

Ahsoka gave Obi-Wan a brave smile and pulled him in for a tight hug, whispering in his ear. “Please don’t argue with me, Obi-Wan. Your life, Satine’s, and Anakin’s are too important. Please do this for me.”

Confusion and fear suffused their bond and Obi-Wan found himself unable to argue with his master’s murmured plea. He bowed his head and rested it against Ahsoka’s shoulder. “Yes, Master.”

“Good,” Ahsoka sighed and stepped back. “Now, if you’ll both excuse me, I have to go free Shmi.”

And with one last look at Obi-Wan and Satine, Ahsoka turned around and marched into Gardulla’s palace.

It was easy enough to find Shmi. Shmi’s name got her in the back door, and the slaves working in the kitchen she found herself in pointed up the stairs and told Ahsoka to take them to the second floor, where Shmi was repairing water vaporators. If they found it odd that a strange Togruta had appeared unannounced, demanding to know where one of their fellow slaves was, they did not show it. They didn’t seem to show much of anything in the Force, only weary exhaustion and a kind of numbness that served as life-saving armor.

The whole scene made Ahsoka’s stomach turn and she wished she had the resources to set them all free. It seemed wrong to her that of all these innocent people trapped in bondage, only Shmi would be freed. They were all deserving of rescue, not just Anakin’s mother.

But Ahsoka couldn’t dwell on that fact for too long at the moment. The clock was ticking and they had to hurry.

Ahsoka found Shmi on the second floor, frowning over a water vaporator, her hands covered in grease and tools laid out by her side. There was a large coiled piece of machinery in her lap and she delicately tapped at it with what looked like a mini soldering iron.

“Shmi?” Ahsoka said, hoping she didn’t sound as anxious as she felt. “I have good news.”

Looking up from the mess of parts and tools, Shmi gazed up at Ahsoka in shock. “You mean… Are you serious? Truly?”

Ahsoka nodded, holding up her small case of credits and patting it with authority. “C’mon. Let’s get you out of here.”

“Let me gather my tools,” Shmi said and before Ahsoka could argue with her and press upon her the need for speed, she was already halfway done, moving with a speed and precision she wasn’t expecting from someone who wasn’t Anakin or Master Obi-Wan.

I guess Master had to get it from somebody. Ahsoka thought as she helped Shmi upright. “Is that it?”

“Yes,” Shmi announced, frowning at the vaporator as she picked up her toolkit. “Gardulla will just
have to get someone else to fix this.”

“I’m sure she’ll find someone.” Ahsoka stepped back so that she could follow Shmi’s lead. “Where to now?”

“The Task Master,” Shmi explained as they hurried through the cool dark tunnels of the palace, passing by slaves, droids, and a few nasty looking creatures who paid them little attention. Gardulla had a wide variety of slaves from every corner of the Outer Rim and no one looked twice at a stately Togruta following a dark-haired human as they hurried past.

The Task Master ended up being a serious looking Nikto who wore well tailored clothing and carried an electrified baton at his side even while sitting at the desk in his office. The very sight of his baton through the door set Ahsoka’s temper to boil and put her teeth on edge.

She took a deep breath and pictured her anger unfurling from her clenched fists before stepping into the Task Master’s small, neat space, Shmi standing behind her and looking meek.

“Excuse me, but are you the person I see about purchasing this slave?” Ahsoka announced, her voice brisk and crisply professional. She would need every last ounce of Master Obi-Wan’s charm and cleverness for this negotiation.

Surprised and perhaps a bit confused, the Task Master swiveled around in his chair to look at Ahsoka and then glance over at Shmi. “I am the overseer for all of the Illustrious Gardulla’s slaves, yes. Why do you want to purchase her? She’s not even a certified mechanic.”

“Then the price for her should be quite reasonable, don’t you think?” Ahsoka replied, her skin crawling at how easy it was to bargain for the life of another sentient being. “I believe the going rate is one hundred and fifty thousand for her age and skill level?”

“If she didn’t have a brat,” he answered, standing up and walking over to a wall full of files and datapads. “There’s an extra cost for the lost labor from the whelp. And expenses required for finding another slave with her skills. It’ll be four-fifty. Not a credit less.”

Giving the Task Master her best Master Obi-Wan unimpressed face, Ahsoka crossed her arms over her chest and let out a heavy sigh. “Four-fifty for one slave and a baby I’m going to have to feed and clothe? Nonsense. I could get me three slaves from the auction house at that price. How about two-fifty?”

The Task Master shrugged, placing Shmi’s flimsiplast file down on his table, leaning his weight against it. He tapped the file with two fingers. “You could. But you’re not going to get records like this. No diseases, strong teeth, and not a whiff of rebelliousness in her or the kid. Don’t believe me? You can examine her yourself.”

Shmi folded her hands together against her stomach and stood up straight, willing to go the extra mile for Ahsoka’s risky gamble if they needed to.

Waving off the offer, Ahsoka shook her head. “You can’t tell me it’s going to cost Gardulla that much to replace a non-certified mechanic. Besides, she was reverse soldering the condenser on that vaporator upstairs. Maybe she’s not certified for a reason?”

The Task Master scowled at Shmi and growled. “Three fifty. Take it or leave it.”

“Three-twenty-five if I pay you in credits right now?” Ahsoka offered, trying to make sure she played her part as a slave owner in full. She couldn’t let on that she was desperate to save a friend, that she even knew who she was outside of what she could do for Ahsoka’s supposed business.
“Let’s see ‘em,” the Task Master said, pulling out another set of flimsiplasts and a stylus for Ahsoka’s eventual signature on the deed to Shmi’s life.

“Hold this,” Ahsoka said to Shmi, handing her the case of their winnings from the race and opening it. She laid out the credit chips in neat stacks for the Nikto to count out to his satisfaction, making sure her hands didn’t tremble as she did. “So? Do we have a deal? Three-twenty-five in cash for the slave and her kid?”

“Deal. Let me get the paperwork pulled up and I’ll give you the tracker.”

The next twenty minutes passed in a tense haze as the Task Master counted out each stack of credits slowly and methodically and then proceeded to drawing up the necessary deed. Ahsoka wanted to shout at him to go faster but she had to keep her worries trapped behind her shields as she lounged in an overstuffed leather chair set on the opposite side of the desk.

Shmi stood quietly in the doorway, glancing up at Ahsoka from time to time, the two women trying to quietly reassure each other without speaking.

_This is happening. We are going to get out of here in one piece._

“If you’ll just sign here and here,” the Task Master instructed, watching Ahsoka sign the document, “you’ve got yourself a brand new slave. Here’s her tracker and your documentation. Pleasure doing business with you, Madame Tano.”

“You as well,” Ahsoka said, standing upright with a guarded smile and shaking the Nikto’s hand. “Come along, girl. We’ve got a ship to catch.”

“Yes, Mistress,” Shmi murmured, following Ahsoka as she strode out of the office, doing her best to not leap for joy.

The first thing Ahsoka did once she and Shmi were reunited with Obi-Wan and Satine was to deactivate Shmi’s slave chip, everyone tense and too afraid to show any of their elation in public.

There was a little bit of discussion between Obi-Wan and Shmi over what was the best way to handle the tiny little bomb. Despite his misgivings about how much time they had, Obi-Wan wanted to find a med droid and cut the deactivated chip out immediately, whereas Shmi, perhaps sensing Ahsoka’s unease, just wanted to get Anakin and flee the planet as quickly as possible.

In the end, they went with Shmi’s choice since it was her body the chip was implanted in.

“So now what?” Satine asked, happily hugging Shmi once the chip’s killing subroutine was deactivated as they all huddled together in the shade of a nearby alley, giddy excitement on both their faces. “Shall we collect your sabers from the pawn shop, Master Ahsoka?”

“Why don’t I go get my sabers and you three go back and collect Anakin?” Ahsoka suggested, resting her hands on her hips. “I don’t know about you three but I have had about all the sand I can handle and I’d like to get us out of her as soon as possible.”

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement and Ahsoka noticed he had moved his saber from behind his back and tucked under a tabard, to resting on his hip within easy reach and out in the open. She reached
out with the Force and touched Obi-Wan’s spirit with her own.

What is it? She asked, trying to project a calm and confident facade to her padawan.

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka and shook his head. I don’t know. But we’re running out of time. Is there a ship waiting for us?

There will be. Ahsoka promised. “Meet me at the entrance to the slave quarters?”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan replied, bowing his head. “Don’t take too long.”

“I won’t,” Ahsoka promised, giving Shmi and Satine a salute as she took off, loping down the street.

Obi-Wan watched her go and tried to ignore the feeling in his gut as he, Satine and Shmi headed back towards the slave quarters where Anakin awaited his freedom.

Back at the Grand Coliseum, the head bookie made his way through the drunken, riotous crowds of partygoers, a datapad tucked under one arm. Once he was finished making his report to Gardulla, he was going to see about partaking of the licentious revelry himself.

But first, business.

Gardulla seemed to be in a good mood, watching a trio of blue Twi’lek dancers as she smoked her hookah in her chambers overlooking the stadium. There was container of gorgs at her side and she reached down to grab one and pop it into her large mouth as he approached her dais.

“Illustrious Gardulla, the Great Lady of Tatooine,” the bookie said in formal Huttese, bowing low to her. “I have the datapad with today’s takings. We did exceptionally well.”

Gardulla chortled to herself, taking a drag off her hookah. “Upsets are good for the house. How much did we take?”

“Five million,” he replied, scanning through his datapad. “The only bets placed on Epllo were mostly joke bets of a few credits. All except for one, which paid out five hundred thousand, Your Eminence.”

“Five hundred thousand?” the Hutt grumbled, looking down at her bookie. “Who would have bet at all on that broken-down pod?”

The bookie scrolled through his datapad and pulled up the recordings from his optical replacements and presented it for Gardulla’s inspection. “Ashla Larte, a Togruta from Shili, we assumed. She didn’t trip the records so we paid out. I didn’t think you’d want to get a reputation for not honoring your debts, Your Illustriousness.”

Gardulla scowled and threw a gorg at the man in front of her. “Begone. I am too busy to listen to your excuses.”
“What do you mean you already sold them?”

Ahsoka had never thought of herself as a violent woman but she was starting to reconsider that in the light of the news that Zeta Naser had already sold her sabers to an off-world buyer.

“I had three more days on the loan you slimy chuta!” Ahsoka glared, both of her hands on the transparasteel counter of the Phindian pawn broker, who was currently cowering behind a protective ray shield. “Those sabers weren’t yours to sell!”

“Y-you shouldn’t have p-p-pawned them,” Zeta stammered, holding his hands up in front of his elongated face. “Do you know how many people pawn their chagas to go gamble on the Boonta and never come back for them? Hundreds, eh? Thousands!”

“You cheating little worm!” Ahsoka seethed, slamming her fist down on the counter. “Those sabers meant a lot to me!”

*Think, Ahsoka, think. “How do you plan on making this up to me?”*

Absolutely terrified of the tall, imposing Togruta in front of him, half-remembered legends of the species being predators in the back of his mind, Zeta stumbled over to his display of blasters and, fumbling with the code, unlocked it. “Take whatever you want! Please! I’m sorry!”

Struggling to control her anger, Ahsoka followed the Phindian over to the display case of weapons. She pulled out a stun blaster for Satine, a small hold-out for Shmi and set of matching blaster pistols for herself. The combined price of the weapons wasn’t nearly the value of one of her sabers, let alone both of them, but they would have to make do.

“I’m taking these as well,” Ahsoka informed the pawnbroker, grabbing two personal comm devices and marching out into the street.

Zeta Naser peered up from behind his counter and babbled out a weak, “P-please doing business with you?”

“Kark you, Naser!” Ahsoka spat back, furious that she had lost her sabers that had served her so well for so long.

Bit by bit, one piece at a time, Ahsoka was losing what connected to the time she had come from. She wasn’t sure how to feel about that.

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Obi-Wan stood with Satine outside of Shmi’s old house as she made her goodbyes to Abarrane, Jaffe and her fellow friends and slaves. It seemed like there was a never-ending line of people Shmi had helped or who wanted to say goodbye to Anakin.

“Shmi has so many friends,” Satine murmured, smiling. “I’m happy to be taking her away from this, but sad to leave so many behind.”

“Perhaps that’s something for the Duchess of Mandalore to mention to the Senate when we get back to Coruscant?” Obi-Wan offered, frowning at his chronometer. He couldn’t escape the feeling that they were running out of time, his guts twisting with worry.
The first of Tatooine’s suns was already on its downhill slide to the horizon.

_We’re running out of time_, Obi-Wan thought as another round of goodbyes looked be starting up.

“Satine,” Obi-Wan murmured softly, turning away from the small clutch of well-wishers. “We need to go.”

Satine glanced up at Obi-Wan, shocked at his clenched jaw and the thin line of his mouth. She nodded and patted his shoulder. “Understood. Leave the unpleasantness to me.”

Obi-Wan waited, his hand on his lightsaber as Satine sweetly apologized for stealing Shmi and Anakin away, but there was a ship to catch and they absolutely had to go.

“Be safe, my friend!” Abarrane cried, pulling Shmi into another tight hug, Anakin cradled between them. “Don’t look back. Promise me you’ll never look back.”

Shmi hugged her dear friend tight, trying not to cry as she nodded her head. “May Azul’ir watch over you.”

“May the Skybrothers walk with you on your path,” Abarrane answered tearfully, dropping a kiss on Anakin’s head before she stepped back to accept a hug from Jaffe.

Shmi turned away from her friends and the small community she had been a part of since Anakin’s birth, a knot of tears in her throat as she let Satine guide them over to Obi-Wan and then out through the winding alleyways of the slave quarters to where Ahsoka waited for them all and a promise of a new life.

Not just for Shmi but for Anakin as well.

The party on Gardulla’s sail barge that had begun the moment the Boonta was over showed little signs of stopping as her sycophants and hangers on drank and ate their way through a mountain of a feast.

With another Boonta over and done, Gardulla was happy to turn her attention back to the day-to-day operations of her criminal enterprises and settled down to work. With everyone else occupied with debauched frivolity, she sent a holo back to her palace, requesting any news or progress on her various and illegal activities.

There was good news about the water tax and another freighter full of slaves was due to arrive in the next month, which was projected to be quite lucrative.

Her slave overseer informed her that they had lost three slaves in the past week, two to disease and another to old age.

“And we sold that off-market mechanic with the screaming kid,” he said, sending over the pertinent data on Shmi Skywalker. “I got three-twenty-five for her and the brat so I think it’s a pretty good deal.”

Gardulla canted her massive head to the side, taking a long drag off her hookah. It struck her as odd that someone would want to buy the mousey little mechanic who worked on her vaporators,
especially since they weren’t going to get any worth out of that mewling whelp of a child for at least another five years.

“Who purchased her?” Gardulla asked, taking a long drink of sweet Alderaanian liquor.

The Task Master consulted his records and pulled up the identification papers of the purchaser, which appeared as a large holo floating in front of her. “Ahsoka Tano, a Togruta.”

“How strange,” the Hutt rumbled. “There seem to be a great deal of Togrutas on my planet recently.”

“Hey! Hey, Boss! That’s her!” one of her thugs, a Weequay shouted over the din of the party swirling around them. “That’s the bitch that attacked us a couple of days ago!”

“Bookie!” Gardulla rumbled over the noise. “Somebody find me the bookie!”

A few minutes later, he appeared before Gardulla, bowing before her. “Yes, your Eminence. How can I serve you?”

“Is this the Togruta who won the five-hundred-thousand credit payout?” Gardulla asked, annoyed that she was having to do all of the work herself.

A new holo picture of this “Ahsoka Tano” sprang up to hover over the small projector embedded in the floor of Gardulla’s throne room. It had been taken from the Bounty Hunter Guild’s database and it slowly circled around as the bookie took a long look at it.

“Yes, your Greatness,” he replied. “That’s Ashla Larte.”

“Thief!” Gardulla roared, slamming her fists down on the arm of her sled. “Backstabbing little bitch! Bring me that woman! She’s a karking Jedi! You fell for her mind tricks, you idiots! Find my slave and bring me this Jedi alive! I want the pleasure of throwing her into the Sarlacc myself!”

Obi-Wan, Shmi, Anakin, and Satine were waiting for Ahsoka when she met them at the entrance to the slave quarter.

“Where are your sabers?” Obi-Wan asked the minute he spotted his master, his eyes dancing over her form and his brows furrowing when he didn’t see them. “What happened?”

“Don’t ask,” Ahsoka growled and handed Obi-Wan a com. “Use this if we get separated.”

“Separated?” Obi-Wan repeated, confused. “What do you mean?”

Ahsoka didn’t answer him, moving past him to gently ruffle Anakin’s hair and hand over a stun blaster to Satine and a hold out blaster to Shmi. “Take these. This is a stun blaster, Satine. It’s not going to kill anyone.”

“What are these for?” Shmi asked, confused, tucking her blaster into the belt around her waist. “Are we in danger?”

“Better safe than sorry,” Ahsoka answered, pulling Obi-Wan’s saber out of her boot and hooking it to her belt in front of her new blaster pistols. “Everybody ready?”
“Yes,” Obi-Wan said, his voice tight as he tucked his com into his belt. “Let’s get moving.”

They were crossing the main artery of traffic through Mos Espa when a loud cacophony of shouts and blasters pierced the afternoon murmur of the crowd, sending people scattering to the protective shade of the nearby shops and stalls.

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan pushed the others behind them, the whole group hiding behind large storage crates as two land speeders filled with what looked like Gardulla’s thugs ground to a halt in the intersection.

“Gardulla will pay five hundred credits to the person who brings us the Togruta Ahsoka Tano alive or dead and the slave she stole from our benevolent patron!” one of the men bellowed over the crowd as a Trandoshan in the back of one of the speeders fired off his weapon into the air, sending another round of screams through the crowds. “And we’ll bring her the head of whoever is stupid enough to help them get away!”

“What do we do?” Obi-Wan whispered to Ahsoka, his hands on his saber. “How are we going to get to the spaceport now?”

Ahsoka frowned, chewing on her lip as the speeders roared off, and turned back to their group. “They’re only looking for me and Shmi right now. Maybe they don’t know about Satine.”

“But they said your name,” Satine pointed out. “Surely that means they know about me as well.”

“We don’t have time to argue,” Shmi said, tucking a blanket up over the back of Anakin’s head. “Take Anakin and flee. Maybe if Gardulla gets me back, she won’t look for the rest of you.”

“We are not leaving without you!” Ahsoka shot back. “I didn’t sell my sabers to leave you behind! My master would never forgive me.”

“And I will never forgive you if your stubbornness lets Gardulla recover my Anakin and he grows up a slave!” Shmi nearly shouted, her dark eyes narrowed as Anakin began to squirm and sniffle. “You have to save him! I don’t care what happens to me but you must save my Ani! He must go with you back to the Jedi where he’ll be safe and cared for.”

“Shmi…” Satine murmured, her face twisted in grief. “We can’t leave you here!”

Ahsoka’s mind raced, working quickly through their options and came up with one that might give them a chance of getting out of there in one piece.

Well, it would get Obi-Wan, Anakin, and Satine off Tatooine in one piece.

Ahsoka and Shmi, on the other hand, were going to need a lot more than just luck on their side.

“We split up,” Ahsoka decided, looking at Obi-Wan as Shmi quieted Anakin with a few worried kisses. “Obi-Wan will take Satine and Anakin and run for the spaceport. I’ve booked the Tellestrian Hawk. All you have to do is give him the credits he’s owed and the pilot will get you off the planet. We’ll meet you but if Shmi and I don’t make it there by the second dusk, I want you three to leave. Do I make myself clear?”

“Leave?” Obi-Wan gasped as Satine let out a sound of fear. “No! I can’t! I won’t leave you, Master!”

“You have to,” Ahsoka insisted, handing over what was left of their credits to Obi-Wan as Shmi gave Anakin to Satine. “You can come back for us if you can, but you have to get Satine and
Anakin to safety! Do you understand, Obi-Wan?”

Looking up at his master, Obi-Wan shook his head before he reluctantly bowed to the hard light in her eyes. “Yes, Master. I will get them to safety. I promise.”

“Good,” Ahsoka said, reaching out to give her padawan a tight hug, possibly their last, before she looked back at Shmi. “Ready to run, Shmi?”

Anakin let out a soft wail for his mother and Shmi bent down to kiss the top of his head and whisper something soft to him in her native tongue before she nodded, her expression equally as grim as Ahsoka’s. “I am ready. Take good care of him.”

Satine tucked Anakin’s head against her shoulder and nodded, heart breaking at the frightened way his tiny fists curled against her. “I will protect him with my life.”

“I won’t let any harm come to him,” Obi-Wan vowed as Ahsoka peered around the corner of the crates, looking for an opening in the milling crowd.

“They’ve gone,” Ahsoka said, gesturing for Shmi to follow her. “Let’s go.”

“Be safe!” Shmi begged Obi-Wan before she and Ahsoka took off running across the main street.

For a beautiful second it looked like they were going to pass through the central part of Mos Espa unnoticed but then someone let out a shout.

“It’s her! It’s that Togruta with the slave!”

“Dammit!” Ahsoka hissed as she and Shmi turned down an alleyway and kept on running, blaster fire peppering the far wall. She pulled out her lightsaber and prayed to the Force to watch over her charges as she fled.

Please don’t let anything happen to them. Please let them get off this planet safely!

“This way!” Shmi called out as they came to another intersection and Ahsoka hurried after her, glancing back over her shoulder as shouts and blaster fire started to grow louder behind them. “If we stick to the smaller alleyways, they can’t use their speeders!”

“Good idea!” Ahsoka answered and leapt over a parked speeder as she and Shmi hurried through Mos Espa’s sprawling maze of backstreets, trying to lose their pursuers.

When they turned what felt like the hundredth corner, they came to a stop to catch their breath, panting in the long shadows of the growing afternoon. Ahsoka leaned back up against the warm stone of the building they were in front of, a blaster pistol in her hand.

She peered around the corner, waiting to see if Gardulla’s thugs were still behind them, but no one was there.

For one tense moment it almost seemed as if they were free.

“There they are!” came a voice from the other end of the street they were hiding on and suddenly blaster fire filled the air.

Ahsoka and Shmi fled, staying close to the buildings to hide from the incoming blaster fire and, when that didn’t work, Ahsoka pulled out Obi-Wan’s saber, the blue-white blade hissing to life to protect their flank before they slipped into another alleyway.
Over and over they barely escaped, thinking they had managed to outrun their pursuers only to find themselves vulnerable and under fire from down another street. As the second sun crept closer and closer to the horizon, Ahsoka was starting to worry about Shmi’s ability to keep up in such a long and exhausting chase.

They were gasping against the side of yet another wall, desperate for air, when Shmi managed to wheeze out a faint, “Oh no. Dead end.”

Ahsoka turned to follow Shmi’s gaze and felt her heart drop into her stomach. They were cornered in a blind alley with stoops leading up to locked doors along it, the only way out back the way they came.

Grimly determined, Ahsoka peered over her shoulder to the alley entrance. The two women slowly began to creep back, Shmi holding up her hold out blaster and Ahsoka ready with her lightsaber.

They were nearly there when Gardulla’s thugs tumbled into view and started firing on them.

“Get behind that stoop!” Ahsoka ordered as she covered for Shmi’s retreat, hissing in pain as a blaster bolt singed her leg. Limping after Shmi, Ahsoka flung herself behind the protective barrier of the nearest sandstone stoop, hooking the blade back to her belt and pulling out both blasters.

She looked over at Shmi and gave her the bravest smile in her arsenal. “Well, at least we’ll go down fighting!”

“I would rather die free than live as a slave,” Shmi confessed, pushing a lock of dark hair out of her face. “I just pray that Obi-Wan got Anakin and Satine to the ship in time.”

“I’m sure he did,” Ahsoka said, looking skyward and sending out a prayer to the Force one last time.

*Let my aim be as true as Rex’s and watch over Obi-Wan and Anakin for me.*

With a deep breath, Ahsoka and Shmi nodded to each other before they turned to fire over the stoop at the advancing gangsters. They caught them by surprise and, in a display of marksmanship that would have made Rex glow with pride, Ahsoka took down four thugs before darting back behind the cover to the stoop. Shmi managed to hit one in the leg and winged another, taking down the number of attackers from a terrifying twenty to an only horrifying fourteen.

“Focus on the ones closest to us,” Ahsoka instructed, checking the charge on her packs. “And stay behind me.”

After another loud round of fire, three more thugs were dead and another one wounded.

But that left ten attackers and both Shmi and Ahsoka’s blasters were dead.

*It’s not enough,* she realized with dawning horror.

“I’m sorry, Shmi.”

“Ani is safe. That is all that matters,” Shmi murmured as they heard the men advance.

Ahsoka took Obi-Wan’s saber from her belt and closed her eyes, trying to center herself in the Force for one last stand when the sound of another vehicle roaring into the alley told her in no uncertain terms that this was the end of her fight. Whatever was going to happen next would be as the Force willed it.
Ahsoka crouched into position, ready to jump up and deflect as many blaster shots as she could before the gangsters overwhelmed her and Shmi.

That’s what Master would do.

A sudden high-pitched whine of an engine warming up and the whirring click of a canon nearly deafened Ahsoka.

Gardulla’s men were screaming, from the sound of it dropping like flies.

The second vehicle was firing on them, a loud, cheerful chortle ricocheting off the tall buildings making up their little alley. The pounding of a repeating blaster cannon greeted Ahsoka’s montrals and she looked over at Shmi, startled and confused.

“What’s happening?” Shmi asked, her eyes round with shock. “Who is that?”

“I don’t… I don’t know,” Ahsoka said, shaking her head.

As the last of the thugs fell to the ground and silence returned to the now pockmarked street around them, Ahsoka slowly peered up and over the sandstone stoop, gaping in shock at the bodies strewn on the street in front of them.

At the end of the alley was a hovering airskiff with a full complement of Weequay pirates, one holding the bulky repeating blaster from earlier against his hip as the smoke from the barrels drifted into the sky.

And in the middle of the skiff, the brightly colored feathers of her massive hat shivering in the wind, stood Mother Ohnaka, the Pirate Queen of Klatooine, a smug grin on her wrinkled face and her arms folded over her sunken chest.

“Hello my friends! How fortunate it is we should meet again like this, so that I might repay the favor I owe you!” Mama Ohnaka enthused, throwing her arms wide. “Now come! Come, come, come! We haven’t much time, do we?”

“Mama Ohnaka?” Ahsoka said, her mouth hanging open in shock. “Is that really you?”

“You were expecting someone else?” the pirate queen laughed, waving a hand that was covered with even more jewelry and rings than the last time Ahsoka had seen her.

She ordered two of her men to shepherd Ahsoka and Shmi onto the skiff before they took off down another side street into the growing dusk. “Now tell me, what has happened to my favorite little Corellian Mango?”

Chapter End Notes

IT'S DONE. TWELVE THOUSAND WORDS BUT IT'S DONE.

I would like to officially apologize to Lily Conrad for asking her to edit this under such a terrible time crunch and thank her for being so wonderful and understanding! If there are any egregious mistakes or terrible writing it is ALL MY FAULT. It's my poor time management skills at fault here and should not unfairly reflect poorly on Lily.
So... Anyway... IT'S DONE!

The next chapter is the last chapter in the Tatooine Arc and the Tano and Kenobi will be going on a long season break. I don't have a hard date for the return yet but we will be coming back.

So... One chapter left! WOOHOOO!
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano pawned her lightsabers to place a bet on the Boonta eve podrace. Thanks to her memories as Anakin Skywalker's padawan, her bets pay off and with the winnings from her gambling she is able to purchase Shmi and her son Anakin. Just when everything seems to be going their way, Gardulla the Hutt's thugs and criminals arrive, splitting up Ahsoka and Shmi from Obi-Wan Kenobi, Satine Kryze and Anakin.

And while Ahsoka and Shmi were rescued by Mama Ohnaka, there is no guarantee the pirates will show up in time to save Padawan Kenobi and his small group...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

As Obi-Wan watched Ahsoka run off with Shmi into the market crowd, he could hear his master's words echoing in his mind.

“You have to get Satine and Anakin to safety!”

With his stomach twisting itself into anxious knots, he saw Ahsoka and Shmi almost pass through the crowd before someone spotted her distinctive blue and white montrals and gave a shout that brought back Gardulla’s thugs.

No! he wanted to shout, but the gangsters’ flashy and brutal warning to the populace had turned the residents of Mos Espa against them.

Master Ahsoka’s question hung sharp and clear in his mind. “Do you understand, Obi-Wan?”

No. I don’t. I don’t want you to go. I don’t want to do this by myself. I’m not ready, Master! I’m… I’m…

Obi-Wan closed his eyes, ashamed to admit the truth as Ahsoka and Shmi disappeared around a corner with the thugs in pursuit. No one had seen him and Satine yet, tucked up against a building across the way, but that could change at any moment.

I’m scared, Master. I don’t… I don’t think I can do this all by myself!

Obi-Wan did not expect any kind of answer and yet he felt something warm and strong at his back. A pair of unseen hands came to rest on his shoulders, along with a whispered promise. You can do this, Obi-Wan. Your master believes in you. Satine believes in you.

Anakin believes in you.

You are ready, Obi-Wan.
“Obi-Wan?” Satine murmured, reaching out hesitantly to touch his shoulder, unsure if she should interrupt what was clearly some kind of communing with the Force. Anakin was starting to fuss against her and the longer they stayed in one place, the worse their chances grew.

Startled out of his worried thoughts, Obi-Wan looked back at Satine and Anakin, at her nervous expression and Anakin’s round blue eyes. They were waiting for him to act, waiting for him to lead them to safety. They were counting on him to be the Jedi he claimed to be, to protect the innocent and to serve the greater good. To be the Jedi Ahsoka believed he could be.

To become the Jedi he knew he could be.

Taking a moment to shake away the last of the fog of worry, fear, and the strange presence that had been there just a moment ago, Obi-Wan started planning.

“Forgive me, Satine,” he said, reaching over to pull Satine’s hood further down across her tense face. “If we can stay hidden, we should be able to make our way to the spaceport without issue.”

“I agree,” she replied, nervously hoisting Anakin a little higher on her hip. “Let’s get moving, shall we, Anakin?”

Anakin, picking up on the stress and tension around him, only grew more agitated, his earlier fussing threatening to turn into a full-blown tantrum. His cheeks grew red and he took a few heaving breaths, letting them out in angry cries.

“Oh! Anakin, not now!” Satine said, trying to bounce the boy up and down as she ran a hand down his back, trying to soothe him. “Shhh! Don’t cry, Little Dragon. Oh please don’t cry!”

The Force roiled with anger and fear around them as Anakin’s emotions spilled out along with his tears, red-hot and full of spines.

Obi-Wan, knowing that nothing drew more attention than a crying child, knew they had to put a stop to Anakin’s wailing and fast. “Give him to me. I’ll talk to him.”

“He’s a toddler, Obi-Wan!” Satine glared, holding the boy protectively against her chest. “You can’t just politely ask him to stop being upset! He won’t understand!”

Obi-Wan gave Satine a look, his mouth pulled into a thin line. “Just trust me, Satine. I… We… We have a connection, Anakin and I. I can get through to him.”

It’s dangerous given his current state and how powerful it is, but we haven’t any other choice.

Deciding they didn’t have time to argue about it any further, Satine carefully handed Anakin over to Obi-Wan, moving to stand in front the two to shelter them from the crowd passing by, her hand on resting on the stun blaster tucked into her belt. She did not understand whatever it was that Force sensitives did when they communicated silently, but she knew that it was an all encompassing experience and that while it was happening, the two would be defenseless.

With Anakin now screaming in his arms, Obi-Wan panicked for a moment, the boy’s nearness adding to the power of his fear. Wave after swamping wave of anger and worry crashed into his shields, and a small, detached part of Obi-Wan noted that he was not particularly weak in this aspect of his Jedi training. It was a testament to just how powerful Anakin was that as a toddler his unrestrained emotions were able to strain a teenage padawan learner’s shielding.

“Shhh… It’s alright, Anakin,” Obi-Wan murmured, tucking the boy against his chest, pressing an awkward kiss to the boy’s hot forehead as he closed his eyes and recalled what Shmi said to make
Anakin calm down. “Shh… small and still, Little Dragon. Small and still… shh…”

Anakin’s fit continued unabated but Obi-Wan was already sinking into the maelstrom, the swirling gale that the boy’s fear had kicked into life around him. The Force was violent, hot and brutal, like being tossed around in a monstrous sandstorm Obi-Wan had once seen in an educational holo when he was a youngling. Each furious gust pounded against his shields, scouring them away, one after the other, like the surface of the sandstone bluffs on the edge of Mos Espa.

*By the stars! He’s so powerful! How can one child be this strong?* Obi-Wan wondered as he reached out through the blinding terror, trying to find what it was that connected him to Anakin. He knew there was something there, had felt it in Shmi’s living room, and yet now, fully consumed by Anakin’s emotions, he was blind, lost in a swirl of black sand under a starless night sky.

*Anakin! Where are you?* Obi-Wan called out to the boy, trying to reach him through sheer force of will, to use his advanced knowledge of the Force and his training as a Jedi in an attempt to simply overwhelm and take control of Anakin’s fear. It seemed an unfairly harsh way to handle a sobbing two year-old but they were running out of time and Obi-Wan didn’t know what else to do.

There was another danger as well. If he stayed put, Anakin’s tempest of emotions and feelings would swallow him up, and Obi-Wan’s sense of self, his separate and unique existence in the Force, would be obliterated.

Each attempt at dominance, each time he tried to silence the noise and the chaos, to bring order to the tumult of who Anakin was, Obi-Wan was soundly and brutally rebuffed, thrown back into the outer walls of the storm. Every time he tried to struggle forward, he was pushed back even further. It was as if Anakin had no limits, as if he was a conduit to the Force itself, a small, terrified, and furious avatar of the Force made flesh.

*Anakin! I don’t… I don’t know how to help you! Please! Let me help you!* Obi-Wan called out into the void, feeling his connection to the boy slip away, feeling the ground shift, treacherous and unsteady under his feet.

And then it was back, the strange presence from before, cool and comforting. *Softly, Obi-Wan. Let him come to you. He will find you. He always does.*

*I don’t… I don’t understand!* Obi-Wan clung to the thoughts, words, feelings in his mind, not willing to let it go. *Please! I don’t know how to help him!*

The Presence took one of Obi-Wan’s hands and held it out, unfurled and waiting. *Tell him it’s time to come home.*

And then it was gone, whatever it was, leaving Obi-Wan trapped in the black torrent of a fiery sandstorm.

Deciding he had nothing to lose and distantly sensing that Satine was starting to panic, Obi-Wan took the Presence’s suggestion and dropped his last bit of shielding and prayed it would be enough, that he would shine bright enough for Anakin to find his way to him.

*Anakin! I’m right here. It’s time to come home, dear one. Take my hand, Little Dragon, and we’ll go home together,* Obi-Wan whispered into the howling cacophony of the hurricane that was Anakin’s spirit.

*Please, Anakin. Come home.*

In the silent, still space between heartbeats, Obi-Wan wondered if it was too late, if he was going to
be trapped here, a prisoner of a toddler’s mind, dead to everyone who ever cared about him.

But then there was something warm and soft in his hand, resolving into chubby fingers and then Obi-Wan looked up and saw Anakin crying, the storm around them dying as if it had never happened.

*Obi-friend?* Anakin sniffled, looking up at him as if he knew he had done something terribly wrong. *Was Ani bad?*

Relieved beyond words and measure, Obi-Wan gathered Anakin up in his arms and hugged him so tightly the little boy let out a gasp of air before he snuggled closer.

*No, Anakin. You weren’t bad. You were just afraid. That’s all,* Obi-Wan replied, sending peace and a soothing calmness to Anakin’s spirit. *Now we have to go Up and Out. Do you understand what that means?*

An image of Mos Espa and Satine’s worried face as she looked back at Obi-Wan and Anakin appeared in front of the two.

*Exactly.* Obi-Wan smiled and affectionately ruffled Anakin’s hair. *Now I need you to be brave, Little Dragon. Can you do that for me?*

Anakin curled into Obi-Wan and for a moment the ground seemed to tremble underfoot before it stillled.

*Obi-friend is brave. So Ani is brave.*

Nodding, Obi-Wan started to pull his spirit back within himself, to carefully rebuild his shields and to put a few over Anakin as well, just in case their deep dive into the child’s psyche had left him raw and exposed. *Up and out, Anakin. Let’s go see Satine, shall we?*

*Tine!* Anakin cheered and then in a blinding flash of white and heat, as if looking into the twin hearts of Tatoo I and Tatoo II, Obi-Wan and Anakin were back and separate in the physical world.

*“Obi-Wan! Please you’ve got to come… back?”* Satine gasped as she stopped shaking Obi-Wan and took his face in her hands, peering at him intently. “Are you back, Obi-Wan?”

*“Y-yes,”* Obi-Wan stumbled, trying to remember how to speak with lips and tongue instead of heart and spirit. “I’m sorry, Satine. That… that took more out of me than I thought it would.”

*“‘Tine?”* Anakin yawned, looking up from where he had been clinging to Obi-Wan’s robes. “Hello, ‘Tine. Sorry.”

Satine let out a huge sigh of relief and shook her head. “Thank the ancestors you’re back. And you needn’t apologize for anything, little one.”

Obi-Wan realized that he was sitting on the ground up against the alley wall, Anakin in his lap, and that Satine was standing over the two of them, her blaster in her hand. He blinked up at her, a little confused, his brows furrowed. “How long were we out?”

*“Not that long but I pushed you over here when you tried to fall over suddenly,”* Satine chided, accepting Anakin back into her arms as Obi-Wan pushed himself into a standing position. “I don’t think anyone has noticed us… yet.”

Nodding, Obi-Wan straightened his robes and pulled his hood back over his head. “I’m… I’m sorry for leaving you alone like that, Satine. I didn’t realize how much that would entail.”
“Apologizes can wait until we’re safely aboard that ship,” Satine said as Anakin silently watched them both, rubbing at his eyes. “So now what? We try to sneak through this city and into the spaceport without anyone noticing us?”

“That shouldn’t be a problem with our hoods up,” Obi-Wan said, gesturing to the mass of sentient meandering up and down the main road of Mos Espa, more than half in some kind of head covering to protect them from the rays of the twin suns beating down on them overhead. “Let’s go.”

Satine took a deep breath as Obi-Wan pushed past her to take the lead. She shot a glance down at Anakin, who blinked up at her and gave her a shy smile and a giggle. “Oh now you’re on his side?”

Anakin nodded emphatically. “Obi!”

Rolling her eyes, Satine hurried to catch up with Obi-Wan, who was waiting at the corner of the major intersection that had exposed his master and Shmi to the attention of Gardulla’s thugs.

Please be safe, Master.

He pulled his robe shut, making sure to keep his lightsaber out of view as he glanced back over his shoulder to Satine and Anakin. “Let’s go, and keep your head down. You look too… proper.”

“I’m sorry my posture offends you so, Ben,” Satine shot back as she tried to hunch forward a little, a prospect made easier by Anakin’s weight on her hip. “Shouldn’t we cover Anakin in case someone recognizes him?”

Obi-Wan frowned at that. “That might be a good idea. Come on. I see a shop that will work.”

Carefully darting through the lazy post-Boonta Eve crowds, Obi-Wan and Satine managed to make their way to a garment seller on the opposite side of the street.

Twenty credits later, they emerged from the shop with a cloak for Anakin and a kind of sling to hurriedly tuck the boy into. The woman working at the shop helped them tie it around Satine, Anakin now sitting against her back with his hood pulled up, hiding his blond hair.

Stepping back into the flow of Mos Espa traffic, Obi-Wan tried to ignore the twisting feeling of dread in his stomach. Yes, it had been absolutely necessary that they cover Anakin in an attempt to hide his identity but that also meant everyone in the shop had gotten a glimpse of Satine while they were helping her with Anakin’s sling, which could cause even more problems he did not know how to handle.

Everything will be fine if we can just make it to the ship. What did Master say it was? The Tellestrian Hawk? We just have to make it there.

With Anakin snuggly secured against Satine’s back and Obi-Wan walking arm-in-arm with her, the two started toward the spaceport, trying to blend in with the rest of the beings going about their daily business.

Even Anakin was quiet as he curled a fist in Satine’s hood and radiated a low level hum of worry and absolute trust in “Tine” and “Obi-Friend”.

Obi-Wan hoped Anakin’s faith was justified.

He couldn’t remember how far away the spaceport was but it seemed to somehow grow further and further away as they walked, sidestepping Gamorreans and getting stuck behind vendors trying to sell their wares. One particularly slow moving cart was covered in painted glass a Zabrak was trying
to pawn off as kyber crystals.

Gripping his lightsaber tightly, Obi-Wan tried not to wonder what happened to his master’s sabers, who purchased them, and what they were going to do with them.

Nothing good, I imagine.

Time seemed to crawl to a halt as each alleyway turned into another delicate dance of avoidance and waiting, like the entire population of Tatooine had set itself up between the anxious trio.

“I don’t remember the spaceport being so far away,” Satine finally commented as she and Obi-Wan came to a stop at another intersection. He peered up at the sky and spotted a ship making an approach overhead and he tracked it over the buildings of Mos Espa before it flew out of sight. “Are we going the right way?”

“Yes,” Obi-Wan nodded, reaching over to squeeze Satine’s hand on his arm. “It shouldn’t be far now. Just another few blocks and we’ll be safe.”

“Thank the ancestors,” Satine sighed and turned her head to Anakin. “Did you hear that, Ani? Soon we shall be on a starship!”

“Ship?” Anakin repeated, curious, reaching to take two of Satine’s fingers in his hand. He glanced over at Obi-Wan, who, too exhausted in the Force to communicate that way for the moment, explained by way of some starship-engine noises and pretending his hand was a cruiser flying through the atmosphere. “Oh! Ship! Ship! Wanna fly!”

“Shortly, we will be, Little Dragon,” Obi-Wan promised, tapping Anakin’s nose before he and Satine silently agreed to move onwards.

They had just stepped into the street when a landspeeder screamed to a stop in front of them, carrying four disreputable-looking men and far too many blasters for polite society.

“Hello, hello! What have we here?” One of the bounty hunters snickered in a thick accent Obi-Wan couldn’t identify. “Is this the Duchess of Mandalore? Out for a seventh day stroll with her boyfriend and her whelp?”

Startled, Satine opened her mouth to spit back something blistering and furious but Obi-Wan cut her off with one hand as he moved to stand between her and the landspeeder full of mercenaries.

“There seems to be some sort of mistake, my friends,” Obi-Wan lied, trying to be as charming and ingratiating as possible despite his own anxiety. “This is my wife… Siri… and we’re on our way back to our ship. We came to watch the Boonta, you see.”

“That’s a Core accent!” one of the bounty hunters, a nasty-looking Trandoshan, hissed to the group. “Doesn’t the poster say something about the bitch being with a Jedi?”

Obi-Wan’s eyes narrowed into blue-grey chips of ice even as his smile stayed on his face. “Now do I look like a Jedi to you, fine gentleman?”

“Ben!” Satine hissed, suddenly remembering that while Obi-Wan’s braid was hidden with the hood up, one wrong gust of hot, dry Tatooine wind was going to give them all away.

“I dunno,” a bounty hunter who looked like he’d seen one too many days under the Tatooine suns peered at Obi-Wan. “Take off the hood and let us have a look at you, boy.”
Damn it! Satine panicked, wondering if she could grab her blaster and fire off enough shots to give them some time to run away.

“I’d rather not,” Obi-Wan replied, his posture not changing but the tone of his voice growing hard and the aura around him tense. Anakin curled up behind Satine and whimpered softly. “I think you four had better move along.”

Satine watched as one of the bounty hunters, a Theelin with a red mohawk of hair edged in four spiked horns, absently leaned forward to start up the speeder.

It almost looked like they were going to get away when the Trandoshan let out a hiss and smacked his compatriot on the back of the head. “What are you doing?!”

“It is the Jedi!” the older bounty hunter cried, jabbing a gnarled finger at Obi-Wan.

“Well, I had to try,” Obi-Wan shrugged and with a flick of his hand and a twist of the Force, he turned on the speeder and jammed the Theelin’s foot down on the throttle, sending it whining off down the road as the passengers tried to regain control before they smashed into a wall or oncoming vehicle.

“C’mon!” Obi-Wan grunted, grabbing Satine’s hand as they started running back the way they came from. “We have to lose them before we get to the ship! There’s no way that captain will let us on board with bounty hunters on our tail!”

“So, what’s the plan then?” Satine shouted as they plowed their way into the thick of the market, shoving past angry merchants and disgruntled shoppers before they broke through to an alley.

Sprinting down the street, Obi-Wan turned a corner with every intention of doubling back to the spaceport. The fewer turns they took, the less likely they were to get lost. “This way!”

Satine followed after Obi-Wan, and came to a stop at his side as he peered back around the corner they had just cleared. Anakin was silent, clutching tightly to Satine’s hood, his spirit reaching out to Obi-Wan’s, looking for answers, and received a warm caress of peace.

It will be alright, Little One. No one is going to hurt you.

“’Tine?” Anakin mumbled, his voice waverering but it was clear he was trying to be brave. “’Tine okay?”

“I’m fine, Little Dragon,” Satine said, in between gasps for air as she reached back for one of Anakin’s little fists and kissed it. “We’re going to be fine, right, Ben?”

Obi-Wan nodded and guided Satine and Anakin forward. “Yes. Of course. Let’s just keep moving.”

“No ship?” Anakin asked, his voice a little sad at the idea of not getting to ride a spaceship.

“No yet,” Obi-Wan replied as the trio hurried down the street, looking back at the busier market avenue their small, shaded one was running parallel to.

“I think we lost them,” Satine murmured to Obi-Wan as they passed through another intersection unnoticed. “I can’t believe your Force trick worked!”

“I have been known to be capable in the past,” Obi-Wan replied with a quirk of his lips before they turned a corner and started to walk down the alley back in the direction of the space port. “We’ll just slip inside, find the ship and not go outside until we’ve landed on Corellia.”
“But what about Ahsoka and Shmi?” Satine asked, reaching out to grab Obi-Wan’s hand. “We can’t leave without them! What if they get caught and Gardulla tries to sell Shmi back into slavery! What if she has them killed?!"

Obi-Wan grimaced and his right hand clenched into a painful fist as he inhaled sharply, trying to ignore the fears and nightmares Satine was invoking in him. Visions of Shmi and his master dead, of Ahsoka’s lifeless blue eyes staring unblinking as a Hutt chortled over her, of Shmi and Ahsoka both sold into slavery and the horrors that awaited them there.

Every terrible image gave birth to another and another and it took every ounce of Obi-Wan’s training to not snap at Satine that her concern was not helping matters any. He needed to stay calm and rational and picturing the worst case scenarios in triplicate was not going to help anyone.

They had come to the large intersection in front of the spaceport and in just a few more meters they would be home free, safely hidden from the men trying to pursue them and drag Satine back to Mandalore where Culling Blade waited to bring a brutal end to her reign.

“Ben, are you listening to me?” Satine asked as she stepped up behind Obi-Wan, peering over the protective cover of his shoulder. “What are we going to do about Ahsoka and Shmi?”

Obi-Wan closed his eyes and reached out with the Force, letting his spirit roll over Anakin and stretch outwards and upwards, searching through the chaos and noise of Mos Espa to find his master and Shmi. It was hard to find any one particular spirit in the churning mass of life energy, especially with Anakin glowing like a newborn star at his back but as he strained against his limits, he could sense the faint warmth of his master.

Ahsoka was still alive out there and if she was still alive, that meant they still had hope.

“We do as Master said,” Obi-Wan finally said, looking back at Satine, his gaze durasteel hard and his jaw clenched. “I have to get you two to safety. Once you are both safe with the Jedi, I’ll come back and tear the Outer Rim apart looking for Master Ahsoka if I have to.”

The faith and conviction in Obi-Wan’s words stunned Satine. She had no doubt that he meant every word he said, and that if fate was inclined to be so cruel as to separate him from Ahsoka and Shmi that he would not stop until they were safe and returned to him.

Just like a true Mandalorian, Satine thought before nodding. “Fine. But if the worst happens, you are not coming back here alone. I insist I be allowed to accompany you!”

“Satine, we haven’t even left the planet!” Obi-Wan protested as he pulled Satine’s hood further over her face. “Let’s just sneak into the spaceport and get on the ship before anybody spots us.”

The trio moved into the intersection, looking left and right as they hurried past a bantha pulling a busted speeder full of junk, and nearly tripped over some Jawas. They had almost made it when the Force shrieked and Obi-Wan pulled out his saber, barely deflecting a blaster bolt.

“Oh Sweet Mother of Kwath!” Obi-Wan cursed, flinging off his robe as he took up a defensive stance. “Get behind me!”

Two speeders swung into place alongside them, the first group that had found them now joined by a new set of bounty hunters who looked far more dangerous. Blaster fire pierced the air, sending everyone on the street running for cover.

“Obi-Wan!” Satine cried, grabbing his arm as she started to pull them into the spaceport. “Just run!”
Obi-Wan managed to deflect a few bolts before he turned around and chased after Satine. Anakin clung to her, letting out a wail for his friend, fear on his face as they scampered past landing bay after landing bay, darting out through a side exit into the warren of quiet back roads that made up Mos Espa.

“Where are you going?” Obi-Wan called out to Satine as they ran, instinctively trusting her as they took turn after turn, blindly losing themselves in the sandstone and duracrete maze and hoping it was enough to lose their pursuers.

After ten minutes of panic and adrenaline, they came to a stop, huddled up against the architectural curve of a building and a duracrete staircase that led to a second-story flat. Obi-Wan peered around the corner, trying to figure out if the road in front of them led toward the spaceport or away from it.

*Dammit, Master! I could really use your help right now!* Obi-Wan grumbled as he nodded to Satine and they turned the corner and started walking slowly in the direction of what looked to be another road back to the main thoroughfare. Neither of them knew Mos Espa well enough to navigate through the back streets and the suns were slowly creeping toward the horizon.

They were running out of time.

Which meant it was an excellent time for their persistent and murderous friends to find them and open fire.

“Get back!” Obi-Wan shouted as he pulled out his blade and moved through one complex and fluid defensive movement after another, the powerful twists and turns of Soresu coming to him with surprising ease and grace. Satine raced back around the corner as Anakin cried out for Obi-Wan and he tried not to think about them, tried not to let the fear and worry into his mind and set his imagination running amok. He focused on his breathing and being present in the moment, trusting the Force to protect them, to save them.

Or if not to save them all, then to at least save Satine and Anakin.

“Here! Take it!” Obi-Wan shouted, flinging the bag of their credits to Satine, who looked up at Obi-Wan in confusion as she caught them. “I’ll hold them off! You get to the ship! Get Anakin to the Temple on Coruscant and ask for Master Plo Koon! He’ll take care of him!”

“What are you talking about?” Satine shouted back, leaning around the corner to fire a few well-aimed stun bolts at the mercenaries chasing them. “I’m not leaving without you. We’re not leaving without you!”

“You have to, Satine!” Obi-Wan ordered, spinning and deflecting another barrage of bolts into the far wall. He was doing alright but if any more reinforcements came for him, his defenses were going to crumble. “I can hold them off long enough to give you time to lose them! You have to get to safety! You’ve got to get back to Republic territory!”

“No! I won’t! Not without you!” Satine cried, begging Obi-Wan to understand. “Obi-Wan! Please! You have to come with us!”

“I can’t let them hurt you!” Obi-Wan said before letting out a cry as he missed a shot and the blaster scoured its way through his sleeve and left a nasty red welt on his left arm. “Run, dammit! Get out of here! GO!”

Satine felt tears, hot and full of shame, running down her cheeks as she turned away from Obi-Wan and prepared herself to flee for the spaceport and the thin promise of safety. Anakin struggled against
the wrappings he was tied up in, crying out for Obi-Wan and flailing about with one hand. “Obi! OBI! No! Obi, come too! OBI!”

“RUN!” Obi-Wan commanded and Satine turned to flee, only to spot a sleek air skiff streaking down the road toward them. She let out a scream and darted back around the corner she had just come from to huddle against Obi-Wan’s back.

The airskiff shrieked to a halt, practically crawling with Weequays and every last one of them armed to the teeth and grinning like the lothcat who ate the Chandrillan quail.

“Kenobi, my friend!” a garishly garbed Weequay boomed, throwing his hands open wide. “How good it is to see you, Corellian Mango!”

The bounty hunters, just as shocked as Satine, momentarily halted their fire as Obi-Wan turned around to gaze up at the skiff behind him with his mouth hanging open.

“How good it is to see you, Corellian Mango!”

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“Hondo Ohnaka? What are you doing here?” Obi-Wan gaped, a strange mix of fear, relief and absolute confusion roiling through him.

“My dearest mother was in the neighborhood on business and we tagged along!” Hondo beamed, gesturing to the men at his side, one or two Obi-Wan recognized from their ill-fated attempt to take him and his master hostage out on Florrum. “But we can discuss this later! I was in the middle of saving your Jedi life! Men! Open fire!”

Obi-Wan dashed for Satine, covering her and Anakin with his body as Hondo and his fellow pirates made short work of the bounty hunters, who quickly scattered back into the market with a few yelps and several bellowed curses that he chose to ignore for the moment.

Once the road was empty, Hondo ordered his skiff lowered and invited Obi-Wan and Satine aboard, the pirate taking the opportunity to give Satine his most seductive smile as he did. “And who is this enchanting creature, Obi-Wan? And why is she associating with a boring Jedi like you when she could be treated to all the finest pleasures that money could buy, courtesy of a man like myself?”

“This is my friend Satine,” Obi-Wan grumbled, stepping between Satine and Hondo, who was busy trying to kiss every last finger on her hand. “And she is under my protection, Gorka Berry.”

“Protection?” Hondo snickered, pointedly ignoring his childhood nickname. “You call that protection? Obi-Wan, my little mango friend, that was a truly dramatic last stand! It was beautiful and crazy. No, no. That was not protection.”

“Hondo,” Obi-Wan seethed, his patience at the breaking point. “We don’t have time for this! Gardulla’s men are chasing after my master and we have to go rescue them!”

“Oh! Yes, yes!” Hondo laughed, shoving his way past his men back to the head of the skiff where the controls were. “Don’t worry, my friend! Mama has taken care of everything! You’ll be reunited with your master soon enough!”

As the skiff rose into the air and started to move down the road, Satine hurried over to Obi-Wan, who was glaring at the back of Hondo’s head. “Obi-Wan! Who is this person? Where is he taking us? Are we safe?”

Deciding that he had no choice but to trust Hondo for now, Obi-Wan exhaled a deep breath and tried to let go of the tension in his body, hooking his lightsaber back to his belt. He turned to Satine and Anakin, squeezing her shoulders. “Hondo Ohnaka is the son of Mother Ohnaka, a pirate working out of Klatooine.”
“Queen! My mother is a Queen!” Hondo reminded Obi-Wan with a triumphant finger in the air.

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and continued on. “My master and I… encountered them out off of Florrum. We… negotiated the freedom of some hostages in exchange for not throwing the lot of them in jail.”

“Pirates?” Satine said, looking at the colorfully and haphazardly dressed Weequays around her. “Are you saying we have just been rescued by a bunch of pirates who owe you and your master a favor?”

“Yes, I am,” Obi-Wan let out a sigh as the skiff turned a corner and headed out toward the open desert. “Ehm… Hondo? Where are we going? Mos Espa is the other way!”

“True,” Hondo said, grinning back at Obi-Wan. “But Mama and your master are this way! Take a seat, Corellian Mango! We’ll be to Mama’s ship in no time! I’m sure that Master Ahsoka will be very pleased to see you. And you too, my beautiful lady.”

Stunned and almost numb as the adrenaline started to wear off, Satine and Obi-Wan collapsed onto thin benches that ran along the edges of the skiff. They exchanged confused glances for a moment before leaning together, Obi-Wan wrapping a protective arm around Anakin, relieved to know that they were safe.

Their long nightmare was over.

As the hot, dry air of Tatooine howled around them, Obi-Wan and Satine curled protectively around Anakin, hiding his delicate skin from the sun as the Weequays on the skiff peered at them curiously. Anakin, trying to peek out under his hood, gazed back, just as fascinated. “Obi? Wazzat?”

“They are Weequay,” Obi-Wan explained, nodding his head to the gentleman in question who was grinning at Anakin. “They are… friends of mine and Master Ahsoka.”

“Soka?” Anakin asked, his face lighting up. “Soka and Mama?”

“Soon, I hope,” Satine soothed, running a soothing hand up and down the boy’s back. “When are we going to arrive, Obi-Wan?”

“I’ll go ask Hondo,” Obi-Wan said, stepping reluctantly away from Satine to make his way to the front of the skiff. Another pirate was only too pleased to take his seat, making silly faces at Anakin, much to Satine’s tangible relief and the boy’s delight.

Thank the Force for small favors. Obi-Wan thought as he picked his way around pirates before coming up on Hondo’s right side. “Hondo? How far out from Mos Espa is your mother’s ship?”

“Hmm…” Hondo mused, stroking his jaw. “Only a bit further. Mama is here on a job for her glorious patron and so we parked out here, far away from the reach of Gardulla the Hutt.”

Obi-Wan frowned, his arms folded over his chest as he tried to reason through what Hondo had just said. “So… Your mother is here on business for her ‘patron’ and you parked in the middle of the desert so Gardulla the Hutt wouldn’t know you were here? Who in all the Sith hells is your mother’s patron?”
“Jabba, of course!” Hondo beamed proudly before getting back to the important business. “So... tell me about your beautiful lady friend. Is it serious? I knew you were my kind of Jedi but I never suspected something like this, Kenobi!”

Obi-Wan ran a hand down his face and let out an exhausted groan. “Hondo, Satine is under my protection. She is not my girlfriend! Why does everyone keep saying that?”

Hondo shrugged, his grin getting wider. “I don’t know. Maybe they think you two would make beautiful babies together!”

“I am not making babies with anybody, let alone the Duchess of Manda--!” Obi-Wan fired back, cutting himself off too late as he realized what he was saying. “Please, Hondo. You cannot tell anyone about Satine! Her safety is paramount.”

“Who am I going to tell that does not already know?” Hondo gestured as the skiff cleared the last of the rolling dunes and the first of Tatooine’s suns disappeared behind the horizon. “I told you! Your master and her former slave friend are waiting with Mama! How do you think I found you?”

Almost overwhelmed by the day’s events, Obi-Wan was about to curse in a way that really would have impressed the pirates around them when he realized the dark spot on the horizon was a Corsair cruiser, the same model as those he had last seen on Mirilan when he had exchanged Hondo for his master.

As they moved toward it, the saucer-shaped ship growing larger and larger, a strange feeling started to bubble up inside Obi-Wan’s heart and for a moment, he didn’t know what it was. He wondered if the shock was giving him some kind of premature heart attack before he recognized it as relief.

_We’re safe. We’re truly safe! That’s really Hondo’s ship. We’re really going to get off of this cursed, sandy hellhole of a planet._

And then, even better, he felt the Force explode around him with relief and joy and an elation he could not ever remember feeling before.

_Obi-Wan!!! Padawan! We’re here! Can’t you see us?_

_M-Master? Is that... Master Ahsoka!!!_

His master was back. Ahsoka’s strong, unyielding warmth was there, enveloping him from a distance as small shadows started to resolve themselves into three figures, two waving frantically and the third made of such color and magnificence it could only be Mama Ohnaka, lounging on a box at the foot of the boarding ramp, waving lazily to the approaching skiff.

_We’re… safe?” Obi-Wan murmured, dazed and a little giddy as he glanced over at Hondo. “Is this real?”_

Hondo, perhaps sensing just how much Obi-Wan had been through and wanting to respect it, simply nodded. He reached out to squeeze the young man’s shoulder and replied with a kind voice. “Yes, my friend. You are.”

Everything after that passed in a daze for Obi-Wan, who stumbled back to Satine and Anakin to find they had made several Weequay friends while Obi-Wan was gone. He managed to point out Shmi and Ahsoka, her striking blue-white montrals clearly identifiable at this point.

Satine let out a tearful sob of relief and pulled Obi-Wan into a tight hug, which Anakin found nice but a little uncomfortable.
“Tight!” Anakin protested as Obi-Wan and Satine smiled down at him.

“Sorry, Little One,” Obi-Wan apologized as he pointed to the ship they were going to take to get off of Tatooine. “Do you see your mother? Do you see Shmi?”

Anakin peered over Satine’s arm and his face lit up, smiling from ear to ear as he called out. “Mama! Mama! Obi, ‘Tine! It’s Mama and ‘Soka!”

Satine laughed, kissing the top of Anakin’s head. “Yes, it is!”

As the skiff slowed to a stop a few meters away from the ship, Hondo called out to his mother in a booming, theatrical voice. “Mama! I have returned and I bring your favorite Corellian Mango with me! And do you know he has a girlfriend now?”

“Hondo!” Satine and Obi-Wan both groaned as a few pirates helped them down off the skiff and over to their waiting loved ones.

“Master!” Obi-Wan cried out as Ahsoka barreled straight for him, wrapping him up in the tightest hug she could give him. “Oh thank the Force you’re all right!”

“Obi-Wan!” Ahsoka gasped, holding him close and silently thanking the Force over and over again for reuniting her with her brave Padawan, for keeping him, Anakin, and Satine safe when they had to part. She didn’t even know she was crying until she felt the tears drip off her chin. “Oh I am so proud of you! I’m so sorry I had to leave you like that. I’m just… I’m so glad you’re safe and sound!”

“Master…” Obi-Wan sighed, happy to have the burden of responsibility lifted from his shoulders after preparing to give up his life back in Mos Espa. It felt so good to have Ahsoka back, to have the confidence of his master’s support and the knowledge that her vast experience and wisdom could make up for the flaws and or shortfalls in his own. “Oh I’m so happy to see you again, Master Ahsoka. I thought… well Satine thought and I tried very hard to not let it affect me but… I feared something horrible had happened to you and that I was going to have to tear through the Outer Rim looking for you! Please, let’s never do this again. I have had far too much excitement for the day.”

Ahsoka laughed softly, ruffling Obi-Wan’s hair as she wrapped an arm around his shoulders, more to assure herself he was still there than anything else. “I agree. I think we need at least a month-long vacation after all of this, don’t you agree?”

“Two months,” Obi-Wan replied, only too happy to be back with his master and among friends who had a way off the sandy blight of Tatooine.

While Ahsoka and Obi-Wan were busy having their reunion, Shmi had rushed to Anakin and Satine, pulling them both into a hug, giving them both kisses as she cried.

“Oh Ani! Satine! I am so happy to see you both!” Shmi almost sobbed, kissing Anakin’s forehead as he happily greeted her. “Oh, my Little Dragon! Did you protect Satine and Obi-Wan for me?”

Anakin nodded emphatically and held out his hands to his mother, letting Satine shift him over to Shmi carefully. “Mama! ‘Tine and Obi said ship? Is this the ship?”

“Yes, it is,” Shmi said, her eyes glowing with happiness as she looked up at Satine, touching the younger girl’s cheek and examining her face for any signs of distress of injury. “Are you alright, Satine? Did anything happen to you?”

“I’m quite alright but Obi-Wan was foolishly brave and got a blaster bolt in the arm for his troubles,”
Satine replied, blushing a little at Shmi’s maternal attention. It had been so time since anyone had mothered her like that and she was surprised to find how comforting it was after nearly six months on the run with Ahsoka and Obi-Wan.

Satine was prepared to step away, to let the Jedi, Anakin and Shmi reunite when she found herself being pulled back into the group.

“You are a part of our family now,” Shmi whispered to Satine as she kissed her cheek. “Azul’ir and the ancestors have brought you to us and one does not undo his works, my child.”

Perhaps it was relief, perhaps the elation at their reunion, or perhaps it was the fact that she was only sixteen years old and had already lost her family and her home, but Shmi’s words unlocked something deep within Satine and she turned her head into the older woman’s shoulder and started to cry, letting Shmi’s soft voice wash over her like the sweetest calming rain.

“Shh… there, there, my dear. You are safe now. Isn’t she, Ani? Tell Satine she is safe with her family now. Azul’ir has protected you all, hasn’t he?”

Anakin reached out from his mother’s arms and hugged Satine, giving her a sloppy kiss on the cheek. “Don’ cry, ‘Tine! Mama says so.”

Satine laughed, a happy, watery sound. “Well, I shan’t argue with you, Little Dragon.”

“Good,” Anakin nodded with a proud grin from Satine to Shmi. “Time to fly?”

Shmi looked back at Ahsoka and Obi-Wan who walked over to them and another round of hugs and tearful reunion took place before Mama Ohnaka strolled over to the group, the feathers in her hat dancing in the wind as the gold bangles on her arms and neck caught the last of the dying light of Tatooine. “All better, Knight Tano? Because I do have a schedule to keep.”

“Yes,” Ahsoka bowed her head to Mama Ohnaka, her eyes dancing with joy and mirth. “And I’m terribly sorry to put you out like this. Do you need to hurry back to your… patron before you drop us off?”

“No, no!” Mama Oh chortled, waving a bejeweled hand. “That fat old slug can wait an extra day or two for the weapons we stole. Gardulla is so stupid, I doubt she even knows we took them.”

“Weapons?” Obi-Wan looked over at Hondo, his eyes wide. “You were stealing from a Hutt?”

“Technically, my dearest mother did but… yes, I did. What can I say? I love the thrill of the heist!” Hondo boasted, his face beaming. “Your plan was flawless, Mama! Gardulla will be none the wiser. Even with my… improvisations.”

Mama Ohnaka folded her arms over her chest and quirked an eyebrow at Hondo. “Improvisations? What are you talking about, my boy?”

Hondo lost his chance to explain to the sound of arriving ships and the explosions of laser cannons in the distance. Mama Ohnaka bellowed out the command to board the ship and everyone scrambled inside, pirates making for battlestations and their passengers following Mama and Hondo to the bridge where they watched the Weequay crew work with calm efficiency to get the ship into the air and out of the range of the small raiding party sent by Gardulla.

“Open fire on those desert rats!” Mama Ohnaka commanded as the Corsair class ship climbed into the sky, the pilot and co-pilot narrowly managing to avoid getting hit by the skiff-mounted cannons from Gardulla’s raiders. “Hondo! What did you do?”
“I might have stolen some credits while I was in the armory!” Hondo confessed as he clung to the railing behind his mother’s chair when the ship was rocked by a near miss. “They were just sitting there, Mama! They looked so lonely! How could I not bring them back with me and make sure they went to a good home?”

Shmi and Satine looked over at Ahsoka and Obi-Wan, wide eyed.

“These are your friends?” Shmi asked, glancing back at the pirates who were laying down suppressive fire as the ship climbed the last few kilometers to break through to the upper layers of the atmosphere. “You’re crazier than I thought.”

“Well, we come by it honestly,” Ahsoka shrugged, glancing down at Obi-Wan, who had nothing to say in their defense.

“Captain! We’ll clear the atmosphere in one minute,” the pilot called back from his console.

The distant sounds of explosions grew fainter and fainter until the view screen in front of them lost the last bit of blue haze and all they saw in front of them was the diamond-studded darkness of space. To the right hung the three moons of Tatooine, thick crescents glowing in the void as they passed.

As the activity around the bridge began to subside, everyone took a moment to breathe before Mama swiveled around in her chair to look at Ahsoka. “Where shall we drop you off, my friends?”

Ahsoka folded her arms over her chest as she thought about it. “I don’t suppose you could just take us directly to Coruscant, could you?”

The entire bridge erupted in loud, bawdy peals of laughter, which Anakin found immensely funny and he proceeded to laugh right along with them. Shmi shook her head, bouncing her son in her arms, happy to have him back, almost unable to believe they were no longer on Tatooine.

“Ahsoka, my friend, I am wanted in nearly twenty systems!” Mama Ohnaka explained with a proud grin. “Perhaps we can try someplace a little less… central?”

Ahsoka looked over at Obi-Wan, who shrugged. “I don’t know what’s out here? Denon maybe?”

“Hah!” Mama Ohnaka laughed. “No, no! No city-worlds like that! We are pirates, my friends! We are not welcome in polite society. Well, only because we steal things.”

“What about Naboo?” Satine spoke up. “It’s not a city-world like Denon and it’s much closer and firmly Republican in nature.”

“Excellent choice, little Duchess!” Mama grinned, spinning back around to point a finger at the viewing screen. “To Naboo, men! I wonder if they have anything we could steal.”

“Naboo?” Ahsoka echoed, her throat tight. “Are you sure?”

*What if Senator Palpatine is there? What if he senses Anakin? How am I going to be able to hide him?*

But it was too late and with the coordinates in place and Mama Ohnaka’s order to depart, the ship jumped into hyperspace and off they went, the familiar blue-white swirl of twisted starlight telling them in no uncertain terms that they were leaving Tatooine, perhaps never to return again.
The jump to Naboo was only going to take a few hours, so everyone spent them in the mess hall, trading stories of what had happened since they last met. Hondo had apparently romanced a lovely Weequay girl but he had broken it off when she wanted him to give up his pirating ways to become a merchant like her father. Mama Ohnaka scoffed and claimed the girl was no true Weequay, but it was clear from the way she patted her son’s shoulder and spoke that she was sad to see her son’s first real attempt at happiness end that way.

“But enough about my troubles!” Hondo announced, flinging a hand to his forehead and nearly falling out of his chair in mock grief. “Tell us what brought you to Tatooine, my friends! I simply must know what such an enchanting woman like the Duchess of Mandalore sees in a scruffy Tiny Jedi like you, Corellian Mango.”

Ahsoka let out a little giggle at Obi-Wan’s sudden annoyance in the Force and even Shmi and Anakin laughed softly, Shmi behind her hand to spare Obi-Wan’s pride.

“They are my Jedi protectors,” Satine explained, trying very hard not to laugh at Obi-Wan’s clear affront. “Dissidents on my home planet of Mandalore want to destroy my government and my family.”

“How terrible!” Mama Ohnaka gasped, leaning forward, her chin on her hand as her face lit up with curiosity. “Tell me more!”

“And the Jedi sent Mango here to protect you?” Hondo laughed, clapping Obi-Wan on the back. “Oh, you Jedi are truly crazy.”

“This from a man who stole weapons and credits from a Hutt,” Obi-Wan shot back with an imperious look. “Or did I just mishear that, Gorka Berry?”

Hondo narrowed his eyes at Obi-Wan before a slow grin spread out over his face. “I knew there was a reason I liked you, Kenobi. Come, come! Tell us what happened, Jedi!”

By the time the story was finished, with everyone getting a chance to add something to it, their audience was cackling with laughter or had drunk themselves into a stupor. Anakin was sitting on Mama Ohnaka’s lap, playing with one of her more ostentatious necklaces as the old woman stroked his hair and claimed that he was very cute for a pink, fat human child.

Hondo had tried and failed to flirt with Satine three times before he gave up and went back to antagonizing Obi-Wan, which was fine as far as Obi-Wan was concerned. Shmi merely watched in a kind of numb haze, not quite sure if this was reality or if she had died back on that street in Mos Espa and this was the eternal dream Azul’ir had given to her as her reward for being a good mother.

“Shmi?” Ahsoka murmured, moving to sit next to her when a friendly game of sabacc started up and Satine volunteered to teach Obi-Wan how to play. “How are you doing?”

“I’m… I’m not sure,” Shmi replied. “I still can’t believe it’s real. And yet, I could never had imagined something like this, even in my wildest dreams.”

Ahsoka nodded, watching Anakin slap at the cards and pull them toward himself and Mama Ohnaka, which earned a roar of praise from the pirates and complaints of cheating from Hondo.

“How can we beat you when you have such an adorable child on your team, Mama?”

Smiling, Ahsoka looked back at Shmi. “What will you do when we get to Coruscant?”
Shmi blinked, looking up at Ahsoka surprised. “Coruscant? You would take us that far?”

“Of course,” Ahsoka replied, gently nudging Shmi’s shoulder with her own. “It’s the least we can do. I’m certain I can request some aid from the Order. We could find you a place to live, get that horrible chip removed, anything you want.”

“Oh… the Order…” Shmi murmured, looking down at her hand, the memories of her frantically begging Ahsoka and Obi-Wan to take Anakin back to the Jedi flashing through her mind. At the time it seemed like the best decision she could make for her son. Knowing he would be safe from Gardulla and the nightmare of slavery would be worth the sacrifice but now, now that she was free and there was a chance of a future for them both, now the choice was much more difficult.

Ahsoka watched Shmi’s countenance change, watched her face fall and sensed her sudden hesitation. As much as a large part of her wanted Shmi to give Anakin to the Order, wanted to beg and plead with her that it was the best course of action in the long run, she knew she couldn’t in good conscience do that to Shmi so soon after her rescue off of Tatooine. It would be taking advantage of her and Ahsoka was damned if she was going to do that.

They had time before Anakin had to join the Jedi.

Ahsoka could wait.

“When did… when did you join the Order?” Shmi asked, glancing up at Ahsoka, her voice hesitant.

Ahsoka smiled, the faintest memory of Master Plo Koon kneeling before her and offering her his hand, of the soft rumble of his voice as he asked her if she wanted to go be with others like her, to be with people who understood her and could speak with feelings and pictures as much as with words.

“What is a ‘Jedi Order’?” Ahsoka asked, nervous and a little scared to leave her family on Shili, even though she knew she was somehow fundamentally different from them and that her difference concerned everyone around her. She scared them and she didn’t want to scare anyone.

Plo Koon smiled, or rather Ahsoka felt his smile even though she couldn’t see it. “The Jedi Order will be your new family. You will have many brothers and sisters and we will take care of you like your parents have done.”

“Family?” Ahsoka echoed, frowning. “Really?”

Plo Koon nodded and held out his hand. “Do you wish to come with me, Little Soka? To join the Jedi Order and make a new family?”

Ahsoka looked at the strange Kel Dor man before her, feeling his warmth and kindness wrap around her like the best sort of hug and not a trace of fear or worry anywhere to be found.

“Okay,” Ahsoka replied, taking Plo Koon’s hand and letting him pick her up and carry her away to her future.

“Ahsoka?” Shmi asked, interrupted her memory. “When did you join the Order?”

“When I was a little older than Anakin,” Ahsoka answered, shaking the dust of memory from her mind. “Obi-Wan was given to the Temple as an infant. This is all we’ve really known.”

Shmi nodded, bowing her head. “I see…”

Ahsoka took a breath before speaking. “Shmi… I won’t pretend that Anakin is not Force sensitive.
He clearly is. But… we still have time. You still have time. Once we get to Coruscant and get you both settled, and you’ve had some time to think, then we can talk about Anakin’s training.”

“Oh!” Shmi blinked, surprised at Ahsoka’s patience. “I… I think I would like that, Ahsoka. I know I should… I know he would be safe there, but… It’s just… So much has happened and I just… Please forgive me! You have sacrificed so much and I am being so greedy and selfish!”

“It’s not selfish to want to spend time with your son,” Ahsoka said, hugging Shmi as they watched the boy in question try to levitate a card away from Obi-Wan, who put a stop to it with one finger and warning tone. “Anakin…”

_There’s time. You can wait for him_, Ahsoka repeated to herself.

“They have a… connection, don’t they?” Shmi asked Ahsoka, gesturing between Anakin and Obi-Wan. “Through the Force?”

Ahsoka answered simply, “Yes. They do.”

_Obi-Wan can wait too. There’s still so much to teach him, so much he has to learn before he’s ready for all of that._

For a moment, the future weighed on Ahsoka’s shoulders, heavy and dark, with no promise of light or relief any time soon.

“Captain!” a pirate called from the far door, interrupting Ahsoka’s grim thoughts. “We’re approaching Naboo!”

“You’re going to shoot us down to Naboo in an escape pod?!”

Ahsoka couldn’t think of anything else to add to Obi-Wan’s horrified exclamation and so she decided to let him speak for the rest of their party.

“Yes! You see, my dear little Gorka Berry might have defrauded one or two businessmen on the planet and it might not be such a smart idea for us to land there,” Mama Ohnaka explained as she shooed Satine and Shmi into the escape pod. “Besides! Naboo is a lovely, civilized planet with plenty of do-gooding security forces! I’m sure they’ll be happy to see two Jedi!”

“And where exactly are we supposed to land?” Obi-Wan asked, his angry glare jumping from Hondo to his mother and back again.

“There are some lovely grasslands south of Theed,” Hondo offered, holding his hands up apologetically. “I am sure you’ll have no problem at all getting in contact with the local constabulary! Tell them I said hello!”

Ahsoka rolled her eyes and pulled Obi-Wan back from the fight he so clearly wanted to have with Hondo. “Come on, Padawan. We’ll figure something out once we make planet-fall.”

“In an escape pod!” Obi-Wan protested but allowed his master to guide him into a seat in front of the console. He was already pulling up a map of Naboo in the navicomputer, looking for a landing spot.
that was a decent walking distance to Theed.

With Obi-Wan’s foul mood managed, Ahsoka turned to Mama Ohnaka and bowed to her. “I take it this makes us even, Mother Ohnaka?”

Mama smiled, a thin, crafty expression that neither agreed or disagreed with Ashoka’s assertion. “We shall see, Jedi. Perhaps now, you owe me?”

Ahsoka shrugged and replied with a half smile of her own. “Well if you ever get arrested on Coruscant, look me up and I’ll see what I can do.”

“I’m counting on it, Knight Tano,” Mama Ohnaka replied, inclining her head just enough to indicate that she respected Ahsoka but not enough to make it look like they were friends.

Pirates were not friends with Jedi.

At least, not out in the open where anyone could see.

“Take care, Jedi Ahsoka!” Hondo cheered as Ahsoka bent down to climb into the escape pod. “Tell Corellian Mango that he owes me five credits from sabacc! I am going to collect the next time I see him! Fly safely, my friends!”

Once the magnetic seals were in place and everyone was strapped in, Ahsoka gave the signal to Obi-Wan to disengage their escape pod.

A few minutes later, as they hurtled down towards the blue-green pearl of Naboo, gravity greedily clutching at their ship, Ahsoka smiled over at Shmi and Anakin, who was apparently having an absolute blast from his excited wiggling. “You two okay?”

“I’m… a little nervous,” Shmi admitted as Anakin cheered on Obi-Wan’s piloting skills.

Satine was taking slow and steady breaths next to Ahsoka, trying not to panic and upset Anakin or Obi-Wan. “Shmi? I was thinking… Do you have family elsewhere in the galaxy?”

Shmi shook her head, scolding Anakin when his bouncing grew to be too energetic. “No. I don’t think so. Why do you ask?”

“It’s just… you’ll need citizenship,” Satine explained, gritting her teeth as the pod hit the atmosphere, the heat shields kicking on. “Typically a refugee files for citizenship on the first Republic planet they arrive on but… I thought… perhaps… I would like to offer you and Anakin citizenship on Mandalore. If you would like, I mean.”

Ahsoka smiled over at the young Duchess, a sudden wave of warmth and affection for the girl filling up her spirit.

“We would be… citizens of Mandalore?” Shmi repeated, as if she couldn’t quite believe what she had heard. “Truly? You would want us after all the trouble we put you through?”

“Yes!” Satine answered. “Of course! What did you say? ‘Do not undo what Azul’ir has brought together’?”

The escape pod bounced back and forth on the turbulent layers of the atmosphere, Obi-Wan keeping his gaze focused on the landing trajectory ahead of them and sending out a homing signal to Naboo Security. “Five minutes until landing,” he called back to the others.
“But… we have nothing!” Shmi said, looking down at Anakin. “How can we repay you for this?”

“We’re family,” Satine replied, letting out a shout as they hit a pocket of turbulence and dropped several hundred meters all at once, Anakin giggling the whole way. “Isn’t that what you said? Besides, if Anakin joins the Order, you could work in the Mandalorian Embassy on Coruscant and still be able to visit him, right, Master Ahsoka?”

Ahsoka grit her teeth the pod’s warning systems started instructing them to brace for impact. “Sure! We’ll work something out! Obi-Wan, are you planning on pulling up any time soon?”

“Just a minute, Master!” Obi-Wan shot back and just when it seemed like they were going to crash headfirst into the waving grasslands below, he yanked the pod up just enough that it was able to skid into a safer landing, kicking up soil and grass as the circular pod ground to a halt.

Everyone inside the pod let out a relieved sigh and Obi-Wan looked back over his shoulder at his master and grinned. “Another happy landing.”

Ahsoka shook her head at Obi-Wan’s confident smirk and reached towards the back door to pop open the hatch. With a sigh, the locking mechanisms released and sunlight, flooded into the pod, complete with the cool, sweet breeze of a spring day on Naboo.

Ahsoka unfastened her restraints and helped Shmi and Satine with theirs before she climbed out of the little ship, stretching upwards until her back popped. Relief flooded through her system as she caught sight of two NabooSec fighters fly past them.

“Finally,” she murmured. “Safe at last.”

“Careful, careful,” Satine said as she helped Shmi and Anakin clamber down the small hill of mud and sod the escape pod was half-buried in. “Almost there.”

“Master, I called NabooSec and they’ll be here with a pick-up in twenty minutes,” Obi-Wan explained as he stepped out of the ship and lightly jogged down the hill once everyone was out, Shmi and Anakin gaping in wonder at all of the greenery around them. “They’ve already put in a call to the Temple and someone should be on their way to pick us up within the day I think.”

“Thank the Force,” Ahsoka sighed, closing her eyes and turning them up to the sun. “Obi-Wan, let’s make a promise to never go back to Tatooine, ever again.”

“That is a promise I am only too happy to keep, Master,” Obi-Wan smiled up at Ahsoka before turning to look back at Satine, Shmi and Anakin. “Is everyone alright? Anakin? Did that ride scare you?”

Anakin shook his head and Ahsoka couldn’t help but smiling at her master’s innate gift for fearless flying already present in him when he was barely two years old.

“Why should flying scare a dragon?” Satine teased as Shmi kissed Anakin’s forehead and smiled into his blond locks. “But enough about Obi-Wan’s terrible flying. I wanted you two to be the first to know that Shmi and Anakin have accepted my offer to become citizens of Mandalore.”

“Oh, really?” Obi-Wan replied, delighted. “Is that what you were talking about while I was trying to keep us from burning up in reentry?”

“Yes, we were,” Satine replied with affectionate hauteur. “And I would like to be the first person to officially welcome Shmi and Anakin Skywalker to the Galactic Republic. Welcome home, my friends.”
Obi-Wan blinked, confused as he looked from Shmi and Anakin to his master and back again.

Did she just say ‘Skywalker’?

Chapter End Notes

WOOOHOOOOOO! SEASON TWO OF TANO AND KENOBI IS FINISHED! WOOOHOOOOOOOOOO!

Or to stay in character and locale, YIPPEEEEEEEEEEEE!!

Thank you everyone for your wonderful comments and questions, ideas and speculations! I hope you enjoyed the ride as much as I did! It was so much to introduce Mama Oh and then to bring everything full circle on Tatooine. I'm super excited to have Anakin, Shmi and Satine in the story now and while we're going to be shifting back to Coruscant and Jedi related things, our new family members are going to be very much active in the story.

I'm not sure of the exact date when Tano and Kenobi returns but when I have it I will update it here and on my tumblr at FireflyFish.

So... until next season when we find out just how Anakin Skywalker joins the Jedi Order and how Obi-Wan Kenobi will react to finding out that Ahsoka knows far more than she's letting on.

THANK YOU ALL! HAVE A HAPPY SEASON BREAK!
Rescue Mission

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and her Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi successfully completed their mission to protect Satine Kryze, the Duchess of Mandalore, and bring her safely to the Mandalorian embassy on Coruscant. Their adventures took them all over the Outer Rim, eventually landing them on Tatooine where they were given shelter by a slave-woman named Shmi Skywalker and her son, Anakin.

After a few well-placed bets, and a dramatic escape or two, our heroes landed in an escape pod on the Republic planet of Naboo, eventually making their way to Coruscant. Satine, Shmi and Anakin moved into the Mandalorian embassy while Ahsoka and Obi-Wan returned to the Jedi Temple to recover from their time away.

But it is only a matter of time before Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi are back in action...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The emergency medical transport ship Solace jostled back and forth as it dashed through hyperspace with its precious cargo, racing back to Coruscant and the Jedi Temple. Heart rate monitors sounded an erratic pace as emergency medical techs monitored their critically injured patient, speaking in a complicated language of readings and values lost on the other two occupants of the craft.

“Blood pressure is dropping!”

“Pushing epikix.”

“We need another liter of blood. Do we know what the blood type is?”

“Check the J Database.”

“Isn’t that her padawan over there? Shouldn’t he know?”

One of the medics, a young blue-skinned Pantoran, stepped away from the patient to approach the two Jedi sitting on fold-out chairs that bounced and jostled with each lurch of the ship. He swallowed nervously, glancing down at the younger one who stared at the floor with round, heartbroken eyes as if the durasteel plating could explain how he had ended up on the Solace. “Ah… excuse me, Padawan Kenobi?”

Padawan Kenobi did not move or act as if he even heard the medic, his eyes lost and far away.

Sensing he would have little success with the padawan, and starting to worry that he was going into shock and would need to be treated once they landed, the medic turned to the older Jedi at his side, who was leaning against the hull, his arms folded over his chest and his eyes closed, looking exhausted and possibly asleep. “Ah… Master Jedi? Do you… happen to know Knight Tano’s blood
The Jedi Master opened his eyes, blue eyes snapping to the medic’s, his brow furrowed. He turned towards the padawan next to him and reached out to place a hand on the boy’s shoulder, his voice low and gentle, a soothing rumble of a command. “Obi-Wan? What is Knight Tano’s blood type?”

The Jedi Master and medic waited for Padawan Kenobi to respond and after a minute or so, when they realized no response was forthcoming, the master sat up and reached up to squeeze the young man’s shoulder, giving it a small shake. “Obi-Wan! Your assistance is needed. What is your master’s blood type?”

Padawan Kenobi jerked back to life, his head coming up sharply and his eyes searching the interior of the ship, darting from Knight Tano to the medic and back. His tawny hair fell over his nose, making him appear far younger than he was, a boy lost without his master to guide him. “I’m sorry, Master Jinn. What did you say?”

“What is Knight Tano’s blood type?” the medic repeated, trying to be as kind as he could given the situation. “Togrutas have slightly different antigens than humans and we thought you would be faster than the J database.”

Master Jinn squeezed Kenobi’s shoulder again, leaning forward, his long brown hair sweeping down between the medic and Kenobi like a curtain. “You must not lose yourself in grief, Obi-Wan. Focus your mind on the here and now.”

Blinking, Padawan Kenobi nodded slowly, taking a breath before he replied. “I believe she is… uhm… Osk delta negative. Yes, I think that’s what she told me once.”

“Thank you,” the medic said and turned back to the patient, relaying the information to his colleagues. “Osk Delta negative. Do we have any of that on hand?”

“I think we have a bag of it,” the trauma doctor said, frowning at the readouts from a medical droid. Another tech strung up the bag of blood and fed it into the IV embedded into Knight Tano’s wrist, red flowing slowly through the plastic tubing. “I hope it’s enough.”

Jedi Master Plo Koon stood on the edge of the eastern emergency landing pad, his heavy cloak billowing around him in the wet and windy weather. It had been raining in Coruscant for the past day and the air still felt heavy and cold, threatening to break out into a squall. He stood far to the side, his arms folded over his chest as he awaited the arrival of the Solace with its emergency Republic trauma team that was caring for the critically injured Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano, her Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi, and the Jedi master they had been ostensibly sent to rescue, Qui-Gon Jinn.

It was a mission that had gone horribly, nightmarishly wrong.

Plo Koon had been immediately notified after Qui-Gon’s initial report of the attack to the Jedi Order because he had adopted Ahsoka and by extension Obi-Wan into his lineage, a responsibility Plo Koon had gladly accepted.

He had hoped that after their recent tribulations on the Outer Rim-- running from bounty hunters, swindling Hutts, and escaping on a pirate ship-- that the duo would be kept on Coruscant for a while
to repair the small but contentious rift between master and learner at the loss of Ahsoka’s lightsabers.

After learning that Ahsoka had pawned her sabers on Tatooine to buy the freedom of a slave woman and her child, as well as the passage necessary back to Republic space, Plo Koon had suggested that Obi-Wan go with Ahsoka to find new lightsaber crystals on Ilum. His hope was that a meditative retreat would give them the time and space necessary to work out their issues. Plo had always found the crystal caverns soothing and firmly believed that it would be just the thing to help the master and padawan find their way back to harmony.

“Master Plo Koon,” a cool, clear voice interrupted Plo Koon’s thoughts, and he turned to nod his head in greeting to the head of the Jedi Healers, Master Tyro Shode, who was being followed by his senior padawan learner, a blue Twi’Lek by the name of Vokara Che. “Have you been waiting here long? The EM transport ship is not scheduled to arrive for another fifteen minutes.”

“I understand but I felt called all the same,” Plo Koon replied, gesturing with one hand. “Please forgive me, Master Sho. I promise to stay out of your and the healers’ way.”

“There’s no need to apologize, my friend,” Master Shode said as he placed a warm hand on Plo’s shoulder. “We have all made this unfortunate vigil, at one point in our career or another. The fact that you adopted Knight Tano into your lineage tells me everything I need to know. I assure you, we will do everything we can for her. Vokara and I will see to her treatment personally.”

Plo Koon looked back at the solemn, watchful young woman holding a datapad in one hand and a biometric sensor in the other. She nodded once in acknowledgement before turning her gaze back to the sky, waiting for the arrival of the emergency medical transport ship.

“Do we know the nature of her injuries?” Plo Koon asked as the wind kicked up and a distant rumble of thunder rolled through the Coruscant skyline. “All I was told was that they were critical and that Ahsoka, Obi-Wan, and Qui-Gon Jinn were being rushed back for treatment.”

“Vokara?” Master Shode asked, glancing back at his student. “What does the file say?”

“Knight Tano was caught in the blast area of an improvised incendiary device,” Vokara began, her voice husky and never wavering as she read through the details. “She has sustained multiple lacerations and contusions, as well as multiple broken bones, and second or third degree burns. The medics report extensive internal bleeding, and gross trauma to her internal organs. According to the file, she has not regained consciousness after the initial blast although there is still sign of brain activity. Unfortunately Knight Tano’s heart had to be restarted enroute but aside from a few instances of abnormal rhythm, it seems to be working.”

For the first time in a long while, Plo Koon was thankful his expressions were shielded by his antiox mask. He inhaled a slow and steady breath, taking the long moment to center himself in reality and within the Force.

Panic would not help Ahsoka or Obi-Wan, and Plo Koon knew that the boy was going to need someone calm and stable to help him through this great unexpected trial before him.

An alarm went off somewhere back inside the Halls of Healing, bringing Plo Koon back to the present as the lights on the landing pad flashed to life, searing red and yellow, cutting through the dull grey of the surrounding area. The alarm continued, calling for a team of Jedi Healers and medical droids to be on standby as the Head of the Healing Order stepped back inside to confer with his colleagues about the hand-off of the patient.

Vokara Che was left next to Plo Koon and she gazed up at him, her expression guarded as she
spoke. “I must warn you that the odds are not in her favor.”

The sudden wrongness of that statement stabbed Plo Koon through the heart and he found himself inhaling sharply in surprise. “Your evaluation of Knight Tano’s injuries sounds very grim, Padawan Che. I… I pray you are wrong and that Knight Tano continues to surprise us all with her resiliency.”

“Hmn,” Vokara replied, turning unerringly towards the arriving ship, her back straight and her chin lifted. “May the Force be with us all today.”

The transport ship cruised into position over the landing pad, hovering for a moment before sinking into a smooth landing. The critical response team of healers stood at the entrance to the temple, carrying the tools and implements of their work as they massed behind Master Shode. Vokara took her leave of Plo Koon and joined them as the ship lowered its cargo lift to show a doctor, a tech, Obi-Wan, and Qui-Gon Jinn standing behind him. Ahsoka lay motionless on a gurney.

It broke Plo’s heart to see Obi-Wan desperately clutching Ahsoka’s hand, his face a mask of grief. Fear and anguish rolled off of him like waves, crashing through the Force like a part of the storm trying to blow in. He was hunched over, trying to make himself small and inconsequential as the traveling doctor waited with the tech to hand off Ahsoka to the healers.

Qui-Gon Jinn stood behind him, his arms folded over his chest, his face and spirit inscrutable even to Plo Koon.

“Move!” Master Shode ordered, the critical care team moving as one towards the hovering gurney. Plo watched as the unit worked together flawlessly, exchanging information at a rapid-fire clip he couldn’t quite track over the whine of the engines and his own distance from the scene. Sensors, bags of bright green bacta, bandages and other medical tools were handed back and forth, the healers flowing around Ahsoka’s gurney, somehow deftly avoiding Obi-Wan still by his master’s side.

“She’s stable. Let’s get her inside,” someone announced over the roar and the group as a whole began to move back toward the entrance to the halls of healing, Obi-Wan quietly shuffling along with them. Plo Koon glanced over at Master Shode, who nodded his head, signaling that Plo was to follow the group. He took a spot in the back of the group, next to Qui-Gon.

“It was kind of you to meet us, Master Plo Koon,” Qui-Gon said, bowing a little. “I understand you welcomed Knight Tano into your lineage, correct?”

“I did,” Plo answered, his gaze drifting from Ahsoka’s vitals to Obi-Wan’s pale, tormented face. The nurses, healers, and medics were starting to look at him too, not quite annoyed, but their concern suffusing the Force around them. “I am very proud of Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. I could not leave them alone in such a trying time.”

“Yes, I can understand your worry,” Qui-Gon nodded, frowning for a moment at his comlink, hidden in his grasp. “This whole situation is very unfortunate. I am very concerned about Obi-Wan. He is… very attached to Knight Tano.”

“They are very close,” Plo Koon said as the medical team carefully rounded a corner into a large open room that he recognized as a pre-op room, where the nurses, healing padawan learners, and other medical techs prepared Ahsoka for surgery and treatment in the operating room. The traveling doctor was conversing with Master Shode and Vokara Che while the team took vitals and pulled up the necessary medical information on view screens or downloaded traveling data into the medical droids that would assist in the surgery.

In the middle of this bustling hive stood Obi-Wan, both hands wrapped around Ahsoka’s right hand,
the bloodied tips of her fingers limp in his grasp. He murmured something, too soft and tremulous for
Plo to catch over the noise of the healers, and took a hand away from his master’s hand to reach out
and touch a patch of robe on her shoulder that wasn’t scarred and burnt away by the blast.

“Padawan Kenobi?” a senior Padawan murmured, stepping up next to him and placing a gentle hand
on his back. “Padawan Kenobi, I need you to step back. We have to prep your master for treatment.”

Obi-Wan’s head jerked up as if he hadn’t even noticed the team working around him and trying
valiantly to respect his grief but unable to accommodate him any further. His eyes were wild and
horrified as he looked back at his master. “No! I can’t leave her! I promised I would stay with her.
Please, I won’t be in the way!”

The padawan healer smiled, patient and understanding as she reached toward Ahsoka’s hand clasped
in Obi-Wan’s. “I know you want to stay with her. We all know how you feel, Padawan Kenobi, but
you have to let her go. We can’t do our jobs with you in the way.”

“No!” Obi-Wan begged, the frantic edge to his voice kicking Plo Koon and Qui-Gon into action,
although the Kel Dor jedi was faster as he politely but firmly made his way into the room. Obi-Wan
refused to budge, grasping at the robe of the young woman next to him. “I won’t be in the way. I
promise! Please don’t make me leave her alone. Master always feels so terribly alone and I don’t
want her to wake up by herself!”

“She won’t be alone, I promise,” Padawan Healer Yanagi swore, untangling Obi-Wan from
Ahsoka’s limp hand and deftly passing him to Master Plo Koon, her spirit brushing against the
young man’s, trying to reassure him. “Someone will always be with her. She won’t be alone,
Padawan Kenobi.”

“No!” Obi-Wan cried, just a hair away from shouting, and then paused, startled at his own
uncharacteristic outburst.

Plo Koon took him by the shoulders, guiding him away from the table, while Qui-Gon took up a
position on the other side of Obi-Wan, worry and concern evident. “Obi-Wan, you must calm
yourself. Your pain and anguish will not help anyone, least of all Knight Tano.”

Plo Koon smoothed a hand up and down Obi-Wan’s back, allowing the boy to curl against him even
as Obi-Wan looked up at Qui-Gon with something like shame and anxiety catching fire behind his
flimsy shields.

“I-I’m sorry, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan managed to stammer out, swallowing harshly as he numbly
scrambled for a much older Jedi’s poise. “I… did not mean to cause more trouble.”

“You are fine, Obi-Wan,” Plo Koon spoke, gazing over Obi-Wan’s head to look at Qui-Gon. “You
are exhausted and in need of medical treatment yourself. There was no trouble caused.”

Qui-Gon’s eyes flicked up from Obi-Wan to Plo Koon and then back to the distraught boy. He
frowned, his hard features softening as he reached over to squeeze Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “Master Plo
Koon is correct. Let’s get you to a healer and then you are going to get some sleep.”

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to protest only to be cut off by Plo Koon. “Ahsoka is being taken care of
by the best healers in the Republic, young Obi-Wan. They will take excellent care of her and I assure
you that when we know more about her status, you will know. Now, come along, little one.”

The fight seemed to evaporate from Obi-Wan as he was led away from Ahsoka and the dedicated
team working against the clock to save her life.
After a thorough exam, the healers decided that Obi-Wan would be kept overnight for observation, one quietly revealing to Plo Koon that they were more concerned for his mental health than any of the minor injuries he had sustained on Maerai Prime. After they had Obi-Wan change into loose fitting robes of a soothing pale blue, a kindly nurse tucked Obi-Wan into bed, telling him that she would be back later to ensure he did not have a concussion.

As she took baseline vitals, she occasionally shot glances over at Qui-Gon Jinn and Plo Koon, her lips pursing in slight disapproval before she pulled out a thick heated blanket from a warming cupboard and placed it over Obi-Wan’s lower torso and feet. “There we are, young man. Now if you need me or anyone else, you push this button right here and we’ll come running.”

“When will my master be out of surgery?” Obi-Wan asked, his voice soft as if he were embarrassed to let the masters overhear his request. “Can I see her?”

“I think once they’re done in surgery they’ll move her straight to a bacta tank but I’ll leave a note for Carda to check on her for you before you wake up,” the nurse smiled, patting one of Obi-Wan’s newly bandaged hands. “He’ll have a full report for you tomorrow morning, so you’d best get your rest. Your master will need you fully healed up when she comes out of that tank.”

Plo Koon felt Obi-Wan’s fear ease, sensed the vise-like grip of terror loosen as exhaustion flooded through him like a numbing fog. He watched the boy relax into the pillow, his bandaged hands curling around the edge of the blankets as he watched the nurse move around the room. His eyes occasionally darted to Qui-Gon Jinn before flickering over to Plo Koon, who bowed his head in acknowledgement, knowing that Obi-Wan wouldn’t realize he was making eye contact with the Kel Dor Jedi.

“Do you… do you think she will be alright, Nurse Solva?” Obi-Wan asked as he turned back to face the woman taking care of him. “No one has told me anything.”

“Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon murmured, holding open his hands. “You must focus on the present and your own healing. Trust in the Force as Knight Tano would no doubt want you to.”

Nurse Solva stood next to Obi-Wan, her arms folded over her chest, a clearly unimpressed expression on her face. “Are you two gentlemen planning on spending the whole night here?”

Plo Koon raised a hand to speak, planning on telling the Nurse that they would stay until Obi-Wan was asleep and then retire to the Council to discuss what had happened on Maerai Prime and why it might have cost the Jedi Order one of its newest rising stars. “No--”

“Yes, I am,” Qui-Gon interrupted with firm assurance, confident Nurse Solva would acquiesce to his decision. “Obi-Wan has been through quite an ordeal and I want to make sure he is properly supported after such a traumatic event.”

Arching one eyebrow, Nurse Solva exhaled through her nose. “Is that so? And where do you plan on sleeping?”

“In the chair,” Qui-Gon helpfully explained, seemingly unaware that his attempts to reassure Obi-Wan’s nurse were falling on deaf ears. Plo Koon had to admire his determination, even as he felt second-hand embarrassment for his friend. Qui-Gon meant well, as he did in all things, but he could be terribly stubborn and oblivious when he wanted to be.
“I see,” Nurse Solva nodded, looking down at Obi-Wan and his distinctly uncomfortable expression before returning her attention to Qui-Gon. “And when were you planning on getting that open wound checked out? And that limp you think you’re hiding? Were you just going to pretend none of that happened? Were you even examined by the emergency medics?”

“I…” Qui-Gon’s utter bafflement at his failure to charm her brought forth a quiet chuckle from Plo Koon, which sadly was not reciprocated by Obi-Wan, who just pulled his blankets further up his chest.

This must be almost unbearable for you, Obi-Wan. Plo Koon thought as he stepped past Qui-Gon, who was being commandingly bundled out of Obi-Wan’s room by the nurse. She would brook no argument, although she did stop long enough to point at finger at Plo Koon and threaten him as well.

“Don’t you keep him up any longer than he wants! In these halls, I outrank all of you lightsaber-toting crazy-people!”

And with that, despite his booming protests otherwise, Qui-Gon was ushered out, leaving Obi-Wan and Plo Koon together.

Silence stretched on between the two for a long, awkward moment, Plo Koon wondering what Ahsoka would do in this situation and how she would try to comfort her padawan. While Ahsoka’s methods were a bit unconventional, Obi-Wan had blossomed under her tutelage and Plo Koon had found little to fault her for.

Hoping Obi-Wan wouldn’t think his behavior strange and invasive after such a traumatic experience, Plo Koon reached out with one hand and covered Obi-Wan’s. It was a small gesture, but he hoped it conveyed the depth of his concern and worry for the young man pale and exhausted against the pillows.

“You have been very brave, Obi-Wan,” Plo Koon murmured, squeezing his hand. “Ahsoka would be proud of how well you’ve handled yourself.”

Obi-Wan glanced up at Plo Koon and then back down again, his eyes swimming with tears and his expression utterly miserable. “I haven’t done anything, Master Plo. I just… I just got in everyone’s way and made a scene in front of every healer in the Order! Master would have been mortified!”

“I doubt that. No one could blame you for your reaction, Obi-Wan. Your master was grievously injured. It is natural to want to stay with those close to us during their time of need. Fear is a primal feeling and one that unfortunately we all must face,” Plo Koon replied, shaking his head, his own senses telling him that there was a small tempest of emotions, feelings, and words bundled up within Obi-Wan but that the padawan did not feel safe to share them. Not yet. His eyes kept darting to the door and Plo Koon wondered what the boy expected to happen. “Ahsoka would want you to rest, Obi-Wan. She would want you to do what is best for your own recovery.”

“Is Master Jinn going to come back?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Do you want him to come back?” Plo Koon answered his question with another.

Head bowed, Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. I don’t.”

Nodding, Plo Koon gave one last squeeze before reclaiming his hand, hoping Obi-Wan sensed his care and concern but also worried that he had overstepped his bounds. “I will inform Nurse Solva. I had planned on staying until you fell asleep before reporting to the Council on your and Ahsoka’s condition. If you would rather I leave, then-”
“No!” Obi-Wan interrupted. “I mean, if you would like… to stay… I would not mind… the company, Master Plo.”

Plo Koon nodded and pulled up the chair next to the bed, taking off his outer robe. He sat down and draped the dark pile of fabric over his lap. He looked back up to Obi-Wan and was surprised to find the young man’s right hand open, wordlessly asking for Plo’s.

Plo Koon took Obi-Wan’s hand. “Did you hear about the hissing vengokit that got loose in the Temple while you were gone?”

“No,” Obi-Wan replied, yawning a little. “What happened?”

“Your intrepid friend, Quinlan Vos, took it upon himself to find and recapture it,” Plo said, leaning back in his chair, determined to weave a little tale that would help put Obi-Wan to sleep. “I must say he was quite resourceful and persuasive. He enlisted Padawan Unduli and Rast to help him on his mission. They seemed to believe the vengokit could be lured into the open by something Quinlan called ‘garbage cake’.”

Worn out, and nearly asleep, Obi-Wan let out an exhausted chuckle. “Why do I have a feeling it didn’t work?”

Five days ago. En route to Ilum

“I have come to an important decision,” Obi-Wan announced as he flung himself into the co-pilot’s seat, all lupine grace and tawny hair that was somewhere between charmingly unkempt and roguishly long. He swiveled the chair around and smiled at his master, Ahsoka Tano, one long leg resting over the other.

Ahsoka let out a mock, heavy sigh and turned away from the view screen and the dashboard to give her padawan her full attention. “Oh have you, Obi-Wan? And what is this important decision that you have come to?”

“Ice cream,” Obi-Wan grinned, feeling very pleased with himself. “I should like my own sundae from the Blue Jewel Parlor. The really expensive one with the edible gold flakes and those ridiculous luminescent flowers from Tellestria. Why does everything on Tellestria glow, Master?”

Ahsoka let out a hoot of laughter, trying to carry on with her charade of being a stern and solemn Jedi master. “That’s what you want? If I buy you an ice cream sundae with actual gold flakes, you’ll forgive me for not consulting with you about my sabers?”

Obi-Wan stroked his chin, screwing his face up in a truly spectacular impersonation of Master Sinube before he nodded. “Yes. That’s what I want. And to keep my hair. Then I will forgive you.”

“Your hair too?” Ahsoka gasped, her eyes round with manufactured shock. “You ask for too much, my very young Padawan. Think of what the Council will say!”

“I have,” Obi-Wan laughed, turning back to the dashboard and running through a few diagnostic checks triggered by travel time.

Ahsoka watched him work, struck by how confident her padawan had become during their long,
difficult time in the Outer Rim, how easily he moved through routine checks that before had seen him checking and double-checking as a way to combat his anxiety about being perfect. He still didn’t exactly have the easy confidence of Master Obi-Wan but Ahsoka felt that had as much to do with age as it did with experience. She felt much more sure of herself at thirty-five than she had at twenty-five, let alone when she was a padawan trailing after Anakin.

_I hope Anakin will be okay while we’re gone on Ilum. Shmi assured me that he hadn’t had a tantrum in several days but there are so many people on Coruscant. It must be so hard for him coming from a place like Tatooine._

Shaking her head to clear her thoughts of worry, Ahsoka leaned back in her chair and folded her arms over her chest, deciding to call her padawan’s bluff. “So what will the Council say, if I let you keep this… Outer Rim smuggler look you’ve got going on.”

Obi-Wan turned back to Ahsoka, a grin and dimples breaking out on his face. “They will say… Sweet Force! Look at how dashing Padawan Kenobi is. How could we have ever made him suffer with that horrible padawan cut? We should apologize immediately. With ice cream!”

Ahsoka burst out laughing at that, slapping the arms of her chair as Obi-Wan’s smile grew wider. She struggled for composure as he proceeded to list all the types of ice cream the council could buy him.

“Chocolate, Gingensu vanilla, mint moss-- that would be from Yoda, of course.”

“Obi-Wan Kenobi!” Ahsoka gasped at her cheeky boy.

Not at all cowed, Obi-Wan continued. “Chandrillan passion berries from Master Ti, Alderaanian lunar fruit sherbert from Master Mundi, chunky chopped Kashyyyk nut mix from Master Koth so he can grind his teeth on it. He’s not terribly fond of me, you know.”

Snickering, Ahsoka shook her head. “No, no! It’s me he’s not overly fond of. You are just the poor innocent padawan learner I’ve dragged into my mess. I’m sure he and several other masters on the Council wish they could rescue you from me. I am an… unorthodox influence on you.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes, arms folded over his chest. “I don’t see what’s so unorthodox about us. They’re just jealous their master didn’t teach them jar’kai when they were my age.”

“It’s a difference of opinion, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, standing up to walk to the back of the ship in search of some snacks, sensing they were about to partake in one of Obi-Wan’s new favorite pastimes: discussing how Ahsoka’s view of the Jedi Code and the Jedi Order’s role in the galaxy differed from what he learned in his theory classes.

Obi-Wan had the heart of a scholar, moving from one topic of interest to another, greedily devouring information and then slowly synthesizing it into his ever-expanding base of knowledge. It was truly fascinating for Ahsoka to watch Obi-Wan’s worldview slowly open up and become more evolved and welcoming, especially after he had met Satine, Shmi, and Anakin.

Staring down slavery and the sometimes cruel nature of the galaxy away from the plush and safe confines of the Jedi Order had done much to open Obi-Wan’s eyes to true need and suffering.

“It is not a difference of opinion,” Obi-Wan huffed, turning back to the viewscreen to watch the blue-white starlight streak past. “You’re teaching me the same things I learn in class. It’s just… more interesting when it comes from you.”

Ahsoka stuck her head out from the small kitchenette alcove. “Obi-Wan, I think that’s the kindest
thing you’ve ever said about my teaching. Thank you.”

She couldn’t see her padawan blush, but she could feel the shy pleasure bloom in the Force as she gathered up a tray of Temple-approved snacks. Ahsoka let out a sigh at how terribly healthy they were and supposed they would have to do.

Rummaging around in one of the cabinets for two cups, Ahsoka realized her left hand was curled into a fist as she pushed past plates and other odds and ends. She peered down at her hand in puzzlement, confused by the slight shake there.

Danger. Something’s going to happen.

Ahsoka inhaled sharply and focused on her hand, uncurling her fingers one by one as she tried to chase the warning she felt in the Force, to follow the vermillion flash of impending violence back to its source, letting out a groan of frustration when it slipped through her mental grasp.

“Master?” Obi-Wan’s voice pierced Ahsoka’s concentration, confusion clear in his voice. “There’s a message from the Temple. It’s from Master Rancisis.”

Surprised, Ahsoka hurried back up to the main cockpit, sliding into the pilot’s chair and keying in her code to unscramble the message. “This is Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi. We read you Master Rancisis. What’s the problem?”

“Forgive me for interrupting your pilgrimage, Knight Tano, but an emergency has arisen that requires your assistance,” the master said, his arms folded and hidden under his snowy white beard. “It seems that Master Qui-Gon Jinn’s mission to Maerai Prime has gone terribly wrong and the Council is concerned his life might be in danger. You and your padawan learner are the two nearest Jedi in the vicinity and the Council needs you to fly to Maeraestra city to retrieve Master Jinn and return him safely to the Temple.”

Ahsoka nodded, keeping her face as still as a mask even as she glanced over at Obi-Wan, who was doing his best to keep his own unease hidden from view.

Master and padawan exchanged looks, carrying on a quick conversation within their bond.

We haven’t even made it to Ilum! Can’t they wait until you’ve crafted new sabers? Obi-Wan’s mental scowl and defensive worry wrapped around Ahsoka like a protective layer of armor.

Apparently not. If we’re the only Jedi in the vicinity we have to go, Obi-Wan. Remember out on Florrum? We would have been rancor meat if Knight Dii hadn’t shown up when he did, Ahsoka pointed out as kindly as she could manage, given the knight they were going to be rescuing was Qui-Gon Jinn. Can I borrow a saber for a little longer, oh smartest and most generous of padawan learners?

Ahsoka was greeted with an image of Obi-Wan rolling his eyes and the faint memory of his saber in his hand as a way of him saying yes.

“Knight Tano? Do you and your padawan understand the task before you?” Master Rancisis asked, arching an eyebrow at their silence. “Time is of the utmost importance. There are reports of a civil war beginning and we want to ensure that Master Jinn is not caught up in the ensuing chaos.”

“Yes, we understand, Master,” Ahsoka answered, nodding her head to the small blue-white holofigure hovering over her dashboard. “Padawan Kenobi and I will drop out of hyperspace and reroute to the coordinates as soon as we receive them.”
“Excellent,” the Thisspiasian master said, bowing his head and his relief audible. “I shall inform the Council that you have accepted this mission. We will send along all the information we have on the escalating situation. If there are no more questions, may the Force be with you.”

And with that, the holographic connection cut out, leaving Ahsoka and Obi-Wan alone in the cockpit.

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to speak but Ahsoka cut him off.

“I know, I know. You have a bad feeling about this,” she grumbled as she started to enter changes into their navigation computer, already feeling a headache coming on. “You don’t want to go rescue Qui-Gon Jinn from whatever civil war he may or may not have caused on accident. Trust me. I know. I don’t want to go either but it’s our job as Jedi. We are duty-bound to come to the aid of anyone who asks for it. Even Qui-Gon Jinn.”

Obi-Wan said nothing to this for a long moment before he finally spoke. “I think I’m going to need two sundaes, Master. And some twice-fried noodles from Mako’s Shop.”

Relief and pride flooded through Ahsoka at the calm and measured way Obi-Wan was handling their sudden reassignment. The way he had gradually shifted from an over-cautious teenage boy to a serious young man with a job to do filled her heart with such love for the man her padawan was going to become.

Her little Master Obi-Wan.

“It’s a deal, Obi-Wan. I might even buy you a drink when this is all said and done.”

Chapter End Notes

Hiiiiii! Welcome back to Season Three of Tano and Kenobi!!!

Did everyone have a nice season break? Thank you so much for all of your support and wonderful, encouraging comments. You are all the best readers a glowing Fishy could ask for!

One note before I go. Lily Conrad (writegowrite) and I are moving to a new apartment next weekend. When I initially planned the return of Tano and Kenobi, we did not have a new apartment or a move-in date at that time and unfortunately, next weekend is the only one that we could make work. So with the impending move, Lily’s ill health and me having to do more of the physical work than I would usually do, I won't have time to work on Chapter Two this week.

But I promise I will be back the week after and I swear to you that Ahsoka will not die between this chapter and the next! Our Perfect Space Daughter is tougher than that, okay? Have faith in Ahsoka and in Obi-Wan!

If you would like to shout at me about my ill-timed move and unavailability you can shriek at me on Tumblr at FireflyFish

Byyyyye!
Dangerous Influence

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano's life hangs in the balance after a rescue mission to Maerai Prime goes horribly wrong. Master Plo Koon rushes to the side of his adopted grandpadawan, Obi-Wan Kenobi. Relatively unscathed, Master Qui-Gon Jinn ponders the path forward for everyone involved.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Now you stay here and you rest up or meditate,” Nurse Solva ordered as she draped a warm blanket over Qui-Gon’s lap, her tone warm but brooking no argument. “That’s what you Jedi are good at, right? Sitting still and staying out of trouble.”

Qui-Gon felt a bemused smile tug at the corner of his mouth. “I don’t believe anyone has ever said that of me, Nurse Solva, but I shall do my best to obey.”

“Good,” she nodded, picking up a datapad and punching in a few notes as she looked up at the Jedi through her bangs. “And I don’t want to see those masters on the Council in here either. You’re in the healers’ Temple now and, as far as you’re concerned, I am Yoda himself.”

Opening his mouth to promise that he would not disobey any of her commands, Qui-Gon was brought up short by the grandmaster himself, riding on the shoulders of Depa Billaba as she followed her master, Mace Windu, into the room.

“Not green enough, you are, Nurse Solva,” Master Yoda chuckled as Depa carried him over to a chair Mace pulled up to the side of Qui-Gon’s bed. “And far too reasonable to be a Jedi, I think. A few minutes, might we have with Qui-Gon?”

Nurse Solva folded her arms over her chest and gave Master Yoda a cool, assessing look before turning her gaze to Mace as Depa left the room. “Five minutes and not a moment more. The gundark may think he’s alright, but I’m not letting him leave until Master Shode gives him the go-ahead to be discharged.”

“Of course,” Mace bowed his head to Solva and stepped back as she strode out of the room, leaving a trail of annoyance and worry in her wake.

Master Yoda let out a sigh before he looked up at Qui-Gon. “Glad to see you in good health, I am. Concerned I was, after your last report.”

“I would not be here if it were not for the timely intervention of the Council on my behalf,” Qui-Gon said, bowing his head to Mace and Master Yoda. “If you had not sent Knight Tano and Obi-Wan, I don’t know if I would be here to thank you.”

“Yes,” Mace said, exchanging a glance with Master Yoda before he continued. “We were all lucky they were close enough to be reassigned to your rescue. They were on their way to Ilum so that
Knight Tano could find new crystals to replace the sabers she had lost on Tatooine."

“Ah,” Qui-Gon nodded, folding his arms over his chest. “I heard about that. She pawned them, didn’t she? And gambled on a podrace to earn the money to get them all off the planet?”

Mace nodded, his expression revealing nothing of his inner thoughts on the matter. Qui-Gon couldn’t imagine the Master of the Order would appreciate one of his knights heedlessly risking her life and the safety of her padawan learner and an important charge like the Duchess of Mandalore on the result of a podrace. It was far too dangerous and reckless and this was coming from a Jedi who practically specialized in “rash and foolhardy” behavior, as his old master used to call it.

Qui-Gon took Mace’s silence on the subject to be a sign that he did not approve of Tano’s behavior, but would not say so until the Council wrote up the formal reprimand.

“Freed two slaves as well, she did,” Master Yoda replied, closing his eyes for a moment, no doubt settling into the flow of the Force around them, seeking wisdom for the path ahead. “Quite an adventure for both master and padawan, it was. Close they are. A difficult time this will be for young Obi-Wan.”

Nodding gravely, Qui-Gon saw his moment to speak. “Yes, and that is something I wish to discuss. With Knight Tano so grievously injured, I would like to volunteer to care for Obi-Wan. I was there when Tano was struck by the bomb and helped him save her life. He will be upset and, if the unfortunate happens and Knight Tano does not recover, he will be grieving her loss.”

Mace folded his arms over his chest. “You don’t think she’ll recover from her injuries?”

“I think Obi-Wan will need someone who understands what he has experienced,” Qui-Gon explained. “He will need someone who will make him feel wanted, especially if Knight Tano expires. The dislocation Obi-Wan will feel could be intense given Knight Tano’s attachment to him.”

Master Yoda made a sound of apparent agreement, opening his eyes and looking from Qui-Gon to Mace and back. “And experience you have, in a situation like this, no?”

“Yes,” Qui-Gon said, not wanting to bring Feemor up, but since the grandmaster had asked, he was not above buffing his own credentials. Obi-Wan and his training was of utmost importance and Qui-Gon had to make them see that. “I took over for Feemor and trained him to knighthood. It is a very similar situation.”

“We’ll bring your request before the Council,” Mace replied as the door on the far side of the room slid open, Nurse Solva striding into the room with an imperious air about her. “I’m glad to see you’re mostly intact, Qui-Gon. We’ll talk more about this later.”

“Thank you, Mace,” Qui-Gon replied, summoning a smile for his friend as Mace helped Master Yoda back down to the floor.

The two masters bowed respectfully to Nurse Solva, walking towards the door before Master Yoda paused and turned back, his blue eyes narrowed on Qui-Gon for a long moment before he spoke. “Rest now, my padawan’s padawan. May the Force be with you and Ahsoka and Obi-Wan tonight.”

Qui-Gon watched the two walk out of the room toward Depa, who had silently reappeared. She knelt down and the aged master lightly scampered up to her shoulder, and once he was firmly in place, Mace, Master Yoda and Padawan Billaba disappeared around the corner.
Outside of the Halls of Healing, Mace Windu turned to look at Yoda riding on his padawan’s shoulder. “Plo Koon won’t like that.”

Yoda nodded, running a clawed hand through the white wisps that might have once been hair. “Discuss this with the Council, we will. A difficult decision before us, we have. The right path forward, meditate on, I will.”

Mace nodded and left it at that. He would save his words for the Council room. “Where can we take you, my friend?”

“To the creche,” Yoda said, patting Deepa’s shoulder. “A lesson I have, with the Rancor Clan. Do me good, it will, to keep busy. Care to join us, Padawan Billaba?”

“I’m afraid I have a lesson with Master Kahru,” Deepa replied with a bowed head. “But I would be happy to help another time.”

“Bring Padawan Kenobi with you, you should,” Yoda suggested as the three walked back into the main halls of the Jedi Temple.

The next day, when word got out amongst members of the Council that Qui-Gon Jinn wanted to serve as Obi-Wan Kenobi’s temporary guardian, Plo Koon was not the only master who was unhappy with the matter.

“Absolutely not!” Shaak Ti insisted, her arms folded over her chest as she glowered from her seat. “Knight Tano has made it clear that if anything were to happen to her, she would prefer Master Plo Koon to take over Padawan Kenobi’s tutelage.”

“We are well aware of that fact, but taking on a padawan learner, and after such a tragic accident, will require extensive time away from his duties here to the Council and the Jedi Order as a whole,” Master Koth responded, his demeanor cooler than Master Ti’s but no less firm. “It is simply a matter of doing the most good for the most people. If Master Jinn is willing to take on Kenobi then I see no reason why this Council should stand in his way.”

“It seems premature to argue over this while Plo is still in the halls of healing with Padawan Kenobi,” Master Ki-Adi-Mundi observed, steepling his hands together. “And while I cannot argue with Master Koth’s logic, it is impolite to have this discussion without his involvement.”

“I disagree,” Master Oppo Rancisis replied, the tip of his tail lazily swaying back and forth. “Since he will no doubt be an interested party, his judgement could be tainted by his attachment to the boy, as he and his master were adopted into Master Plo’s lineage. For true impartiality, he should recuse himself from the decision.”

“A agreed,” Master Even Piell nodded from his chair, frowning over a datapad in his hand. “And this will serve as an important lesson to young Kenobi about being overly attached to his master. A hard lesson it is better to learn now, rather than later.”

“A lesson, not needed, at this moment in time,” Master Yaddle retorted, seated to Master Piell’s right. She settled herself into her chair and met Master Koth’s gaze. “Jedi are compassionate, first and
foremost. Compassion demands we give Obi-Wan the chance to choose who to mentor him.”

“He’s just a boy,” Master Adi Gallia sighed, shaking her head. “I cannot agree with you, Master Yaddle. He is in the throes of his grief. Master Shode recommends extensive work with a mind healer, and I am inclined to agree with him. Kenobi is no doubt overwhelmed by his emotions.”

“All the more reason to have Master Jinn take command of his training,” Master Koth insisted, turning to look at Mace Windu, searching for a like-minded supporter as he gestured wildly. “Master Plo Koon is needed here, assisting all the Jedi, not just Obi-Wan Kenobi and Ahsoka Tano!”

Mace Windu nodded, recognizing the validity of Master Koth’s argument, and indeed the arguments of all the masters who had spoken up. Yoda, at his side, had said nothing, content to simply listen, his eyes closed and hand clasped on his gimmer stick. Others had also not spoken, content to listen and allow their opinions to form as the Council worked over a small problem that should not have taken as much time as it already had.

He wondered about that for a moment, why it seemed that Ahsoka and Obi-Wan were a locus for strange happenings and outsized events. There had been the dramatic duel for the right to instruct the young Obi-Wan and then in their first solo expedition they had managed to prevent a terrorist’s bomb, overtake a pirate ship and negotiate a peaceful and bloodless exchange of lives.

And that didn’t even begin to cover their year-long adventure with the Duchess of Mandalore that ended with more pirates, a dramatic crash-landing on Naboo and the emancipation of two slaves on Tatooine.

Mace wondered if he should start paying more attention to the small shatterpoints that blinked in and out of existence around Tano and Kenobi, like tiny Feluccian fireflies.

“While I respect the argument in favor of Qui-Gon Jinn,” Mace said, leaning forward to rest his arms on his knees to impress upon the rest of the Council that his opinion had already been formed and he would not be swayed, “I feel this sets a bad precedent if this Council overrules Knight Tano’s wishes in regards to Kenobi’s training. To say nothing of the fact that implying one cannot teach while sitting on this Council seemed wrong-headed. My work with Deepa has made me better as a Jedi and as a member of this body. If Plo Koon wishes to temporarily mentor Obi-Wan, I am inclined to agree with him.”

“Why has Master Plo not joined us?” Master Saesee Tiin asked from a corner, his tone carefully neutral and hard to read. “I have not seen him at all today.”

“He did not want to leave young Kenobi,” Master Dyas answered, looking up from behind his folded hands. “I have been taking notes for him and will pass them along. He sends his regrets and begs our understanding.”

There was a quiet murmur of praise for the Kel Dor Jedi Master before Yoda opened his eyes and tapped his stick on the floor of the Council room. The assembled masters turn to look upon the elder Grandmaster, waiting for some kind of pronouncement from him.

“Leave this topic, we should,” Yoda said, calmly meeting the gaze of each Jedi Master. “In time, the answer will come to us. Rest and recovery now, is what all three need.”

Mace nodded at Yoda’s wisdom. “I move to table the discussion of Master Jinn’s petition for the time being.”

“Seconded,” Ki-Adi-Mundi sighed, his relief at the end of the discussion clear in the Force.
Shaak Ti frowned, her arms folded over her chest but she said nothing, merely exchanging a glance with Yaddle and Sifo-Dyas as Saesee Tiin also voiced support for a change of topic and moved the Council onto a discussion of the activities of the Trade Federation on the Mid and Outer Rim.

Mace understood her frustration with the other members of the Council and wished that he could have been more forceful in his support. He felt it was better for the harmony of the Council to try and find a middle ground, a clerical reason for why Qui-Gon Jinn’s request should have been refused. Qui-Gon’s behavior toward Obi-Wan and Ahsoka right before their contentious duel, was not common knowledge amongst the Council and Mace was reluctant to share that information without Yoda’s permission. Qui-Gon was Yoda’s grand padawan and Mace did not want to unfairly tarnish his friend’s lineage.

Exchanging a silent, sympathetic nod with Shaak Ti, Mace decided they would simply have to trust the Force to guide their decision when it came time to make it.

Obi-Wan woke up to the sounds of nearly deafening explosions that rattled his bones and made his head hurt. He was lying on the ground somewhere, covered in sweat and dirt, his whole body aching.

What is this? Where am I? I don’t recognize this place!

His thoughts swirling in a panic, Obi-Wan rolled onto his back, trying to take a deep breath, peering up at the sky overhead that was filled with what looked like distant insects that were shooting bright streaks of light at each other. Smoke billowed up between Obi-Wan and the faraway warrior bugs and he felt another shockwave knock through the area before he heard the heavy guttural boom of another… what? Bomb? Explosion? He didn’t have a word for what he just felt.

Shell. It was a cannon shell.

Frowning at the strange and foreign words in his mind, Obi-Wan became aware of something else, of feet pounding towards him and a white-hot wave of emotion crashing into the Force, like someone had just opened the floodgates. Obi-Wan groaned and closed his eyes, trying to turn away from the nausea-inducing fear and concern.

“Commander! Commander, are you alright? I’ll get you out of here, Commander. Just stay with me!”

Cracking open his eyes, Obi-Wan looked up into a figure of light with hands darker than pitch. He held up his hand, trying to block the painful radiance from his eyes and whispered in a cracked, broken voice that was not his own. “Rex? Is that you?”

Who is Rex? Where the hell am I? What is going on?!

Just as Obi-Wan was starting to panic, the white figure with black hands- Rex?- grasped him by the arms and spoke with Master Plo Koon’s voice. “Obi-Wan, I’m right here, little one. You are safe here.”

Obi-Wan jerked awake, his eyes darting around the room, looking for the white figure, looking for Plo Koon and finding the Jedi Master at his side.

Master Plo was holding his hand and reaching for his shoulder, a calm and solid presence as the last
of his terrifying nightmare faded away in the warm artificial light of the private room he was in.

“Obi-Wan?” Plo Koon murmured, his voice low and soothing. “You are safe now, Obi-Wan. You are in the Halls of Healing on Coruscant. Your master is safe as well. Breathe, young one. You are safe and no harm will come to you.”

“I’m… I’m…” Obi-Wan struggled to find the right words, to find the necessary strength to behave appropriately, to smother the fear and confusion in his heart. He took a few sharp and shallow breaths before a squeeze from Plo Koon momentarily drew his attention away from his fear. “Master Plo! When did you get here? Have I slept too late? How is Master Ahsoka? Is she alright? I am so sorry I was not awake when you arrived!”

Plo Koon gently guided Obi-Wan back down to rest on his pillow before the Jedi master returned to his seat, still holding Obi-Wan’s hand warmly. “Ahsoka is doing well, Obi-Wan. She is out of surgery and the healers are moving her into a bacta tank as we speak.”

“A bacta tank?” Obi-Wan echoed, looking down at his lap as he tried to picture his bright and lively master trapped in one of those claustrophobic tanks, floating in blue-green liquid like some kind of preserved oddity. “Does that mean she’ll be okay? How long will she be in there? Did she wake up?”

“The healers are cautiously optimistic,” Plo Koon explained, calling a datapad over and floating it into Obi-Wan’s outstretched hand. “They do not know how long Ahsoka will be in the tank. Each species reacts to bacta differently, as does each person. Hopefully she will only be in there for a short while although they do say she could be in there for up to three months.”

Obi-Wan frowned at the datapad, which explained the process with a few holos and some extra information. He zeroed in on a small paragraph at the bottom of the pad that noted that the longer a patient stays submerged in bacta, the less likely they are to leave it. Although reports of patients emerging from bacta after three to six months are not unheard of, they are not statistically significant.

“Can I see her?” Obi-Wan asked, putting the datapad with its horrible information to the side as he looked over at Master Plo. He wanted to insist he be allowed to see his master right at that moment, to cast off his attempts at maturity and demand what his heart wanted no matter the consequences. He was angry and worried and Obi-Wan wanted nothing more to let his emotions out, to inflict his pain and fear on something else, anything else. He felt like if he tried to hold onto it for one minute longer he would die from it.

“Not yet,” Plo Koon said, his voice apologetic.

A geyser of blistering rage exploded from the depths of Obi-Wan’s heart and he felt a truly furious outburst on the tip of his tongue, held in check by the thinnest sliver of control and his affection for the Kel Dor master who had gladly adopted Ahsoka and himself into his lineage.

“Why not?” Obi-Wan snapped, wanting to yank his hand out of Plo Koon’s, wanting to fling the terrible datapad at his side at the floor.

Plo Koon, perhaps sensing the young man’s frustration and anger, loosened his shielding, allowing a wave of serene concern and affection to gently brush up against the spiny anxiety and fear that made up Obi-Wan’s mental protection. “I do not think they’ve finished with the submersion. Nurse Solva promised to notify me the minute you could visit her.”

“Oh,” Obi-Wan closed his eyes, all his anger draining away from him, leaving him weak. He felt fat,
hot tears threaten in the corners of his eyes and he tried to blink them away, to push the inexorable flood of misery and fear away.

He was a Jedi and he was supposed to be able to control his emotions.

“T’m sorry, Master Plo,” Obi-Wan mumbled, scrubbing at his cheek with the heel of his hand, ashamed of his anger toward the Jedi Master who was being so kind to him. “I… I should not have spoken so harshly.”

“There is no need, young Obi-Wan,” Plo Koon said, the faintest image of a smile passing through Obi-Wan’s mind as he looked up. “You are still recovering from the shock of the attack. What you are feeling is natural. Do not apologize for your grief.”

Obi-Wan bowed his head and silently reclaimed his other hand from Master Plo, scrubbing at another few tears that tried to break free. He tried to focus on the present, to focus on his breathing and to tell himself that Master Ahsoka needed him to be at his best, to be calm and resolute in the face of the awful situation they found themselves in.

Master Ahsoka needed him now more than ever.

She needed him to be the best Jedi he could be.

And he couldn’t stop crying.

“Obi-Wan…” Plo Koon murmured, kind and gentle. “Ahsoka would not want you to suffer like this.”

“But… but…” Obi-Wan gasped, trying to desperately cling to his control, to hold back the dark sea that threatened to overwhelm him. “But it’s… it’s my fault! I have- I should… I have to be there! M-Master saved my life! She saved Qui-Gon’s life and I’m not there. I should be with her and I’m not there. I’m just sitting here, crying like a youngling! She could die alone and I’m just feeling sorry for myself when she needs me!”

The wave of anguish, of fear and pain, crested over the banks of Obi-Wan’s control and he broke down, sobbing even as he tried to wipe the tears away to be the good padawan learner he aspired to be.

Or at least he did until he found himself wrapped up in a hug, tentative at first but with growing strength as Obi-Wan gave into his sorrow and misery. Plo Koon held him against his shoulder, the wicked-looking talons of his hands surprisingly soft against his back as he cried and cried, letting all of his emotions out in wave after wave of grief and worry.

*I’m so sorry, Master. I disobeyed your orders and it might have gotten you killed. I just wanted to help!*

*Please… please don’t leave me alone, Master Ahsoka. Please don’t leave me behind.*

Qui-Gon felt relieved to finally be released from the Halls of Healing and the watchful eyes of Nurse Solva and Healer Yagyu: while he appreciated their dedication to his recovery, he did not have time to waste. Thanks to Knight Tano’s quick thinking and Obi-Wan’s courageous action, most of Qui-
Gon’s injuries were minor and superficial. He would no doubt have some new scars but there was nothing that required him to stay under the care of a healer.

After a trip to his room to shower and change into a new set of clothes, Qui-Gon strode back out, heading to a floor and a wing he had not visited in a long time. If he felt a moment’s hesitation as he left the turbolift to head down a quiet hallway, it did not show.

Nothing could show on Qui-Gon’s face as he walked the last few meters to the door of his old master, Dooku.

The last time Qui-Gon had sought out his former master’s wisdom had been when when he lost his duel with Tano. Dooku had been an exacting master and was considered the greatest living master of Makashi, perhaps of all time, and if anyone could pick out the flaws and weaknesses of Qui-Gon’s defense, it was his old master.

He had stood in the doorway of Dooku’s room, feeling angry and ashamed that a mere knight had bested him in combat, even after the Force had so clearly spoken to him. Dooku had looked down on him with those deep-set eyes and turned back into his room, a silent order to follow him.

“What have you done, Qui-Gon? What egregious mistake have you come seeking my wisdom to rectify?” Dooku asked, his voice slowly filling the room with his impressive stentorial baritone. His master sat himself down on a comfortable chair, his hands resting on one knee as he gazed up at Qui-Gon, who felt all of fifteen years old. “As I recall, our last parting was less than cordial. What has so vexed you that you would seek out my company and not that of your wise friends? Whose guidance you have always valued above mine?”

Qui-Gon could still feel the raw shame from that moment, when he admitted to Dooku that he had lost his duel, that a mere slip of a woman, half-trained and lacking even a modicum of refinement and true skill, had bested him. He had expected derision and perhaps a curt dismissal from Dooku.

It would have been what he deserved, but Dooku had surprised him. He had listened to Qui-Gon’s story with an impassive face, his eyebrows jumping only once as he described what would have been Tano’s killing blow. Once he was finished Dooku was silent for a long while, his gaze drifting out the window as he thought, the cool morning sunlight making his master look less like a person and more like a living statue, imposing and distant.

“Have you considered, Qui-Gon, that the Force sent you a vision not to encourage your duel but to warn you?” Dooku did not meet Qui-Gon’s eyes as he spoke. “Are you certain that it was the future you were shown and not an aborted half-life you should avoid?”

“Yes, I am certain of it, Master,” Qui-Gon replied, his confidence in his evaluation of his vision only growing. “I saw something, Master Dooku. Something terrible. It lives in Tano’s shadow, like a dark-side spirit. I cannot let it corrupt Obi-Wan.”

His master turned to him, hands still perfectly folded, his demeanor not at all ruffled by Qui-Gon’s fervor. “Indeed. You cannot.”

Dooku had advised Qui-Gon to wait, to work on earning Obi-Wan’s trust and regaining the good will of his grandmaster and Mace Windu. He had even agreed to spar with Qui-Gon, to precisely pick apart where his defenses had failed. Dooku had insisted that many of Qui-Gon’s weaknesses in lightsaber combat could be fixed with a greater adherence to the tenets of Makashi, he had received several pieces of good advice that Qui-Gon had gone on to implement to great success.

Their relationship had not warmed overly much in the ensuing years but Dooku wore his hauteur like
a protective cloak, keeping all but the most determined away. Only a few were privileged enough to
earn a smile or a kind word from Dooku, who preferred to spend his time honing his already razor
sharp lightsaber skills or deep in the Archives, trying to untangle the greater mysteries of the Force.
Qui-Gon could count on one hand the number of times he had seen his former master smile.

Not a one had been in his direction.

But he could not deny Dooku’s wisdom and so Qui-Gon found himself standing in front of his
master’s doorway again, hoping for guidance in such a critical moment. With Tano hanging between
life and death in a bacta suspension, Qui-Gon would have a chance to wrest Obi-Wan away from her
dangerous influence, to shield the boy who should have been his padawan from the nightmarish fiery
shadow that dogged Tano’s every step.

I do this for Obi-Wan, not for myself, Qui-Gon thought as he rang the doorbell of his master’s suite.

For several long minutes, Qui-Gon stood silently in the hallway, his head raised and his back
straight. It would not do to appear before Dooku looking defeated again. It would be far better to
appear confident and in control of his situation.

Qui-Gon was starting to wonder if his master was not at home when he heard the stately gait of boot
heels on the floor and felt his master’s smoldering presence in the Force. Dooku was a white-hot
point of light within the Force, like a luminous crystal, and the purity of his intention, the surety of
his purpose, had always impressed and intimidated his former padawan.

“Who is it?” Dooku asked behind the door, a crisp and imperious command.

“It is Qui-Gon Jinn, Master Dooku.”

“Come in.” Dooku’s voice receded back into the room as the door opened, revealing a dimly lit
hallway that led into the main living area of his master’s residence.

Qui-Gon stepped inside and followed the train of his master’s spirit, taking note of the modest statues
and icons tucked into small nooks on the wall, no doubt souvenirs from Dooku’s travels. The central
living area was equally dark, lit only by a few guttering candles and the dimming light of an ancient
holocron.

Clearly his master had been working on another of his projects when Qui-Gon interrupted him. He
resisted the urge to bow his head and instead clasped his hands behind his back and raised his chin
only to be blinded by the light exploding through the window as Dooku pulled black the curtains
with a flick of the Force.

“I see you have survived your encounter on Maerai Prime,” Dooku said, extinguishing the flames on
his desk with another sharp gesture. Gliding through the space of his room like a king through his
court, Dooku took as seat in his chair and waited for Qui-Gon to speak. “And you’ve not yet
outgrown your dislike of the healers’ ward. You reek of bacta.”

Inhaling slowly, Qui-Gon nodded in agreement. “Yes, I… I apologize for that, Master Dooku. I felt
that time was of the essence.”

“Oh?” Dooku canted his head every so slightly and arched one eyebrow, an expression that let Qui-
Gon know he was on limited time and needed to make his argument clear and fast. “And what
problem do you bring before me? What cannot wait until you are… presentable?”

“Obi-Wan Kenobi, Master,” Qui-Gon said, forcing himself to relax. “The boy I spoke of before?”
Dooku’s eyebrow jumped and he tapped one finger against his hand on his knee: small, barely perceptible indications of curiosity. “The boy you lost when Knight Tano defeated you?”

Qui-Gon nodded, reminding himself to keep his emotions in check, to keep his walls high and smooth lest his master pick them apart as easily as a house made of flimsicards. “Yes, the very same. The Council sent Obi-Wan and his master to extract me from the middle of my mission. They were rightly concerned about the... stability of the situation.”

“Ah.”

“I chose to see their arrival as a blessing,” Qui-Gon continued, sensing he had lost Dooku’s interest again. “To follow your wisdom. To guide and teach Obi-Wan in whatever way the Force would allow.”

Dooku said nothing. The only sign of life was his level stare and the slow tapping of his finger.

“During the course of our investigation into the central government of Maerai Prime, we came across an improvised explosive device,” Qui-Gon said, ignoring the faintest memory of the explosion and the acrid smell of smoke. “Tano took the brunt of the blast, saving my life and Obi-Wan’s.”

Dooku inhaled a little through his nose. “How heroic of Knight Tano.”

Qui-Gon was going to continue on, detailing the current situation and what he was going to ask of his master but there was something about Dooku’s reply, the cool boredom of it that jabbed at the part of him that would always be a truculent padawan learner and would automatically take the opposite opinion of his master out of petty spite. “It was. She saved my life.”

“And here you stand, trying to steal her padawan learner from her,” Dooku replied with an even tone, raising one hand to gesture at him. “Continue, Qui-Gon.”

_I am not stealing Obi-Wan! He was meant to be mine. Tano is the thief here, not me._

Taking a deep breath, Qui-Gon continued, struggling to keep his temper under control. “Tano was badly injured in the attack. The healers are doubtful that she will recover. They say she will be in bacta for three months, possibly more.”

Dooku nodded slowly. “And you wish to train Kenobi in her absence or in the event of her demise?”

“Yes,” Qui-Gon said, folding his arms over his chest. “I am certain that if I have more time with Obi-Wan, if I am given the chance to properly train the boy, my work will speak for itself.”

“I see,” Dooku exhaled, relaxing back into his seat, clearly waiting for something. “As engaging as your story has been, Qui-Gon, it does not explain to me why you are here. Is it my approval that you seek?”

Gritting his teeth and reminding himself that he would always get further with deference than with defiance, Qui-Gon bowed his head and acknowledged his former master’s observation. “I am here asking for your assistance. You once sat on the Council and you are still friends with many of the masters there. I was hoping you might…”

Qui-Gon came up short, suddenly losing his nerve in the face of Dooku’s impassive eyebrow raise.

“You are here to ask me to peddle my influence,” Dooku stated, in a tone that implied no answer was required from Qui-Gon. “To use my good name and reputation to enable you to take over as Obi-Wan’s Jedi master.”
Sullen anger burned Qui-Gon’s face as he stood before his master, all his attempts at clever prevarication undone. Feeling spiteful and humiliated, Qui-Gon raised his chin. “Yes. I do. Obi-Wan is far too important to leave in the hands of that woman. She’s teaching him Jar’Kai, of all things!”

There was short, sharp inhale of distaste and the faintest twitch of Dooku’s lips upwards. His master had little use for exotic lightsaber weapons and even less use for dual wielders, finding them ostentatious and lacking in the fundamental skills necessary to truly protect themselves in battle.

That his master had such a visceral reaction-- well, a visceral reaction for Dooku at least-- was a good sign.

“Most unorthodox,” Dooku replied, his gaze drifitng to the far window. “And I assume you will instruct him the ways of your… lightsaber gymnastics?”

Qui-Gon took a breath and told himself everything he was doing was for Obi-Wan and the galaxy. “No, Master. I had hoped to train him in Makashi first. I believe he has shown aptitude for it.”

Dooku glanced over at him for a moment and, for the first time in Qui-Gon’s presence, his master made a sound that might have been a laugh or perhaps a smile. “You must be truly desperate to train this boy, Qui-Gon, if you are willing to grovel like this. I wonder if he is truly worth all this effort?”

Qui-Gon sensed a refusal was imminent and decided to play his last trump card. “I feel Obi-Wan is a worthy heir to our illustrious lineage, Master. I am certain he will live up to your… exacting expectations. Unlike Knight Feemor.”

He watched as his master almost bristled with annoyance, slowly standing up from his chair to look down at Qui-Gon. “Training him was an act of generosity on your part, Qui-Gon, but Feemor is not of Master Yoda’s illustrious line, no matter what Jocasta’s Archive claims.”

Qui-Gon took a step back as Dooku strode past him into the small kitchenette, taking out a kettle and filling it with water. The Jedi master gestured sharply with two fingers, pulling out two chairs at the table near the window. He set the kettle on a hot plate to boil as he removed a box of tea leaves and two cups from the cabinet overhead.

Qui-Gon stood in the middle of Dooku’s room, feeling awkward and confused. Did this mean his master was going to help him? Was he about to be reprimanded about his decision to train Feemor all those years ago? Was Dooku expecting company shortly and Qui-Gon needed to see himself out?

Dooku looked up from where he was measuring tea leaves into a small strainer. “Sit down, boy. And we shall discuss this plan of yours to liberate Kenobi from Knight Tano. As usual, you have neglected to think everything through. I fear your bullheadedness will be the end of you one day.”

Relief flooded through Qui-Gon as he bowed respectfully to his master and took a seat at the table. With Dooku on his side, he was certain of success now.

Soon, Obi-Wan. Soon you will be my student and everything will be as it should be.

Chapter End Notes

And we're back! AND PLO KOON HUGGED OBI-WAN! I AM SO PROUD OF YOU, PLO!!!!
I would just like to take a moment to welcome Master Dooku to Tano and Kenobi. There is now officially someone who can look down on Qui-Gon. Maybe that will help knock some sense into him.

I want to thank everyone for their patience and understand while Lily Conrad and I dealt with what seemed liked the absolutely worst move ever! (Aren't all moves terrible? And how does one do a strikethrough in this box?) We're all done now, save for putting some things away and hanging pictures. Tano and Kenobi should be back on its regular schedule with weekly updates now.

So stay tuned for next week when we'll get a chance to visit with our favorite Mandalorians, Obi-Wan is cleared to leave the Halls of Healers and Plo Koon actually finds out what's up.

As always, you can find me at FireflyFish.
Welcome to Mandalore

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After crash-landing on the planet of Naboo, our heroes are recovered by the Jedi Master Saesee Tiin, who delivers Duchess Satine Kryze, Shmi Skywalker and her son, Anakin, to Coruscant and the awaiting Mandalorian escort. While Satine ponders a return to her old life without the support and friendship of her Jedi protectors, Shmi and Anakin take their first steps into Mandalorian society.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

One week after the crash landing on Naboo...

A blue speeder pulled up in front of an ornate townhome made of transparasteel and duracrete in the Garden District of central Coruscant, the afternoon sun painting the building in shades of rosy gold as the occupants of the diplomatic vehicle disembarked.

“And this is your new residence, Your Grace,” an aide announced as Satine Kryze, the Duchess of Mandalore, stepped out of the speeder with the assistance of one of her guards. The aide, a perky young woman from Clan Wren, continued on. “This was purchased by House Kryze back when the Duchy passed to your family. As you can see, it was done in the early Unification style and is quite popular with design enthusiasts.”

Satine stared up at the large mansion in front of her and nodded, summoning a polite smile for her aide. “Yes. Thank you, Didia. Would you please announce us?”

“Of course, Your Grace,” Didia replied and hurried up the steps, the tails of her coat fluttering behind her.

Letting out a heavy sigh, Satine turned away from the glass and gilt structure, suddenly overwhelmed by the feelings rising up within her at being confronted with the fact that she had safely returned to her former life. A life that did not include her Jedi friends and protectors.

“You promise you will come see us as soon as you can?” Satine asked Obi-Wan, holding his hand in hers, her gaze level and firm on his. “I will not stand for any Jedi nonsense. If I need to speak to this… Council of Old Men and Yoga, I shall.”

Obi-Wan laughed at that, one of his rare full smiles that brought out his dimples and made his blue-grey eyes twinkle in a most distressingly attractive way. “His name is Yoda but I assure you, Satine, that we shall pay you a visit. And remember, I promised to give you a tour of the Room of a Thousand Fountains.”

“Yes!” Satine replied with a warm rush of memory. “We shall all come visit your impossible garden room.”

“Are you two planning a date over here?” Ahsoka teased as she stepped away from Shmi and
Anakin, who was enthralled at a small children’s animation of The Very Hungry Gundark and needed to tell his mother how much he was enjoying it.

Both Satine and Obi-Wan turned bright red, Satine recovering enough to state, “We were planning a future visit to the Temple to see this Room of Many Fountains that Obi-Wan assures me is quite marvelous.”

“Ah huh,” Ahsoka grinned, stepping over next to Obi-Wan and looping an arm around his shoulders as if she doubted the truth of Satine’s statement. “Well, he’s not lying. It’s pretty awesome, if I do say so myself.”

“I cannot wait to see it,” Satine said, glancing over at the far side of the landing terminal as a small contingent of speeders bearing the insignia of House Kryze pulled up. She watched the Ducal Guards step off an open-air speeder as the Mandalorian diplomat to the Republic and his aides stepped out of one of the speeders and started heading towards her.

“It seems it is time for us to part… Your Grace,” Obi-Wan murmured as he and Ahsoka stood up straighter and stepped apart, turning back into dignified and remote Jedi almost in the blink of an eye.

The Jedi Master who recovered them from Naboo, Master Saesee Tiin, stood at the bottom of the landing ramp of the ship that would take them back to their Temple. It seemed the end of Satine’s long adventure with Obi-Wan and Ahsoka was coming to an end.

“Yes,” Satine sighed and turned back to her Jedi protectors and dearest friends. “I… I cannot thank either of you enough. There are… Please know that you will always be welcome in my home and on Mandalore.”

Tears caught in her throat and Satine tried to ignore them as she sought for the words that would truly convey how she felt and how much their sacrifices had meant to her.

Ahsoka nodded, bowing to Satine as Obi-Wan did the same. “It was our privilege and honor, Your Grace.”

The moment stretched on between them, warm and bittersweet, as Satine’s welcoming party advanced down the space port towards them. A part of her wanted to shoo them away, to rush back onto the ship with Obi-Wan, Ahsoka, Shmi and Anakin and run as far away from Coruscant and her responsibilities as it was possible to do. As terrifying as parts of the past six months had been, there had been wonderful moments of friendship, of adventure and discovery.

And now it was all going to end and she would have to go back to her gilded life and the responsibilities of her title. She knew it was childish and selfish of her, but she had made a new little family out there in the galaxy and she didn’t want to give it up.

Almost as if she sensed Satine’s unhappiness, Ahsoka spoke with a gentle voice. “If the Council clears us, we’ll be allowed to leave the Temple grounds some time next week… And didn’t Anakin promise you a rematch, Obi-Wan?”

Obi-Wan nodded, relief evident on his face. “He did. He owes me another game of ‘How High’ and you’re not allowed to help him cheat this time, Master.”

“Next week then,” Satine said, immediately cheered up at the prospect of seeing her friends so soon. “Yes. I think that would be lovely.”

Satine held onto that promise as Diplomat Baron Cluvia Antio of House Seeres, Clan Fox led her,
Shmi and Anakin away from the Jedi, as he first kindly but politely sent Ahsoka and Obi-Wan on. That done, he tried and failed to separate Satine from her new family, insisting that he would find a place for the “refugees”.

“They are not refugees,” Satine insisted, raising her chin as she leveled her gaze at Antio, daring him to contradict her. “Shmi and Anakin Skywalker are Mandalorians now and under the protection of House Kryze. I’m sure you can work out the details later, Baron Antio. For now, we should like to retire.”

That had been barely an hour ago and now they stood outside of a house her family owned that Satine had never heard of until today.

Everything felt strange and artificial, as if she was stepping into someone else’s life. She felt the absence of Obi-Wan and Ahsoka keenly, and kept looking around, trying to find a pair of blue-white montrals or hear the faint lilt of Obi-Wan’s voice as he responded to something she said.

It felt so wrong that they weren’t there with her, with Shmi and Anakin, and yet…

This was her life that she was returning to, the only life she had really known before her time on the run.

This was her reality and it stared her in the face, cold and stark like the building in front of her.

“Satine? Could you help me with Ani?” Shmi asked from the doorway of the speeder, interrupting Satine maudlin thoughts and pulling her back to the present.

“What’s wrong?” Satine asked, leaning down to peer inside the speeder. She found Anakin absolutely enthralled with all the buttons and switches, the driver grinning back at him from the front seat as Anakin raised and lowered the window next to him. “Oh. I see!”

Shmi chuckled, shaking her head. “I am so sorry, but he has never seen anything like this.”

“It’s alright, ma’am,” the driver said. “It’s perfectly normal. Once, I drive Baron Antio’s twin daughters around and they spent the entire time trying to find the ejection button.”

“Is there an ejection button in this?” Satine asked, gathering up a robe Jedi Master Saesee Tiin had given Shmi and the datapad Anakin had claimed as his the minute he found it on the Jedi cruiser back from Naboo.

“No, Your Grace,” the driver replied with a wink. “But it kept them occupied on their way to the Parks. I told ‘em there was a secret combination to unlock it.”

Anakin was lowering the window again when Shmi appeared on the other side of the speeder, smiling at her son. “Hello, Ani! Ready to go inside? With Satine?”

“Yes, Little Dragon,” Satine smiled, stepping back from the speeder as Shmi opened the door and picked Anakin up. She waited for mother and child to rejoin her before leading them up the stairs to her family’s home. “This is where we will be staying. According to Didia, my family purchased this a long time ago.”

Shmi and Anakin both gazed up at the house, their eyes round, with Shmi covering her mouth in shock. “You live here? This is a palace!”
“We live here,” Satine gently corrected, taking one of Shmi’s hands in hers. “You are a part of my family now, and this is where members of House Kryze live when they are on Coruscant.”

“What is House Kryze?” Shmi asked as they cleared the steps and moved into the grand foyer at the front of the house. High ceilings, covered in brilliantly colored glass and transparasteel gave the room a jewel-like glow, warming up the cool duracrete walls and floor. The thick rugs under their feet felt sinfully plush after so long away from the creature comforts of luxury.

“That is the name of my family,” Satine explained as Aide Didia reappeared with a butler, a protocol droid and two handmaidens. “Houses are made up of clans. For example, my uncle is from House Vizla and his wife, my Aunt Julia, is from Clan Wren.”

Nodding, Shmi followed Satine as Aide Didia and the butler, a solemn looking man from Clan Rook named Ordus, showed them around the house. There were several parlors, one to receive, one to read in, and one in the back that was called the sun room. There was a large hall designed to host a large party, an exquisite library full of more books than Satine could possibly ever read, a beautiful courtyard full of thriving plants, and that was just the main area of the house. There were two wings beyond that, one that was restricted to family members and the other wing where high profile guests and aides to the House of Kryze stayed.

“We’ve made up the grand suite, Your Grace,” the butler explained, showing Satine where it was on a datapad embedded into the wall. “Where would you like Madam Skywalker and her son to stay?”

Satine shot a glance at the butler who didn’t bat an eye and felt the ghost of a smile on her face. The butler was sharp and knew better than to try boss his new mistress around. She gestured Shmi and Anakin over to the datapad and asked which suite of rooms they would like.

“Oh, we don’t mind,” Shmi said marveling at all the space and the sheer opulence of the life Satine came from. “We’ll be fine with whatever room you chose.”

“I think something with a view,” Satine frowned over the map of rooms. “Ordus? Is there a room with a view of the courtyard? Close to my suite?”

“Might I suggest the Blue suite?” he said, pointing to a suite of rooms across the hall. “It does not look out onto the courtyard but you can see the Parks from there and in the spring, the view of the Flowering Forest is stunning.”

“Excellent,” Satine nodded at Shmi before turning to her aide. “Didia? Please see to it that Shmi and Anakin are given the Blue Suite. They can stay in my rooms this evening and we’ll take dinner there as well.”

“Yes, Your Grace,” Didia responded, her fingers flying over the datapad.

Anakin found that far more fascinating than the butler and he waved over his mother’s shoulder to Didia, and when that didn’t get her attention, he waved harder. “Hello!”

Startled, Didia blinked up at him from her work. “Oh, ah, hello… Anakin, right?”

He nodded with great enthusiasm. “Yes. I’m Anakin.”

“It’s… nice to meet you, Anakin,” Didia replied, a little awkward and confused but it was clear her heart was in the right place, which helped to ease Satine’s mine. “Your Grace, should I arrange to have some new clothing and effects purchased for Madam Skywalker and her son?”

Satine cut Shmi off before she could once again protest that they didn’t need anything. “Yes, right
away. And you absolutely will accept them, Shmi. You can’t run around in the same pair of clothes for the rest of your life. And Anakin’s already trying to outgrow his pants, and I know you won’t argue with that.”

Shmi said nothing to that but the look she gave Satine was one that promised future discussion about this later. “Fine, but nothing fancy. Anakin will only get it messy at mealtime.”

“Agreed,” Satine said and then decided it was time for everyone to retire back to her room. “Ordus? Can you show us to my suite? I think I am ready for a long shower and then a nap.”

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The next week passed in a haze for Satine, Shmi, and Anakin. First there was the matter of arranging for Shmi and Anakin’s Mandalorian citizenship, which involved more paperwork and signatures than Satine thought was truly necessary. There was the matter of tracking down any existing Republic citizenship Shmi might still have, of which there was none, and then there was the legal briefs that needed to be written up and submitted to both the Republic Bureau of Immigration and the Mandalorian Department of Legal Residence and Family Registry.

Once they were done with that, there was the matter of which noble house and clan Shmi and Anakin would join and the conversation via holo between Satine, Shmi, and her Uncle Tiber about the topic went on for over an hour.

“Satine, my dearest niece, a new clan has not been created in generations!” Tiber sighed as he rubbed a hand down his face. “I am not the one who would object to your creation of a new daughter clan for House Kryze. It is the ruling council who will object to you unilaterally decreeing there is a new cadet branch in the ruling family. That is what might not go over so well, especially given how long you have been away from Mandalore. It will give Culling Blade more sway over the populace. This Clan Skywalker idea will have its place and time later.”

“Uncle, I do not see how me welcoming Shmi and her son into my family will give Culling Blade any kind of power!” Satine insisted, her hand curled into a fist as she frowned at the blue-white ghost hovering before her. “Shmi and Anakin would not be in line for my title. I have made that abundantly clear that if Bo-Kat and I pass without issue the title would be yours and then Pre’s. Why can’t you make the ruling council understand?”

Tiber let out a long sigh, shaking his head. “Satine… so idealistic and so stubborn. You truly are your father’s daughter.”

“Satine,” Shmi murmured from where she had been sitting at the Duchess’s side. “Is it truly necessary for Anakin and I to be a part of a Clan? Right this minute?”

“Of course it is!” Satine protested. “You should have the same rights and privileges as any Mandalorian!”

“But is it necessary?” Shmi continued, gesturing to Tiber. “Your uncle does not object to the idea, only the time. Who does it hurt if we wait? Certainly not Ani or myself.”

Satine frowned and leaned back in her chair, folding her arms over her chest. She did not like the gentle and reasonable argument Shmi was making and most certainly did not like the relieved way her Uncle Tiber was nodding, as if Satine were being a child and finally an adult was speaking some sense. “It is about the principle of the matter. You are a part of my family now. Isn’t that what you
said? ‘Do not undo what Azul’ir has brought together’?

With a smile, Shmi nodded, reaching out to squeeze Satine’s arm. “Yes, I did. Azul’ir has brought us together. We can wait a little longer for some stubborn Mandalorians to recognize his wisdom.”

“Shmi speaks the truth, Satine,” Tiber said, trying and failing to hide a yawn behind his sleeve. “Give the Ruling Council, give Mandalore a chance to get to know Shmi and Anakin. I’m sure they will come to welcome them in time. Then we can bring up the creation of a new clan.”

“We are still family,” Shmi murmured, taking Satine’s hand in hers and squeezing it. “Nothing will change that.”

Satine looked up at Shmi and saw in the older woman a patience and a gentleness that she could not find in herself. She sensed a still, deep pool of resilience that soothed the angry raw edges of Satine’s temper.

She saw the early wrinkles around the edges of Shmi’s eyes, the faint furrow in her brow no matter how much she smiled. Her hands were rough and her skin had been tanned to a warm shade of bronze by her long years working under the twin suns of Tatooine.

*If Shmi can wait, then so can you. She is right. This won’t change anything. They can’t tell me who I can and cannot keep with me.*

“If you believe this is the best way forward,” Satine sighed, covering Shmi’s hand with hers. “I will… agree to this compromise.”

“I do,” Tiber answered with a wide and relieved smile. “I will have the documentation sent over as soon as it is completed. Welcome to Mandalore, Madam Skywalker.”

Shmi smiled back at Tiber and bowed her head. “Thank you, Lord Vizla. I am honored to be given a home here.”

After such an exhausting conversation, Satine and Shmi retired to the courtyard, where Anakin was playing with a brand new set of brightly colored wooden blocks while Didia worked on an assignment. She was reading something out loud in Mandalorian as the two women emerged into the sunlight.

Anakin saw them first and bounded upright, running over to his mother to greet her. “Su’cuy, Mama! Su’cuy, ‘Tine!”

Satine gasped in surprise. “Su’cuy, adi’ika! Where did you learn that, Anakin?”

“Didi!” Anakin beamed up from Shmi’s skirts, his eyes bright. “Su’cuy is ‘Hello’!”

“Yes, it is,” Satine nodded, reaching down to ruffle Anakin’s hair and give him a hug. “And such a lovely hello it was! Whose idea was this?”

“Madam Skywalker’s,” Didia explained as she stood up to curtsy. “And the texts you requested have arrived. I… I didn’t know what language would be best so I ordered them in Basic and Huttese.”
Shmi walked over to Didia and claimed the two datapads next to the dark-haired aide. “They are both perfect. Thank you so much for getting them for me.”

“What did she get you?” Satine asked as she picked up Anakin and carried him over to the table. “Oh! Mandalorian language books? Where did you find these, Didia?”

“There’s a central shop that members of the Republic Diplomatic Corps visit when given new assignments,” Didia explained with a proud tilt to her head. It had been difficult to track down what Shmi had requested but after a few hours of dedicated research she found what was needed. “Fortunately they happened to have these two in stock when I visited yesterday.”

“I see,” Satine nodded, taking a seat next to Shmi as she pulled up the first screen on the datapad. “I hesitate to mention this, Shmi, but you know you do not have learn Mandalorian to be a part of our people.”

Shmi waved off Satine’s concern. “Nonsense. I was forced to learn Huttese. I choose to learn your people’s language. If Mandalorians speak Mando’a, then I shall learn Mando’a.”

“Is that why you were reading to Anakin?” Satine asked Didia, who smiled up sheepishly from her work, nodding in agreement. “Honestly, you two make me feel positively lazy!”

“‘Tine?” Anakin mumbled from where he was tucked up against Satine, his head on her shoulder. “‘M tired. It’s loud.”

Satine frowned back at Anakin, smoothing his hair back from his head. “You’re tired? But it’s just past lunch, Ani. Are you feeling alright?”

“It’s…” Anakin frowned, shaking his head and pushing himself against her shoulder with more force. “Loud.”

Shmi looked up from her datapad and met Satine’s eyes before reaching out for her son’s forehead, concern sparking when his forehead felt cool to the touch. “Ani? Is it loud in your ears?”

Shaking his head, Anakin clung more tightly to Satine. “No. Inside. It’s loud inside.”

“Your Grace?” Didia’s voice was nervous and wary as she glanced from Anakin to Shmi and back. “Is there something I can do? Should I take my work inside?”

Satine nodded, gently shifting Anakin from her arms to Shmi’s. “Yes, thank you, Didia. You can take the afternoon off once you finish scheduling Master Tano and Padawan Kenobi’s visit.”

At the mention of Ahsoka and Obi-Wan, Anakin seemed to break, letting out a whimper. “I want Obi-Friend. Obi-Friend is quiet! Where is ‘Soka and Obi-Friend?”

Shmi stood up in a smooth motion, tucking Anakin under her chin as she headed towards the door that would lead her into the family wing. “Yes, my Little Dragon. I know. We miss him and Ahsoka too.”

Didia watched them go, confused as she looked back at Satine. “Is something wrong? Did I say something?”

“No,” Satine sighed, giving Didia an understanding look. “Anakin is… special. Sometimes it is hard for him to control his emotions. He misses his Jedi friends is all. Thank you for your help today, Didia. That will be all.”
And with that, Satine hurried off into the house.

Shmi was in a dark corner of her bedroom with Anakin when Satine came in, carrying the Jedi robe Anakin had declared to be his. She smiled up thankfully at the young woman, gladly taking it and wrapping it around Anakin.

“Thank you. I am so sorry we left in such a rush. Ani… He needed some quiet time.”

“Ah, is it time to be small and still, Little Dragon?” Satine asked, sitting on a footstool in front of Shmi and Anakin. She reached out towards the sniffling, red-faced boy, holding open her hand. Anakin nodded at Satine, not taking her hand but not pushing her away either, and Shmi felt a wave of relief when Satine pulled her hand back into her lap, not upset with Anakin’s reaction.

Although Satine clearly adored Anakin, she had not lived with him for nearly two years and still didn’t know his quirks and habits. Shmi worried that that unfamiliarity might cause Satine to wrongly believe that her son did not care for her.

Nothing could be further from the truth, but the power within her little boy made so many things more complicated for Anakin than they were for other children.

“Should I leave?” Satine asked softly, looking up at Shmi, her desire to do what was best for Anakin written on her face.

Shmi shook her head. “No. Just stay here with us.”

They sat in the quiet, dark corner for a long while, Shmi holding Anakin as he snuffled against her side, asking soft questions about why Obi-Wan and Ahsoka weren’t there any more. Shmi explained gently that the Jedi had to return to their Temple, that Obi-Wan was still studying to become a knight and that Ahsoka was his teacher.

Anakin scowled at this. “Should be here! I want ‘Soka and Obi!”

“I know, Ani,” Shmi sighed, wishing the two Jedi were there with them to use their Force and soothe her son as they had on Tatooine. “But we will see them soon, won’t we, Satine?”

“Yes, Didia thinks they can visit tomorrow or perhaps the day after,” Satine said, smoothing a finger over Anakin’s chubby fist. “That’s what she’s doing right now.”

“Didi’s nice,” Anakin mumbled as he looked down at Satine. “She talks pretty. Like ‘Tine.”

Satine let out a soft chuckle at that. “Thank you. I am very fond of Mando’a.”

“Do you feel better, Anakin?” Shmi asked, looking down at her son, pushing his hair back from his forehead and noting that while he seemed more calm, he was still clinging tightly to the bodice of her dress. “Is it still loud?”

Anakin looked up at Shmi and nodded, a miserable pout on his face. “Yes. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry, Ani,” Shmi murmured, pulling him back to her shoulder and starting to rock him back and forth, humming the first few bars of one of Anakin’s favorite lullabies from back home.
“Blackbird,
Once you were red
Oh, blackbird, blackbird
How long you bled!
‘Till nothing was left
But black!
Poor blackbird…”

She continued the song, looping the end into the beginning three more times before Anakin seemed to slip into a faint doze.

Shmi slowly stood up, careful not to jar her son too much as she carried him the few steps over to his small bed next to hers. She placed him down against the pillows, tucking his favorite robe around him before pulling the soft blanket over him.

“Is that a Tatooine song?” Satine asked as she waited by the doorway, her voice quiet. “It sounded lovely but so forlorn.”

“Slaves do not know many happy lullabies,” Shmi explained as they slipped out of her room and back across the hallway to Satine’s writing room. “But ‘Blackbird’ is his favorite. That and ‘Skybrothers’, but that’s not a lullaby. Perhaps you can teach me some Mandalorian songs.”

“I would like nothing better,” Satine said, reaching out to squeeze her hand. “My mother used to sing one to me and my sister called ‘Cin Vhetin’ but now that I think about it, I think it’s just as sad as ‘Blackbird’.”

Shmi laughed at that. “Perhaps there is something about watching over a sleeping child that makes a mother feel bittersweet. But tell me about this sister! Who is she and why has she not come to see you?”

“My little sister’s name is Bo-Katan,” Satine smiled, and it was clear from the way her face lit up that there was a great deal of love and affection within the duchess for her younger sister. “She is staying on Kalevala with my Uncle Tiber’s wife and our cousin Pre. She is particularly fond of them, especially after our parents’ deaths.”

“Why doesn’t she live with you?” Shmi asked, frowning, unsure if this was a Mandalorian cultural issue or something else. The world Satine came from often seemed complicated and baroque but when the reasoning and logic behind things were explained, Shmi could usually understand why something was done the way it was.

Most of the time. She still didn’t understand why there were so many forks and knives at dinner or which glass was for water and which was for wine.

Satine sighed and smoothed her hands down the lap of her dress. “She used to, before Culling Blade. We lived in our family’s home in Sundari. But there were too many attacks and Uncle Tiber thought it better to send her away. That was almost a year ago. I miss her so much.”

“Have you spoken to her since we arrived?” Shmi said, sensing there was something more there.
Satine looked away for a moment, her eyes sad. “She… she was… I think she was mad at me for not contacting her while I was on the run. We did not speak for very long. C-cousin Pre promised to speak to Bo-Kat on my behalf.”

“So why isn’t she coming to see you?” Shmi asked, sliding an arm around Satine and giving her a hug, pulling her close. “You are her sister and she should be here with you. Not on Kalelale or wherever it is, she’s at.”

Laughing weakly, Satine rubbed at the corner of her eye and rested her head on Shmi’s shoulder. “Cousin Pre thinks it might not be safe for her to travel.”

“Then send Obi-Wan and Ahsoka to pick her up,” Shmi suggested, leaning her head against Satine’s. “She should be here with you, not with Cousin Pre. How old is Bo-Katan?”

“Seven, no, eight,” Satine answered, dabbing at her eyes again. “You know, she was very fond of Obi-Wan when he came to Mandalore. I think she would like to see him again.”

“Everyone is fond of Obi-Wan,” Shmi chuckled, gesturing with a dramatic hand. “You, your sister, Anakin, Abarrane, and even Jaffe was sweet on him. Why if I were an oba’ii back in Mos Espa I could have had six offers of marriage for that boy!”

Satine gasped, smacking her on the arm. “I am not sweet on Obi-Wan! He is a Jedi. Mandalorians and Jedi don’t mix. For generations we were bitter enemies.”

“Ah, but you know what old Jaffe used to say?” Shmi teased, happy that the mood was lightening up. “There is nothing like a feud to set hearts and loins aflame.”

“Shmi!” Satine all but shrieked, turning red and pulling herself free. “Neither my heart, nor my loins, are aflame for Obi-Wan! Honestly, he’s too…”

“Handsome?” Shmi grinned as she watched Satine try to convince herself that she didn’t have a tiny crush on the dashing young Jedi.

“No!” Satine huffed, giving Shmi a good and proper Mandalorian scowl. “He’s too… calm and reasonable. He’s too… you know! He’s too much of a Jedi, with his braid and that ponytail and that horrible haircut.”

At the sight of confusion on Shmi’s face, Satine’s eyes lit up and she dashed to a datapad. “You’ve never seen him when he’s done up as a proper padawan, have you? Oh I must show you! It is too hilarious!”

Shmi took one look at image of a standard human male in a padawan learner’s robe and haircut and promptly burst out laughing.

“Oh that poor boy! Why would Master Ahsoka do something like that to him?”

“Presumably to keep people like you and Old Jaffe from marrying him off to the locals!”

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The Jedi Temple, three days after the explosion on Maerai Prime

Obi-Wan had been cleared by Master Shode to return to his room and he walked through the
hallways of the Jedi Temple with Master Plo Koon at his side. He was conscious of whispers around him and managed to return the gentle well-wishes from those masters and knights that they passed with a nod or a faint smile.

“Welcome back, Padawan Kenobi.”

“It’s good to see you again, young Kenobi.”

“We hope for the best for you and Knight Tano, Padawan Kenobi.”

It was a slow, funereal march back to his rooms and as much as Obi-Wan appreciated the well-meaning thoughts, he just wanted to go home. He wanted to throw himself into his bed and pretend that nothing had happened, that his master would be in the next room, snoring slightly, not trapped in that horrible blue-green tube he had last seen her in.

“Can she hear me?” Obi-Wan asked Healer Yagyu as he put a hand on the transparasteel bacta tank. There was no indication that his master heard or felt his presence as he watched her float in the healing fluid, her head tails partially obscuring her face.

“Reports vary,” Healer Yagyu explained as she walked over to Obi-Wan’s side. “Some patients have reported they could hear every word, but many do not.”

Obi-Wan frowned down at his hands, feeling a vast chasm opening up between him and his master, a chasm he might never be able to cross, no matter how deeply he meditated or how hard he tried to reach her through the Force. The words on the datapad ricocheted around his head. After three months, recovery is unlikely.

Perhaps sensing his despair, Healer Yagyu gently nudged Obi-Wan and whispered to him. “But if it were my master in there? I would talk to him and tell him that I was out here waiting for him and he had to get better, fast.”

That small ray of light and hope warmed the cold ball of ice in Obi-Wan’s gut a little and he gave Healer Yagyu a weak smile. “And no one would think you odd or strange?”

“No one down here would bat an eye,” Healer Yagyu promised. “But for now, I think Master Plo is here to take you back to your rooms.”

“Obi-Wan?” Plo Koon rumbled, placing a hand on his shoulder. “You are welcome to stay with me while we wait for Ahsoka’s recovery.”

“Thank you, Master Plo,” Obi-Wan replied as he glanced up at the Kel Dor master. “But I could not ask you to forgo the haven of your rooms for me.”

“It would be no trouble,” Plo Koon insisted as they stepped out of the turbolift that had carried them to the floor where Obi-Wan and Ahsoka lived. “You do not need to be alone, if you do not want it.”

Obi-Wan shook his head, exhaling slowly. “I just want to go home. To my own bed. Does that make sense? To some place that doesn’t smell like bacta or feel… foreign. Does that make sense?”

Plo Koon nodded, squeezing Obi-Wan’s shoulder before he let his hand drop. “I understand all too well, Obi-Wan.”

They were at the door of Obi-Wan’s apartment when a young voice called out. A young, bright lavender Twi’lek initiate was standing at the end of the hallway carrying a datapad.
She hurried down the hallway to Obi-Wan and Plo Koon. “Master Plo Koon? I have a message for you!” the initiate gasped as she cleared the last few feet between them and held out the datapad, panting. “It was sent from the Council and marked urgent.”

Plo Koon frowned at the datapad and took it from the initiate. “Thank you, young one. I appreciate your haste in this task.”

The initiate bowed to Plo Koon and then to Obi-Wan before she turned to dash back to the turbolift and the rest of her shift at the communication hub.

Obi-Wan frowned at the datapad, not liking it the instant the initiate had handed it over to Master Plo. “Is everything alright, Master? It must be very important for the Council to have sent a runner.”

“Hmm,” Plo Koon mused as he activated the pad and read the notice on the screen.

Petition Number 24681-33950

As it may please the Council, Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn does hereby request formal permission to assume guardianship for Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi, and responsibilities that entails, until such time as his current master, Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano recovers fully from her injuries and proves herself worthy of aformentioned mentorship or subcumbs to her injuries. In the even that Jedi Knight Tano expires, Master Jinn requests to make his temporary position permanent.

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone! Sorry I'm late but my cat wouldn't get off my lap. But I finally managed to break free (he totally ditched me to get dinner) and I am here to bring you a nice little flashback to before all of this mess got started!

. . . hmm? What was that? Something about Qui-Gon?

OH MY GOD! QUI-GON JINN! I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT OF THIS CHAPTER!

____. Sorry guys. I really tried to keep him out but apparently the man does not take "Stay the %$&# away from Obi-Wan for like ONE chapter, okay??" for an answer.

Please stay tuned for next week when $hit goes down in the Council room and Obi-Wan wonders what he's done to deserve all this suffering.

And as always, you can shriek at me at FireflyFish where I cannot always promise cute cat pictures but I can promise plenty of whinging about Qui-Gon.

Later my dears!
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi was released from the Halls of Healing when his grandmaster, Master Plo Koon, received a petition from the Jedi Council. Master Qui-Gon Jinn, with the assistance of Master Dooku, his former master, has formally requested the chance to train Obi-Wan Kenobi while his master recovers in a bacta tank. While there are some on the Council who see no problem with this, many others disagree strongly, not the least of whom is Plo Koon.

While the Council discusses the best path forward for everyone, Qui-Gon Jinn seeks out Obi-Wan Kenobi in the hopes of making the boy see the wisdom of his actions...

Obi-Wan woke as he went to bed, cold and alone.

The suite of rooms he shared with Ahsoka was still and silent. There was no warmth or life coming from the other side of the central living area, no cheerful “Good Morning!” to start his day with a smile.

When he woke up, there was no pot of hot water waiting for his tea, no Ahsoka sitting at the table scanning through one of her datapads, wordlessly pushing the honeypot toward her padawan as she nursed her own mug of tea, the two of them waiting to wake up.

There was just silence and the cool grey light of early morning, turning the shadows indigo and remote.

Obi-Wan quietly walked over to the sink and filled the kettle with water, setting it on the hot plate. He opened the cabinet overhead and pulled out a mug. Slowly, robotically, he went about his usual morning routine. A quick hop into the shower and then changing into his habit and boots before returning to the kitchen, where the kettle should have been just about to ready to let out a hiss of warning but wasn’t.

Letting out an exhausted sigh, Obi-Wan looked down at the on switch and realized he had forgotten to turn on the heating element.

“Well, that’s karking perfect.” Obi-Wan muttered and left the kettle on the plate, deciding to forgo his morning tea. He walked over to the small table tucked up against the window that overlooked the Senate and collapsed into his seat, frowning at the honeypot.

“Obi-Wan would like his tea with one small spoonful of honey.”

“How did you know that, Master?” Obi-Wan asked the honeypot, a garishly colored item Ahsoka had picked out for him during a field trip to Corellia because it was decorated in tropical fruits, most noticeably mangos. At the time he had been annoyed with Ahsoka when she first suggested buying it
and then proceeded to forget all about it, imagining she had too.

But a few months later, when Obi-Wan’s anxiety had been driving him up a wall over a readiness test for flying, one that in his mind had life-or-death consequences, Ahsoka handed him a wrapped package while they sat together at the little table.

“Master? What’s this?” Obi-Wan asked, confused and worried Ahsoka was trying to get out ahead of his impending failure and resulting mood.

“Open it,” Ahsoka smiled, her elbows resting on the table and her chin in her hands. “I’ve been waiting for the right moment to give it to you.”

The wrapping wasn’t anything special, nothing like the ceremonial wrapping for his first padawan outfit. That was wrapping he still had, kept in near pristine condition in his closet.

Small and lumpy, the mystery package didn’t seem to be anything particularly high-quality, unlike the endlessly useful kit bag she had given him when he started to make his first saber. The leather satchel was now stained with soder and grease, and burnt in some places, but he cherished it all the same because Ahsoka had taken the time to find a kit bag with two pouches, clearly intended for two sabers, and had carved on the side a decoration of a beaded padawan’s braid, making the bag just as distinct as its owner.

This present was wrapped up in brown flimsi and shaped, he realized, like a piece of crockery. Confused, Obi-Wan unwrapped it enough to reveal an obnoxious yellow.

He let out a gasp and burst out laughing. “I can’t believe it! You bought this hideous thing? How did you smuggle it past me?”

Ahsoka smiled up at Obi-Wan, her eyes twinkling. “A master has to keep some secrets from her padawan. Otherwise you’d get bored and find a new one.”

“As if that could ever happen, Master Ahsoka,” Obi-Wan smiled, running his fingers over the garishly painted item. “This thing is truly hideous. You really shouldn’t have.”

“How could I not?” Ahsoka replied, reaching over to ruffle her padawan’s hair much to his dismay. “It was practically made for you. In fact, I think I heard it calling to me through the Force. ‘Buy me! Buy me! A needlessly nervous padawan needs me in his life!’”

“Master!” Obi-Wan groaned, handing the honeypot back to Ahsoka. “I am not needlessly worried about my exam. It is very important that I get high enough marks to qualify for small fighter lessons. The test is very challenging and it will be doubly mortifying if a padawan of Plo Koon’s lineage fails it!”

Ahsoka said nothing, leaving the honeypot on the counter and giving Obi-Wan a mirthful look that made it clear his master’s faith in him was total.

Obi-Wan looked down at the bright yellow and green object, his fingers running over the waving, ruffled lip of the bowl. He hadn’t expected to see the item again that day, but every time he walked out of a class, Ahsoka was lurking somewhere in the hallway, holding up the honeypot and smiling.

He was so mortified and annoyed that he completely forgot about his test, unconsciously letting go of the tension and fear that would have normally wrapped its insidious tendrils around his heart and mind.

In the past, he had been a fretful wreck, getting points taken off major exams for being unable to
focus and control his emotions. But by the time the flight test actually rolled around that afternoon, Obi-Wan had almost forgotten about it, only remembering it as he was walking into the flight simulation bay.

The padawans around him were tense, vibrating with anxiety and worry in the Force. The vast room was filled with a cold, inky miasma that was easy to give into as he had so many times before, and Obi-Wan felt his good mood begin to curdle into fear.

Until he opened the cockpit of his usual simulator and found the honeypot waiting for him, wrapped in a blue ribbon and sitting atop a note in his master’s usual dynamic script.

*Fair skies and following winds, Padawan.*

*Good luck!*

*P.S. Master Plo says if you beat my score, I should take you out for noodles AND Chandrillan sponge cake!*

Obi-Wan had been so touched, and so relieved at the new idea he only had to achieve his own master’s score, rather than his own expectation that he would need to ace the entire test, that he almost did anyway, breezing through the challenges with the outrageous piece of porcelain tucked up against him.

He had received the highest marks in his class, and that night he and Ahsoka had gorged on fried noodles and all the Chandrillan sponge cake Ahsoka’s stipend could afford.

Now the honeypot sat on the table next to one of his master’s datapads, a silent witness to happier times, to younger days, when things weren’t quite so dire, when the biggest things Obi-Wan had had to worry about were marks on class tests and how to sleep in just five minutes later.

Where had all that time gone? When had he gone from a young boy trailing after his master like an akk puppy to sitting alone in their suite, pondering a lonely, grey future unspooling before him?

“How did you know?” Obi-Wan asked the empty room, hoping for answers and knowing he would get none. “How did you know how I liked my tea? How did you always know how to cheer me up? How did you know me better than I knew myself?”

There was no answer, only the distant chime of the hour, rolling through the Temple hallways like the faint rumblings of thunder. Obi-Wan picked up the datapad, intending to look at the time.

He frowned when the pad wouldn’t unlock without a code. It wouldn’t even display a chrono on the lock screen.

Just a single line of blue-white text with a blinking cursor.

**Password Required: _**

“Password? What would Master have that requires a password?” Obi-Wan murmured as he stood up, checking the time with the chrono in the kitchen. It was just past 0600. That left him plenty of time to meditate and get breakfast in the dining hall, assuming he could find the will to take in anything more robust than tea and toast.

Grabbing his robe, Obi-Wan hurried out the door, the mystery of his master’s datapad left behind for now.
The hallways of the Jedi Temple were just beginning to stir with life as the long, golden rays of sunlight started to pierce through the sleepy shadows of the hallways. Obi-Wan made his way through the Master and Padawan halls into the central area of the Temple, keeping his hood up, not wanting to deal with the stares and the pity, the quietly worded “I’m so sorry”s and the hopeful “May the Force be with you”s.

All Obi-Wan wanted to do was to get to the Halls of Healing without having to talk to anyone. He kept his head down and his eyes focused on the floor in front of him, trying to blend in with the shadows as he hurried through one expansive vaulted hallway to another.

Occasionally he would get caught behind a slow moving pair of masters sonorously debating some unimportant trifle of Jedi philosophy, and Obi-Wan would grit his teeth and wait for a moment to dart past them, struggling to keep his ire and anger behind his shields. It was a testament to his hard work that no one seemed to notice him as he made his way into the Grand Hall.

*Just a little further and you’ll be there,* Obi-Wan told himself as he stepped around a small pack of nocturnal younglings who were heading back to their rooms, yawning and grimacing at the sunlight.

He bowed apologetically to their crechemaster, turning on his heel to pick up the pace and stumbling into the tall, hard shoulder of a man.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Master!” Obi-Wan blurted, immediately backing away into a bow. “I do apologize. I wasn’t watching where I was going.”

Pulling his hood off to show proper respect Obi-Wan looked up and up into the towering and imposing might of Master Dooku, who gazed down at him with the still aura of a hawkbat observing its prey.

Obi-Wan’s mouth went dry. “Oh… Master Dooku! I… I am truly very sorry.”

Master Dooku arched one dark brow before speaking in a vow so low and stately, it sounded as if it had been dragged up from the depths of the Temple itself. “Padawan Kenobi, is it? Your master is Knight Ahsoka Tano, is it not?”

Nodding, Obi-Wan looked off the to side, rubbing the back of his neck. “Yes, Master. She is. I… I was on my way to meditate with her, sir, before I so rudely crashed into you… Master Dooku.”

“Has Knight Tano recovered from her injuries already?” Master Dooku asked in a way that seemed both impressed and dismissive at the same time.

Flushing to the roots of his hair, Obi-Wan shook his head. “No, Master, but it is our habit to meditate every morning and… well… I thought the location wasn’t as nearly as important as the act itself so… I… am going…” He glanced up at Master Dooku and quickly felt his nerve leave him at the Jedi master’s impassive face. “To the Hall… of Healers to meditate… there. Sir.”

Master Dooku said nothing to that, instead turning back to the man he had apparently been speaking with, Master Tiin. When he realized that Obi-Wan had not understood that to be a dismissal, the older Jedi closed his eyes and murmured a sonorous “That will be all, Padawan Kenobi.”

Relieved beyond words, but careful to keep that from the prying eyes of Masters Dooku and Tiin,
Obi-Wan bowed once again and walked past the masters, making sure to walk slow and solemnly until he was out of their line of sight before he picked up the pace, hoping to get to the room where his master was recuperating before the healers and trainees started their rounds.

“He is surprisingly polite,” Dooku commented to Tiin as they walked toward the grand entrance way. “An innate gift from the Force, it seems. A pity his master is so combat-focused.”

“A hazard of her upbringing and training,” Saese nodded. “Knight Tano was raised outside of the Temple on the Outer Rim by a master no one can find in the Archives.”

Dooku ran a hand over his beard, returning a respectful nod from a junior archivist hurrying past them off to their shift. “Most unusual.”

“That could be said for the pair as a whole,” Saese Tiin said, folding his arms over his chest. “As loathe as I am to break with tradition and speculate on a master’s methods, Knight Tano has given her padawan learner far too much leniency. He hasn’t even trimmed his hair since their return from the Outer Rim.”

“A minor cosmetic nuisance,” Dooku said as the two Jedi masters continued on their way. “I am surprised to see him out so early. Qui-Gon preferred his pillows and bedroll to the beauty of a sunrise.”

Saese Tiin shrugged. “Attachment is a powerful motivator.”

“Indeed it is, my friend.”

“The next order of business is petition number 24681-33950,” Master Ki-Adi-Mundi said, a faint edge to his voice and his presence in the Force smooth and featureless. To the clever observer, it was clear that Master Mundi did not want to discuss the petition but felt he had to give the document its due process.

Plo Koon waited for the reading of the petition, his fingers steepled together as traditional council procedures opened the petition.

When he had first received a copy of the document, Plo Koon had been confused, convinced that it was some kind of mistake. Well-intentioned, no doubt, but a mistake nonetheless. Why is Qui-Gon asking for this?

Apparently Qui-Gon’s experiences on Maerai Prime had convinced him that he needed to take care of Obi-Wan, to protect the boy until his master was returned to him, and that Plo Koon would be too busy to care of his grand-padawan while attending to Ahsoka.

Prior to the meeting, when Mace Windu had explained to Plo Koon in private that Qui-Gon was quite serious about his request, Mace had noted that it was the first thing Qui-Gon had spoken about upon his return to the Temple.
Plo Koon had not been furious, per se, but most definitely vexed.

There was simply no precedent for a Jedi Master to take over the training of another Jedi’s padawan learner if the padawan’s grandmaster was willing to take on the padawan.

And Plo Koon was more than willing.

“Good morning, Master,” Obi-Wan said, his voice quivering as he stepped into the room where his master was floating in the blue-green bacta tank, her eyes closed as if she were just taking a very strange nap. “I’m sorry I was late. I ran into Masters Dooku and Tiin on the way here.”

There was no response from Ahsoka, as Obi-Wan had expected. He walked over to the tank, placing his hand on the smooth, curved glass, hoping he would feel something, anything from the other side of his connection, his bond with his master.

Only silence greeted him.

Taking a deep breath, Obi-Wan nodded to himself and pushed over a nearby gurney, rolling it to a stop in front of Ahsoka’s tank. Slipping out of his boots, he hopped up onto the bed and folded his legs in a traditional meditation pose, relaxing into his seat as he counted his breathing.

“Healer Yagyu told me that you might be able to hear me,” Obi-Wan explained, slowly lowering the layers of shielding he had thrown over his mind to protect himself from the well-meaning pity of others. “She said that I should tell you to get better quickly. But that doesn’t really sound like me. And knowing you, you might stay in there longer just to tease me.”

Obi-Wan didn’t really believe Ahsoka would stay submerged in bacta a moment longer than she had to, but he also knew there was a contrary streak in her, no doubt left over from her quixotic time on the Outer Rim with Master Skywalker.

*never did get to ask her if Shmi and Anakin are related to Master Skywalker. I'll have to ask them how common their family name is.*

“So I thought I would come meditate with you, like we usually do when we’re in the Temple,” Obi-Wan explained, taking another deep breath and letting it go as he closed his eyes. “I don’t know about you, but I could use some mental peace and quiet right about now.”

Breathing steady and even, Obi-Wan slowly opened himself to the Force and sunk into a deep and quiet meditation.

After Master Mundi read off the body of Qui-Gon Jinn’s request, Mace Windu opened the floor to discussion with the other masters.

“I see no harm in granting this petition,” Master Eeth Koth said, relaxed in his chair as if he were discussing whether or not to update the climate control in one of the greenhouses. “As I have said
before, Master Plo Koon is a member of this Council and, as such, his time is more valuable than Master Jinn’s. If Qui-Gon wishes to supervise Padawan Kenobi while Knight Tano is in the Halls of Healing, I see no reason to refuse him.”

“That is not our tradition,” Master Yaddle answered before Plo Koon could speak, leaning on the arm of her chair. “Master Plo is the boy’s grandmaster and should care for him while Ahsoka is recovering. There is already a connection there.”

“I would be happy to take over Obi-Wan’s tutelage during Knight Tano’s convalescence,” Plo said, holding open his hands and trying to appear as neutral and calm as possible. It would not do to let his emotions get the better of him. It would not help Obi-Wan, nor would it help his own argument. “When I chose to stand in for Knight Tano in place of her master, I did not choose to be her mentor whenever it was convenient for me. This is a responsibility I will gladly accept.”

“But you accepted a seat on this Council as well,” Master Rancisis said, gesturing to the rest of the group. “And your dedication to Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi kept you away from your responsibilities here for nearly two days. It is a question of priorities, and if I may be frank, I do not think you can balance them equally. Padawan Kenobi requires extensive support and care during this difficult time and service on the Council requires long hours here in discussion and debate.”

“Padawan Kenobi is nearly eighteen,” Master Shaak Ti pointed out, her hands folded over her knee as she glanced over at Plo Koon with a supportive look on her face. “And the worst has passed for him. I doubt Kenobi will require round-the-clock supervision, and Master Plo already balances his teaching with his responsibilities to the Council. We all have responsibilities that take us away from time to time.”

“Do we know for certain that he will not require further supervision?” Master Evan Piell asked, the lower half of his face hidden behind his folded hands. “Has he been evaluated by a mind healer?”

Master Mundi consulted a datapad and shook his head. “It does not appear to be on his records.”

“For all we know, the boy is still in shock,” Master Koth said, not looking over at Plo Koon as he spoke. “He could turn out to be far more damaged by his experiences than we realize. Qui-Gon Jinn would have plenty of time to devote to his recovery.”

“All the more reason to keep him with Master Plo,” Master Sifo-Dyas spoke up from the far side of the circle, his gaze level and steady on Master Koth. “He’s familiar with Knight Tano’s style of training. There would be little disruption there.”

“We are discussing this in a vacuum, as if this situation does not involve two sentients with their own thoughts and feelings,” Master Saesee Tiin spoke up, shifting in his seat like the tides of the ocean. “Should we not consult with Master Jinn and Padawan Kenobi in this matter?”

“I second this idea,” Plo said, leaning forward a little. “Aside from Master Tiin, we cannot truly know Master Jinn’s intentions or Obi-Wan’s feelings on the matter until we ask them.”

“Agreed. Let’s bring them in,” Mace Windu nodded, pressing a button on the side of his chair to summon the day’s runner. “Knight Vaya, please find and inform both Master Jinn and Padawan Kenobi that their presences are requested in the Council room right away.”

Knight Vaya bowed at the hip and departed without another word.

Plo Koon watched as Mace turned to ask Yoda if the grandmaster had any opinion on the matter.

“Difficult to know, the correct path in this matter,” Yoda sighed, his eyes still closed. “Concerned for
Qui-Gon strode through the halls of the Jedi Temple, making his way to the Halls of Healing.

He had hoped to speak to Obi-Wan in his rooms, to discuss the petition he had submitted to the Council before Obi-Wan heard about it through official channels, but was surprised to discover that the boy was already gone. It was barely a quarter past 0700. When Qui-Gon had been a padawan, it had taken five alarms and the threat of Master Dooku’s withering gaze to get him out of bed.

_Obi-Wan is truly an exemplar of his generation, in spite of Knight Tano’s best attempts to turn him into whatever feral Jedi her master trained her to be._

Paying little attention to the people in his way, Qui-Gon stalked through the main doors of the Halls of Healing, ignoring the protests of the non-Jedi sentient sitting at the reception desk. He had little time to waste and it was far more important that he talk to Obi-Wan before the boy was blindsided by a Council interrogation.

“Master Jinn.” A smooth baritone froze Qui-Gon in his tracks halfway down the first hall, and he turned to see the equally tall and serene Master Healer Shode, followed by his padawan learner, Vokara Che. “How kind of you to return early for your follow-up examination. Have you checked in with Neraja at the main desk?”

Qui-Gon glanced back at the irritated Rodian who stood in the middle of the main hallway, his arms folded over his chest, one trumpeted finger tapping in annoyance. “Er… no, I did not. I am not here for myself. I have come seeking Obi-Wan, er, Padawan Kenobi.”

Master Shode inclined his head at the angry Rodian, a slow and stately gesture, that seemed to subtly rebuke Qui-Gon’s haste. “I am certain that Neraja can assist you in this, Master Jinn. Come along, Vokara. It is time for Grand Rounds.”

And with that, the master healer glided down the hallway, not a single backward glance as his blue Twi’lek padawan followed after him. She was not as calm and centered as her master and she glanced back at Qui-Gon, a disapproving frown on her face.

Momentarily defeated, Qui-Gon hurried back to the Rodian returning to his seat at the reception desk and inhaled, putting on his most charming smile. “Good morning. Neraja, was it?”

Neraja did not even glance up at Qui-Gon as he worked over his data terminal and assorted datapads. “Padawan Kenobi is meditating in room B2281. That’s a bacta room, so I’ll ask you to mind your manners in there, Master Jinn.”

Qui-Gon nodded in what he hoped was an appropriately contrite manner. “Yes, of course. I take it that room B2281 is the room Knight Tano is being kept in?”

“Yes,” Neraja frowned, pausing an alert before looking up at Qui-Gon, his eyes narrowed in a polite warning. “It’s her recovery room. It’s two floors up on the left.”

Bowing to the testy receptionist, Qui-Gon hurried on his way to the nearest turbo lift and room B2281.
Obi-Wan was clearly deep in the Force as Qui-Gon approached the room he was meditating in. As Qui-Gon walked down the quiet hallway, passing empty rooms and softly humming droids, it was hard not to notice how brightly the boy glowed in the Force, to notice how strong his presence was, even submerged within the flows of eternity.

Obi-Wan was a beacon that drew Qui-Gon with the promise of restoring and saving the future he had seen in his vision. Qui-Gon had no way of knowing how much damage Ahsoka Tano had done to the future the Force had shown him, but he would do everything in his power to see to it that it was preserved as best it could be.

The door was not locked, but having been startled out of his own heavy meditations before, Qui-Gon felt it was prudent to both knock and send a warning through the Force to Obi-Wan lest he startle him.

When there was no answer despite his careful efforts, Qui-Gon opened the door and stepped inside, his eyes immediately drawn to the large bacta tank that contained the body of Knight Tano, floating limp and seemingly lifeless in the blue-green fluid that was supposed to save her life.

"It's far too late for that. I doubt Knight Tano will ever come out of that coma."

Turning from the bacta tank to a gurney that had been rolled up next to it, Qui-Gon found Obi-Wan’s blue-grey eyes already on him, cold and steely. The padawan slipped off the bed and into his boots without a word as Qui-Gon approached him.

"Good morning, Obi-Wan," Qui-Gon began, hoping to start their conversation off in a friendly, casual manner. "I see you are an early riser."

"Good morning, Master Jinn," Obi-Wan replied with crisp formality. "My master, Ahsoka, has always invited me to her early morning meditations. It is a tradition she inherited from her grandmaster."

"I see," Qui-Gon nodded, folding his hands behind his back. "You must find the routine comforting during such a difficult time."

Obi-Wan said nothing about that, merely raising his chin an inch and inhaling sharply before speaking. "Is there something I can assist you with, Master Jinn? Or were you perhaps looking for Master Plo?"

Frowning, Qui-Gon shook his head, telling himself he had to be patient, that he had to be gentle with Obi-Wan. This new phase in his life, the transition looming before him, was going to be painful and any selfishness on Qui-Gon’s part would only prolong Obi-Wan’s suffering.

"Obi-Wan, I have made a petition to the Jedi Council," Qui-Gon began, making sure his voice was warm and kind. "I have requested the honor and privilege of taking over your training while Knight Tano is recovering. They're discussing the petition as we speak."

"What?" Obi-Wan asked, confusion and something Qui-Gon couldn’t define laced through his voice. "You… You asked the Council for permission to… to…"

"Train you, yes," Qui-Gon finished, smiling. This was good. Confusion he could work with. He
could explain his reasoning to Obi-Wan, make the boy see that this was best for everyone involved. The Force itself had ordained their pairing and he was positive there was still time to repair the damage done by Knight Tano. “I put in a special request. I know Master Plo Koon has adopted you into his lineage, but he’s far too busy with his Council work and teaching to give you the support you need in this difficult time. I have no such responsibilities.”

Obi-Wan gaped up at Qui-Gon, his eyes round and his mouth hanging open. It wasn’t the reaction Qui-Gon had hoped for, but it was better than outright defiance and he was confident that Obi-Wan was inherently too polite for that.

“Master Plo adopted us both,” Obi-Wan managed to get out, his gaze falling to the floor, as he combed a hand through his long and unruly hair. “He… he stood up for Master Skywalker at our binding ceremony.”

Nodding, Qui-Gon continued on. “Yes, Master Plo is a most caring and compassionate Jedi master. It is one of the reasons he is so popular in the Temple.”

Obi-Wan nodded, as if in a daze, before looking back up at Qui-Gon. “Yes. I… Did you really ask the Council to train me?”

“Yes, I did,” Qui-Gon said, gesturing to Knight Tano. “It’s clear your master’s recovery is going to take far longer than anyone realizes and there is no reason your learning should be held back by her injuries. And after the events on Maerai Prime, I feel you and I have a bond that will make your transition very easy.”

Qui-Gon was going to continue when he felt the Force around him freeze and then crack, as if he had stepped out onto ice that was too thin to carry his weight.

“After the events?” Obi-Wan gaped, looking over at Knight Tano and then back to Qui-Gon, his cheeks flush with emotions. “After the events?! We were on Maerai Prime to recover you! This is your fault my master is in here! If it weren’t for you, we would be on Ilum and Master Ahsoka would be fine!”

Disappointed to sense a sudden swell of anger in the Force, Qui-Gon took a breath and folded his arms over his chest. “I know you are searching for someone to blame in all of this, Obi-Wan, but this is the life of a Jedi. It can be cruel and random at times but that is why it is important to not let our attachments control us.”

“What?” Obi-Wan cried, holding open his hands. “What are you talking about? I am not searching for someone to blame. I know who is responsible for this! Our orders were to go to Maerai Prime and retrieve you from a dangerous situation. You were the one who refused to leave!”

Qui-Gon inhaled sharply, the muscles in his jaw clenching. He had hoped their conversation wouldn’t have devolved into shouting and recriminations but clearly he had underestimated Knight Tano’s influence on Obi-Wan. He was going to have to take the boy back to square one at this rate. “It was my right, as the senior Jedi, to dictate how to carry out my mission, as per the Jedi Code. Something I see Knight Tano neglected to teach you.”

“What does the Code have to do with this?” Obi-Wan retorted, sharp and heated. “We had orders from the Council!”

The pure vitriol and outrage washing out through the seams of Obi-Wan’s shielding stirred up the Living Force around them, turning it choppy and angry, like a sea during a storm. Qui-Gon found his own pulse rising to match the young boy’s, a smoldering fury that had never truly been banked,
catching fire within him. “I do not appreciate your tone, Padawan Kenobi. You are being rude and
disrespectful. Knight Tano may tolerate your childish tantrums, but I will not.”

“Well then, it’s a good thing you’re not my master!” Obi-Wan shot back, moving to stand between
Qui-Gon and the bacta tank that held Knight Tano, his arms folded over his chest and his brows
furrowed.

“I have it on good authority that the Council will agree to my petition,” Qui-Gon replied, pulling
himself up to his full height. “That’s why I sought you out, to explain the process and ensure that you
did not react in such an immature manner before the Council. Clearly, I was right to do so.”

“Before the Council?” Obi-Wan echoed, his confusion taking some momentary heat out of his anger.
“I will have to speak before the Council?”

“Yes,” Qui-Gon said, his voice low and measured as he chose his words carefully. “The Council
will no doubt wish to interview us both.”

“Good!” Obi-Wan retorted, his fury rekindled and his eyes bright. “I shall tell them the truth of what
happened on Maerai Prime, how you ignored their orders and your actions led to my master almost
dying trying to save your life! Let’s see how they handle your petition then.”

Qui-Gon grit his teeth and was going to growl out a response to Obi-Wan when the door chimed and
slid open.

Standing in the doorway was a young knight, glancing down at her datapad before looking up at
Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan. “Ah… Master Windu was right. Master Qui-Gon Jinn? Padawan Obi-Wan
Kenobi?”

“Yes?” Qui-Gon said, standing up and practically scowling down at the Pantoran knight. “What do
you want?”

“The Council requests your presences,” the knight replied respectfully but with an urgency in her
voice. “Immediately.”

“Fine,” Qui-Gon grit out, bowing his head to the messenger. “Please inform the Council we will be
there shortly.”

Obi-Wan watched the knight leave, his gut twisting and rolling with righteous fury.

He struggled to keep his emotions in check, to keep his anger locked down tightly. While he had lost
control of his sharp tongue during his argument with Master Jinn, he knew that kind of language and
snappish behavior wouldn’t serve him or his master before the Council.


He tried to picture a river flowing out to the sea, the crisp, cold waters carrying the red-hot coals and
inky poison of his anger out into swirling dark blue waters. Obi-Wan scrambled for his self-control,
telling himself it was alright if he popped off against Qui-Gon Jinn because there was no way the
Council was going to agree to let the meddling bastard train him without his permission.
And it will be a snowy day on Tatooine before I agree to that, Obi-Wan swore to himself.

Sensing he had the upper hand in the conversation, Obi-Wan decided it was best to be polite through the rest of this farce. “Shall we depart, Master Jinn? It would be rude of us to keep the Council waiting.”

“One moment, Padawan Kenobi,” Qui-Gon rumbled, his gaze on the floor and jaw set in a threatening frown. “What exactly do you plan on telling the Council?”

“The truth,” Obi-Wan replied, standing tall and proud, confident he was going to vanquish his foe once and for all. “That you disobeyed the Council, overruled my master’s objections and led us into the trap that nearly cost Master Ahsoka her life.”

“Ah, I see,” Qui-Gon nodded to himself, as if coming to a conclusion. “You will tell the Council the truth as you see it, then.”

“The truth is the truth,” Obi-Wan said, a sudden foreboding stealing over him. He glanced up at Qui-Gon, the feeling growing stronger.

“The truth depends entirely on your point of view, young Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon intoned, gesturing with one large hand toward Ahsoka in the tank. “The Council might agree with your assessment of the facts, or they might not. They might listen to my evaluation of the tragic accident that befell us in the processing plant and come to an entirely different conclusion all together. A conclusion that might reflect poorly on your master.”

“And what conclusion is that?” Obi-Wan asked, his temper close to fraying as he glowered at Qui-Gon. “We followed your orders to explore the premises and came across the bomb. Master Ahsoka pushed us out of the way and saved our lives. How would that reflect poorly on her?”

“It is the actions of her padawan, your actions, after the fact that will be of great interest to the Council,” Qui-Gon said, his voice low with the faintest hint of an unspoken roughness there, as if Obi-Wan had finally pushed his patience too far. “What will you tell them, when they ask how the three of us survived?”

Obi-Wan frowned, looking away, confusion and a creeping fear rising up from his gut. He could barely remember what had happened after the explosion: everything was lost in a haze of fire, smoke, and screaming. There were visions of twisted metal, of crumbling masonry and pain, so much pain that Obi-Wan thought he was going to die from it.

He was running, screaming his master’s name and then he caught something massive on instinct with the Force as it plummeted toward Ahsoka. A wall, a section of roof, he wasn’t sure what.

But it was heavy, too heavy.

Obi-Wan wasn’t strong enough to carry it, to lift it. He heard voices— a voice?— shouting at him to stop, to let it go, that Ahsoka was already gone.

No. NO! My master is alive! I am not leaving her!

Obi-Wan grit his teeth, anger, fear and determination blooming within him. He dug deep into his soul, desperately scraping every last bit of strength and power within him to hold up the part of the building that was going to crush his master, that was going to kill Ahsoka.

And it wasn’t enough.
No! Please! I can’t let her die! Please! Someone help me!

Perhaps it was his desperation, perhaps it was his anger, but something seemed to swell up and around Obi-Wan, something that burned everything away, something that flooded through his veins like pure power, like a fuel line set ablaze, and he knew he could not only hold up the building, but that he could push it away, could send it crumbling backwards into a pile of rubble far away from Ahsoka.

Obi-Wan hadn’t really thought of that awful moment until now and he wasn’t sure what he was going to say to the Council about it.

Had he done something wrong?

“I… I don’t know,” Obi-Wan murmured, looking down at his hands. “I don’t know how I did that. I just… I knew I had to save my master. I couldn’t let her die like that.”

Qui-Gon nodded as if he were simply listening to a child explain why they had stolen an extra sweet before dinner. He stroked his beard before speaking. “Yes, your attachment to her is quite strong. And it is that attachment to her that no doubt led you to channel the Dark side when you held up that section of the roof.”

Obi-Wan’s head whipped up. “No! I didn’t touch the Dark side! Why would you say that?”

Shaking his head slowly, Qui-Gon walked to the door, the unspoken implication that he was on his way to tell the Council just that. “I’m sorry, Obi-Wan, but I was there. I saw you, felt you sink into the Dark. Your fear for your master, your attachment to her, was so strong that you were willing to do anything to save her.”

“No!” Obi-Wan gasped, horrified. “I didn’t! You can’t tell them that!”

“Like you, Obi-Wan, I will tell them the truth,” Qui-Gon explained, holding his hands open as if there was nothing more he could do, as if this whole mess was Obi-Wan’s fault and he was blameless. “The truth as I see it. And I wonder, which of one us is the Council more apt to believe? You, a grieving padawan learner to an unorthodox master, or…”

Qui-Gon trailed off, meaning clear.

“But I didn’t touch the Dark side!” Obi-Wan protested, feeling a hysterical and impotent rage rise up within him that threatened either tears or unhinged laughter. “If you tell them that, they’ll… they’ll expel me!”

“Possibly,” Qui-Gon nodded, as if he had just thought of that. “And I can’t imagine they’ll look kindly upon Knight Tano either. It’s unfortunate, really. She had such faith in you. It’s a shame our mutual devotion to truth will punish the woman we owe our lives to.”

Obi-Wan swallowed hard and looked back at the bacta tank where his master was resting, blissfully unaware of the nightmare her padawan found himself in. He gazed up at Ahsoka, at the lacerations on her face, her montrals and lekku, at the crisscrossing injuries that had been neatly sewn up by the best healers in the Order, at the splints that were wrapped around one arm and leg.

Master… I don’t want to do this but I, I don’t see a way out. Obi-Wan bowed his head, working over every angle, trying desperately to find a way out that would not get him and his master expelled from the Order. Or even worse, locked away in a miserable prison somewhere for touching the Dark side.

Closing his eyes, Obi-Wan made his choice. I will do anything to protect you, Master.
Even this.

“Perhaps…” Obi-Wan began, gritting his teeth as he spat each word out, “I was… mistaken in my… recollections, Master Jinn.”

He noted with grim, bitter satisfaction that the Jedi master seemed pleased with his display of contrition.

“Perhaps you were, Padawan Kenobi. It was a chaotic and traumatic moment for both of us,” Qui-Gon intoned, bowing his head to him. “Come along, Obi-Wan. We have a meeting with the Council.”

Chapter End Notes

sighs

SO THAT HAPPENED... >___> I swear to the Force, Qui-Gon! Why must you ALWAYS be such an unrepentant bastard?? Why can't you just go off on a retreat, get some serious therapy and leave everyone else ALONE?

I know things seem bleak my darlings and I'm sure you're gathering your boxing gloves or steel-toed boots to give Qui-Gon his just desserts but if you can just hang on for another chapter, I promise things will be not so... relentlessly sucky. Stay strong my lovely guppies and good things will happen! They have to happen. Because even Qui-Gon has to sleep at some point and we'll shove the good things in while he's not paying attention!

On a housekeeping related note, Tano and Kenobi will be moving to a two week update schedule which means the next chapter will go up on March 25th instead of March 18th. If you want to know more about my decision you can find it HERE on my tumblr.

Thank you all for your impassioned comments and while I know this is a hard chapter to read it's a chapter we will all get through together. So take my hands my friends and let's ride this rollercoaster of suck just a little bit longer.
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn submitted a petition to the Jedi Council, seeking permission to train Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi while his master, Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano recovers from her injuries on the fractious planet of Maerai Prime. Brought before the Council, Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan must rely on a fragile agreement between the two of them to keep them, and Ahsoka, free from the Council's scrutiny.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Watching the Jedi Council work through Qui-Gon Jinn’s petition to train Obi-Wan Kenobi was like watching a starship crash in horrible slow motion and Mace Windu had to sit in the circle and watch it happen. Each step of the unfolding drama threw out shatterpoints that sprung up and died away just as quickly, frustrating Mace with his inability to process them and their meaning before another one appeared.

He could only imagine how Plo Koon felt about the situation before them.

The Council had elected to work on a few more issues before them while they waited for Master Jinn and Padawan Kenobi to report back for their interview. Mace had wanted them to move faster, to reject Qui-Gon’s petition and spare Obi-Wan the unnecessary trial of studying under a master he had little to no connection to. He saw absolutely no reason why any member of the Council would agree to Jinn’s request with not only defied centuries of Jedi tradition and practice but for such an inconsequential amount of time at that. Master Shode had already sent in a report that made it clear while Ahsoka Tano’s injuries were grave, with luck and faith in the Force, they were survivable.

Mace had every belief that Ahsoka would be returning to Obi-Wan’s side eventually, even if it took longer than her padawan would have liked.

The petition was ridiculous and smacked of Qui-Gon’s former master, Dooku. He was prone to overly formal phrasing and using his vast knowledge of Jedi lore to belabor many a point to the younger Jedi who found themselves on the receiving end of one of Dooku’s “lessons”. While Mace respected him as a fellow Jedi, Dooku held a notoriously lofty opinion of himself and his lineage and used his reputation as Master Yoda’s final padawan learner to have his way on more than one occasion.

It was one of the reasons why Dooku had not been invited back to sit on the Council once Jedi of Mace’s generation started to fill in the empty spots. The Council was supposed to be a circle of equals, where various different views and opinions could be discussed with respect and calm understanding.

It was very hard to be calm and understanding when Master Dooku chose to use his speaking time as an impromptu lesson on how little the Council truly knew about the Force.
That being said, it was clear that Dooku and Jinn had friends on the Council and they were more than willing to entertain Qui-Gon’s request to temporarily train Obi-Wan.

Once Master Stass Allie finished her report on Trade Federation’s take over of Acronae and Acromino on the Outer Rim, Knight Vaya left her spot by the door and stepped into the middle of the circle of masters. “Master Qui-Gon Jinn and Padawan Obi-Wan Kenobi are here are you requested, Masters.”

With a curt bow, the young woman stepped back out of the circle and awaited further instructions.

“I move we conduct the interviews and finish this,” Master Rancisis said, the tip of his tail tapping lightly against the side of his chair. “All those in favor?”

There was a majority of “Aye”s and Ki-Adi-Mundi at Mace’s side called Qui-Gon in first.

Mace exchanged a look with Plo Koon, who watched from behind the protective covering of his mask, seemingly at peace with the situation before him. He couldn’t know what was going on in the Kel Dor master’s mind but from all outward appearances, he was willing to give Qui-Gon’s petition a decent hearing.

Ki-Adi-Mundi took over administrative duties for Qui-Gon’s interview, Mace feeling it was better to recuse himself from the position given his staunch support of Plo Koon both as a Jedi Master and as the administrative head of the Jedi Order. He listened as Qui-Gon regaled the Council with the story of his mission to Maerai Prime, of how courageously Knight Tano sacrificed her life to save his and Padawan Kenobi’s, of how Padawan Kenobi, with Qui-Gon’s help, managed to save Ahsoka’s life.

Qui-Gon told the Council about how distraught Obi-Wan had been in the aftermath, how Ahsoka’s injury had devastated the boy and how Qui-Gon had had to hold him together on the long, agonizing trip back to Coruscant on the emergency medical transport.

“I swore to myself that I would do everything in my power to help Obi-Wan recover from the horrible tragedy that had befallen him,” Qui-Gon finished, holding his hands open as he glanced over at Masters Saesee Tinn and Sifo-Dyas. “And that is why I am before you today, to ask for the chance to help that poor young man outside. A chance I foolishly rejected once before and now seek to make right.”

Mace frowned at Yoda, who met his eye and then looked away, pursing his lips.

“A chance you rejected?” Master Shaak Ti echoed, leaning forward in her chair. “As I recall, your rejection was quite brutal and in public no less. What has made you change your mind?”

“I was speaking from a place of anger and shame,” Qui-Gon said, explaining to the Council that his earlier failures with a prior padawan who had abandoned the Jedi Order had colored his view of Obi-Wan’s initial request.

“After some deep soul searching and meditation, I realized that the fault had not been Obi-Wan’s, that it had never been Obi-Wan’s,” Qui-Gon said with a small head shake. “The problem had been mine. I hadn’t been listening to what the Living Force was trying to tell me.”

“And what if the boy does not wish to study with you?” Master Yaddle asked, her head canted to the side. “What will you do?”
Mace watched as Qui-Gon turned to smile at Master Yaddle, an easy, confident expression. “While I do not think that will be a problem, Master Yaddle, I will, of course, bow to Obi-Wan and the Council’s wishes on the matter. I only seek to be of assistance during Obi-Wan’s time of need.”

Yaddle sat back into her seat, her arms folded over her chest, done with her questions, and it seemed that everyone else was done with their questioning as well.

Qui-Gon stood in the middle of the circle, his hands folded across his abdomen, waiting.

Mace glanced around the room and spoke. “This isn’t the first time you’ve offered to… assist Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi, is it?”

Qui-Gon seemed startled by Mace’s question. “No, it’s not. But I have always been happy to serve at the pleasure of the Council. If in the past I have… volunteered to provide assistance to Knight Tano and O… Padawan Kenobi it has only been out of a desire to serve the Order and the Force.”

“I don’t suppose you can recall the last time you’ve offered to run out to the Outer Rim and rescue a master-padawan pairing, can you, Master Jinn?” Mace asked, his eyes narrowed as he watched for the slightest sign of a shatterpoint.

Qui-Gon inhaled and pulled him up a little taller, as if he could intimidate Mace. “I have been very busy recently, Honored Masters. There has been an increase in calls for Jedi peacekeepers in many systems. I cannot recall with perfectly clarity every mission I have undertaken.”

“No should you have to,” Master Eeth Koth said, the faintest edge in his voice subtly warning Mace about his line of questioning. “Your service record is impeccable. The Chancellor speaks highly of your successes.”

Mace sat back in his chair, nodding more to himself than anyone else. “Yes, I suppose he does.”

“If there are no more questions?” Ki-Adi-Mundi said, seeking a natural breaking off point. “I move to-”

“I have a question,” Plo Koon murmured, leaning forward in his chair. “Master Jinn, do you think Knight Tano will survive her injuries?”

Qui-Gon opened his mouth for a moment before closing it and thinking through his answer. Mace could sense Yoda at his side, leaning forward as they all waited for his answer.

“As I am not a healer, I will defer to Master Shode’s belief that she will recover,” Qui-Gon finally said, nodding to Plo Koon.

“That is not what I asked you,” Plo Koon replied, his voice cool and polite. “Do you think Ahsoka will recover?”

Mace watched Qui-Gon as he parsed his response, ignoring Ki-Adi-Mundi’s wary look at him and then Plo Koon. He watched as Qui-Gon came to a decision and raise his head, a fine latticework of shatterpoints flickering into life and then fading back into Qui-Gon’s form, more like an afterimage of the tangled knots of fractures.

“No. I do not think Knight Tano will recover,” Qui-Gon finally said, head held high. “But for Obi-Wan’s sake, I hope the Force proves me wrong.”

Plo Koon sat back in his seat and nodded to Ki-Adi-Mundi, who dismissed Qui-Gon with a relieved sigh and then called for Padawan Kenobi to enter.
Obi-Wan’s interview was short and terse: the young man answered questions with perfunctory politeness, his gaze rarely leaving the floor. He would look at the master who addressed a question to him but then his eyes would drift back to the floor in front of his boots.

“Do you know why you have been summoned, Padawan Kenobi?” Eeth Koth asked.

Padawan Kenobi nodded, “Master Jinn wishes to train me whilst my master is recovering from her injuries.”

Oppo Rancisis leaned forward, holding out a hand. “And what are your thoughts on this?”

“I bow to the wisdom of the Council,” Obi-Wan replied, glancing back at the master.

“You do not have an opinion on this?” Shaak Ti asked, disbelieving. She glanced at Plo Koon and Mace, her expression shocked.

Obi-Wan frowned for a minute, clearly thinking through what to say before he spoke. “I… I am a padawan learner, Master Ti. I… I do not wish to be a burden.”

“Burden, you are not, Obi-Wan,” Yoda spoke up, tapping his gimmer stick on the ground. “Want what is best for you, we do.”

Lifting his head and looking Master Yoda in the eye, Obi-Wan nodded and murmured softly, almost like he was trying to say more with his eyes than he could with his actual words. “Thank you, Master Yoda. I… appreciate it.”

“Tell us about your mission to Maerai Prime,” Master Saesee Tiin said, cutting in.

Obi-Wan seemed to deflate and told the Council what happened on the fractious planet, his story almost identical to Qui-Gon’s save a few details about Ahsoka’s actions.

“How did you save Knight Tano?” Master Syfo-Dyas asked, his hands folded over his lap. “Qui-Gon said you… caught the ceiling?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes. For… for a few seconds, just long enough for Master Jinn to.. rescue me. Honestly, I am not quite sure how I did it, Masters.”

“Clearly the Force was with you, Padawan Kenobi,” Master Allie said, her voice gentle. “Thank you for telling us. I think that’s all we need.”

“Do you have anything else to tell us, Obi-Wan?” Mace asked, sensing Plo Koon’s uneasiness as it magnified his own. This was not the charming young man they remembered from only a week ago. This Obi-Wan was quiet and pale, all the spark and vibrancy of his spirit gone. He said the right things and knew the right behaviors but he was nothing like Ahsoka Tano’s padawan learner.

Something was wrong and Mace wanted to know what it was.

Obi-Wan shook his head, his gaze returning to the floor, respectful and humble. “No, Master Windu.”

“Are you certain?” Mace tried again, unable to do anything if Obi-Wan would not open the door for him or the Council to address whatever was wrong. “You will not be punished for your honesty.”

Mutely, Obi-Wan shook his head again, taking a deep breath and standing up straight, his chin raised and his eyes focused on the windows behind them. “I have nothing more to say, Honored Masters.”
“Obi-Wan…” Plo Koon murmured, his voice gentle and kind. “This petition is not a foregone conclusion. If you object to Master Jinn’s instruction, no one on this Council would find fault with you.”

“I do not wish to burden you, Master Plo,” Obi-Wan replied, a short, almost panicked look at Plo Koon before turning his gaze back to the wall. “I will do as the Council instructs.”

The Council took some time to deliberate in private, letting the assembled masters stand up and discuss their positions and opinions in small groups.

Eeth Koth remained adamant that they grant the petition, exclaiming they had wasted enough time over it as it was. Not nearly as strident, but equally convinced of the expediency of Qui-Gon’s offer, was Ki-Adi-Mundi who argued that a temporary guardianship was well within the purview of the Council’s role.

“It is not a permanent placement,” Ki-Adi-Mundi said to Mace, who listened to his friend. “Besides, it will do them both good. Once Knight Tano recovers, Qui-Gon will return Kenobi to her and master and padawan will be reunited. It will be a valuable lesson for Qui-Gon about attachment.”

It was something Mace heard from other masters who were inclined to agree to the petition.

“Kenobi is very attached to his master and Jinn to Kenobi,” Oppo Rancisis said, flicking the tip of his tail back and forth. “Kenobi will survive this temporary trial and Jinn will learn a great deal from letting go of him. It is the best solution for both parties.”

Stass Allie agreed, explaining to Mace and Shaak Ti that while she understood Master Jinn’s rejection of Obi-Wan had been brutal, “This could teach them both an important lesson. Obi-Wan will see that growth and change is possible. He can learn to forgive Qui-Gon. And Qui-Gon will learn not to make snap judgements. Perhaps this will help him find a new padawan, afterwards. Since I have no doubt Knight Tano will recover.”

“The Council as a whole seems to think this is a temporary situation,” Mace explained to Yoda, who was sitting in the window sill, gazing out over Coruscant as the other masters talked amongst themselves. “And it will do Obi-Wan no harm to spend some time with Qui-Gon. Several seem inclined to grant the petition, thinking it will teach Qui-Gon to let go of his attachment to Obi-Wan.”

Yoda let out a dry rasp of a chuckle. “My old padawan’s words, those are. Spoke to me, he did, about this. Spoke to the others as well.”

Mace resisted the urge to roll his eyes.

“Is there nothing we can do?” Plo Koon asked, walked over to the window where Mace and Yoda were talking. “Yaddle has tallied the votes and, with Master Yoda and I recusing ourselves, they are five to four in favor of Qui-Gon.”

“Not unless Obi-Wan says something,” Mace shook his head, folding his arms over his chest. “I don’t like it any more than you do, Plo.”

“Obi-Wan does not want this,” Plo Koon insisted, his voice low and soft, his Force presence strong and firm like a rocky cliff-side baked in the afternoon sun. “I do not know why he is going along
with this but I know he does not want this.”

“Agreed,” Yoda nodded, tapping his stick on the ground. “Tied, our hands are. For now, anyway.”

“I want to know what really happened on Maerai Prime,” Mace said, nodding to Shaak Ti, who let them know the decision was made and the Council was preparing to announce it to the parties involved. “We don’t have the full story.”

“Agreed,” Plo Koon nodded as he and Mace escorted Yoda back to his seat. “If you will watch over Obi-Wan in my absence, I will go tomorrow and see what I can uncover. There is more going on here than we realize, I feel.”

“Careful,” Yoda murmured, clambering into his seat. “Unsteady, the Force is. Proceed with caution, you must.”

“Of course,” Plo Koon agreed, glancing over at Mace and nodding. “And it is only a temporary assignment.”

“Force willing, Knight Tano will be out of the bacta in no time,” Shaak Ti agreed as the Council settled back into their seats. “Although I would like to go on record and say that I do not agree that this is the best course of action and I intend to keep an eye on both Master Jinn and Padawan Kenobi.”

“I see no issue with that,” Master Koth said, bowing his head to Shaak Ti’s pronouncement. “This is a trying time for both of them.”

“I’m sure Qui-Gon would appreciate the extra help,” Master Tiin added. “Does anyone here know jar’kai?”

There was a soft chuckle that passed around the circle before Master Sifo-Dyas spoke up, looking over at Plo Koon and then Mace.

“This is a difficult but necessary trial, my friends,” Sifo-Dyas said, his dark eyes bright and intense. “Force willing, both parties will learn from this stressful time and be the better for it.”

Mace nodded. “I hope for Obi-Wan’s sake that you’re right, Master Dyas.”
bite his tongue, to keep the truth of what happened on Maerai Prime to himself, but that did not mean he was going to meekly submit.

Qui-Gon Jinn was not Obi-Wan Kenobi’s Jedi master.

*It’s only until Master recovers. Three months at most,* Obi-Wan told himself as he braced himself in the middle of the Circle, glancing over at Qui-Gon just once to make sure he understood that. You will not intimidate me.

Eyebrows twitching upward for a moment at the ice in his gaze, Qui-Gon nodded and turned his attention back to Master Ki-Adi-Mundi. Obi-Wan focused his attention on the head of the Council, where Mace Windu was sitting, looking as if he did not like what was happening any more than Obi-Wan. He was sitting forward, his arms resting on his knees as he watched Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon await the news of the Council’s decision, no doubt trying to figure out the truth behind Obi-Wan’s apparent obedience.

Obi-Wan pursed his lips a little and decided it would probably be better if he were a bit less defiant and bowed his head a bit. He hadn’t really had time to work over Qui-Gon’s claims that he had touched the Dark side and come up with a proper rebuttal. He could barely remember what happened, knowing it would take several deep meditation sessions to ferret out of what exactly he had done.

But time for reflection was not a luxury given to padawan learners charged with touching the Dark, especially when accused by a Jedi master of renown like Qui-Gon.

No, Obi-Wan needed to buy himself and his master some time and if playing “master and padawan” with Qui-Gon was what it took, it was a sacrifice he was willing to make.

“Master Jinn, Padawan Kenobi,” Master Ki-Adi-Mundi began, keying a few commands into his datapad. “The Council has come to a decision on Master Jinn’s petition. Master Jinn, do you have anything else you wish to share with the Council before I continue?”

Qui-Gon shook his head. “No, Honored Masters, I do not.”

“Padawan Kenobi, do you have anything you’d like to tell us?” Master Mundi asked, looking at Obi-Wan with an almost concerned expression on his face.

Inhaling through his nose, Obi-Wan mirrored Qui-Gon. “No, Master Mundi, I do not.”

“Very well,” Master Mundi said, glancing at the other members of the Council. “Then in the case of petition 24681-33950, the Council finds in favor of granting Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn temporary guardianship of Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi for the duration of his master convalescence. When Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano is recovered from her injuries, or at a time the Council sees fit, the guardianship shall be terminated.”

Obi-Wan said nothing, merely bowed his head and put another layer of shielding over his emotions, imaging the entire construct freezing over, a smooth impenetrable fortress of sea ice. Whatever it was that Qui-Gon wanted out of him, Obi-Wan would not give him. You are not my master.

“Thank you,” Qui-Gon said, bowing low at the hip. “I am most honored to have been given this important task. I shall make the necessary arrangements immediately.”

“Arrangements?” Master Allie asked from Obi-Wan’s side of the room. “What arrangements need to be made?”
“This is a temporary assignment, Qui-Gon,” Master Tiin said, shifting in his seat, canting his head.

The mood of the Council room seemed to shift around them and Obi-Wan felt an immature thrill flicker in his gut at Qui-Gon’s misstep. He told himself the emotion was unbecoming of a Jedi and something Ahsoka wouldn’t approve of, which finally managed to dim the feeling, if not kill it outright.

Qui-Gon was quick on his feet and bowed again, folding his arms into the sleeves of his robe as he cut off whatever plan he had in mind before it could make him look bad in front of the Council. “Yes, of course, Honored Masters. I had only thought of keeping Padawan Kenobi close by in the event of a post-traumatic episode, is all.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Plo Koon said, his voice firm, brooking no argument. “Master Shode has advised against any further changes to Padawan Kenobi’s environment.”

Shaak Ti spoke up, her beautiful lilt just as strong. “We will provide you Padawan Kenobi’s schedule after you are dismissed but as I understand it, you are late for your Advanced Linguistics class, are you not, Obi-Wan?”

Obi-Wan stepped forward and turned towards Master Ti, bowing respectfully to. “Yes, Master. I am. Do I have permission to leave?”

“Yes, Padawan Kenobi,” Master Windu said from the head of the Circle, his eyes never leaving Qui-Gon’s face. “And I will see you tomorrow for our usual breakfast.”

Glancing back at Master Windu and pausing, Obi-Wan’s mind whirled for a moment, trying to remember when he had a breakfast meeting with the head of the Order when something flashed through his mind.

“Master? Why do you still have a weekly meeting with Master Windu after all this time?” Obi-Wan asked, lazily collapsing onto the sofa of their living space and pulling a blanket around his shoulders. The heater in their unit was on the fritz and Coruscant was going through a cold spell. “You’ve been back for almost four years now. Does he still think you’re not a real Jedi?”

“Sometimes, it’s just nice to have a person to talk to that has a different opinion of things,” Ahsoka explained with a smile, reaching over to ruffle Obi-Wan’s hair. “Besides, Master Windu is a font of knowledge on how the Order and the Republic work together. Some day, that information is going to be useful to us.”

“I doubt it,” Obi-Wan yawned, smiling up at his master in thanks as she placed a mug of tea in his hands. “But I am just a padawan learner, so what do I know?”

“More than you think, little one,” Ahsoka smiled as she walked to the door. “Tell your friends I said hello.”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan waved as he inhaled the wonderful smell of hot, honeyed tea on a cold morning.

Seeing an opening and taking it, Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes, Master Windu, of course. I will be in the Main Hall at 0800 hours.”

Master Windu nodded and gestured with his hand, clearly a dismissal and Obi-Wan bowed once again to him and the Council before turning on his heel marching out of the room, fully intent on getting as far from Qui-Gon Jinn as humanly possible.
Obi-Wan had every intention of going to his Advanced Linguistics class, truly he did, and yet his feet took him to the turbo lift that led to one of the side hangar bays were he found himself taking out a citybike in his master’s name from a sign out panel that had a broken holo-lens and didn’t scan for fingerprints.

After a cursory examination of the bike, Obi-Wan was off, flying sedately out of the hangar bay and Jedi airspace before he revved the bike’s engine and let it rip. It wasn’t quite the same thing as a small starfighter simulation or even driving one of the two seater speeders from the main hangar bay but the roar of the cold wind blocked out everything and froze over the anger that burned in his gut and tried to spread out to his limbs.

The cold of the atmosphere was soothing in a way, giving him a distraction from just how angry he was and how unfair everything felt. It wasn’t enough that Qui-Gon Jinn’s refusal to bow to the Council’s command pulled him and his master away from a peaceful trip to Ilum but now he wanted to train Obi-Wan as well?

And he had the gall to make it seem like he was doing the Jedi Order some kind of huge favor? Freeing up Master Plo Koon’s time to make decisions on whether or not they should rewire the electricity on sublevel 4, section 21?

If only I hadn’t… no! I didn’t! I didn’t touch the Dark Side! I can’t think like that. I can’t let him in. Obi-Wan’s dark mood turned inward as he played over his memories of that moment again and again in his head, looking for the truth in the fragments of images and sensations in his mind. Everything was so new and disjointed and while Obi-Wan understood that the further away he got from that experience the more faulty his memory would become, he hadn’t really had the time to process it.

I wanted to talk to Master about it. I.. I felt something there. Something outside of me, stronger than me. But I don’t have that luxury now.

Before Obi-Wan realized where he was, the Garden district loomed before him and he realized his intended destination, glass and durasteel gleaming in the morning sunlight like a prism.

The Coruscanti townhome belonging to the House of Kryze.

By the time Obi-Wan had pulled his bike up to the front of the building and gave it to a valet droid, the front door was already open, Shmi standing there and struggling to keep Anakin from tumbling down the steps into Obi-Wan’s arms.

“Obi-Wan! Obi! Wan!” Anakin exclaimed, drawing out Obi-Wan’s name like a triumphant cheer. “You’re here! Mama, he’s here!”

Shmi nodded in agreement, smiling down at Anakin. “Yes, Ani. I can see that. Hello, Obi-Wan. It is so good to see you again.”

Loping up the steps two at a time, Obi-Wan was more than happy to wrap Anakin up in a tight hug as Shmi ushered them both back into the house. It felt right to be back with Shmi and Anakin, to be able to sense Satine’s familiar presence in the back of the house and quickly moving towards them.

It pained him to note Ahsoka’s absence but it was easy to pretend his master was just elsewhere, especially when Anakin blazed so brightly at his side.
“Obi-Wan! Obi, Obi!” Anakin cheered, happy to be reunited with his best friend. “I missed you, Obi!”

“And I missed you too, Anakin,” Obi-Wan sighed, happily and selfishly giving into a need for comfort by hugging Anakin tight. “Stars, you are bright! How could I have forgotten how bright you are?”

Anakin giggled, smiling up at Obi-Wan, a radiant ball of light and affection.

“And how are you, Shmi?” Obi-Wan asked, taking one of Shmi’s hands and giving her a kiss on both cheeks. “How are you handling Coruscant?”

“It’s been amazing and maddening,” Shmi said, guiding them all to a small parlor away from the front of the building and the busy street there. “There are so many wonderful things to see and do and learn but at the same time, it’s so hard to find time to one’s self and it is never quiet. Not like Tatooine.”

“I’ve heard that a lot from people who grew up off-world,” Obi-Wan nodded, more than happy to listen to Shmi talk about anything for hours if it took his mind off of what awaited him back at home in the Temple. They sat down on a sofa in a elegantly decorated room, with a surprisingly comfortable geometric sofa and cascades of fragrant white blossoms spilling out of a bowl over a table near a window.

Once they sat down, Anakin scrambled back over to his mother and curled up next to her, but he held onto the edge of Obi-Wan’s cloak, unwilling to let him go that far.

“How is Anakin handling it?” Obi-Wan asked, unwilling to give Shmi the chance to ask after his master.

“He adores flying in the speeder,” Shmi laughed, ruffling Anakin’s soft curls as he turned his face into her side, overcome with shyness. “It is his favorite thing to do. That and talking to droids.”

Anakin pursed his lips together in a rudimentary attempt to whistle and laughed when all that came out was a wet “pbbbst” sound. Shmi smiled down at him, rubbing his arm as she turned back to Obi-Wan. “As you can see, he’s not quite mastered it. But tell me about you. What brings you to us so early in the day and where is Master Ahsoka?”

“Soka…” Anakin frowned, his face scrunched up as he turned into Shmi’s side, as if he could hide from the world that way.

Obi-Wan glanced down at Anakin, his head canted to the side, wondering if the boy could sense his feelings on the subject of his master. “I… Master is… perhaps we should have this conversation later? When Anakin is resting?”

“Soka hurts,” Anakin mumbled around his thumb. “Obi hurts too.”

“I don’t… I mean, I do but, you shouldn’t…” Obi-Wan looked up at Shmi, confused at Anakin’s words. “I’m sorry. I… ehm… You remember when Master Ahsoka were going to leave to go to Ilum?”

Shmi nodded, gently moving Anakin so that they were both more comfortable and allowing him a chance to pull more of Obi-Wan’s robe around him. “Yes, to find new… crystals? To make new sabers for Ahsoka.”

“Yes, exactly,” Obi-Wan continued, easily sliding out of his robe and handing it over to Anakin,
who proceeded to bundle himself up in it like an Akan rabbit in a nest. “We were halfway there when the Council called and asked us to pick up another Jedi who was in danger.”

Shmi’s eyes widened at this as she covered her mouth. “But Ahsoka had no sabers!”

“Well she had one of mine and we were only supposed to pick the Jedi up, not fight our way through an army to get to him,” Obi-Wan tried to explain and felt like he was failing. He was about to continue when he felt a presence in the Force: the warmth of sunlight off of polished durasteel and the faintest scent of lilacs as the door across the room opened up.

“Obi-Wan!” Satine gasped, utterly delighted and worried at the same time. “What are you doing here? Do we have an appointment I forgot? Shmi, what have I missed? Where is Master Ahsoka? Didia, would you please bring us something Mandalorian from the kitchen? They feed Obi-Wan inedible vegetables in that Temple of his.”

Rising to bow to the duchess, Obi-Wan found himself wrapped up in a tight hug, nearly buried in layers of ornate fabric and decorations that chimed pleasantly. He closed his eyes and let the familiar presences, the sensations of his friends and adopted family surround him as Satine let him go and pulled up a wing chair to sit next to him.

“I was just about to… explain Master Ahsoka’s absence to Shmi and Anakin,” Obi-Wan told Satine. He told her about their intended destination of Ilum and how they were sent to Maerai Prime instead. “We had been rescued by another Jedi in a similar manner before, from pirates that time-- the Ohnakas actually -- and we couldn’t say no.”

“Of course not.” Satine smiled, patting Obi-Wan’s hand on the arm of the sofa. “You two are terribly self-sacrificing you know.”

“This from the girl who tried to sell herself to bounty hunters to free me and my son,” Shmi interjected with a chuckle. “But go on, Obi-Wan. What happened on Maerai Prime?”

Obi-Wan told the story as simply and as economically as he could, keeping an eye on Anakin as he talked. He noticed the boy seemed to react to events before he explained them, almost as if Anakin knew what had happened. When it came time to tell Satine and Shmi about the explosion, Anakin curled himself up into Obi-Wan’s robe and let out a plaintive, “Stop! Hurts!”

“Ani?” Shmi murmured, running a soothing hand down the curve of Anakin’s spine as he tried to hide from the pain of that moment. “Maybe I should take him back to his room.”

“No, I don’t think that will help.” Shaking his head, Obi-Wan decided to finish his story quickly, telling them that Ahsoka was almost killed in the explosion and that she was back on the Temple in a bacta tank in a coma.

“By the ancestors!” Satine gasped, grabbing Obi-Wan’s hand and squeezing it. “I am so sorry, Obi-Wan. Is there anything we can do?”

Shaking his head, Obi-Wan gave Satine an exhausted look. “Just let me stay here, for today? The Council has assigned me a new temporary master, whom I do not like, and I thought I might… ehm…”

“Seek unofficial asylum?” Satine asked with knowing look. “For as long as you like, Obi-Wan. You are a dear friend to both House Kryze and to Mandalore. You are always welcome in my home.”

“When did this bombing take place?” Shmi asked, having successfully recovered Anakin from a few layers of robe to pull him up into her lap, where he could rest against her but still be a part of the
conversation. “Three days ago?”

“I think so, maybe four?” Obi-Wan said, a little confused and momentarily distracted at Didia walking in with a few bunny droids bearing silver platters of food, drink and a pot of tea that smelled of fragrant flowers. “Why do you ask?”

“Thank you, Didia,” Shmi smiled at the aide, who departed with a silent bow. “I ask because Anakin had… well… he had a terrible nightmare. He was inconsolable.”

“It was a night terror,” Satine offered, filling a tray with fruits and a small pastry and handing it to Shmi, who held it within Anakin’s reach as he messily fed himself, the boy distracted from their talk of his nightmare. “We couldn’t get him to calm down at all. He woke up the whole house and the neighbors.”

“He did?” Obi-Wan looked aghast, turning from Shmi to Satine and back. “What happened? What did he say? Did he mention Master Ahsoka specifically?”

“Nothing like that,” Shmi murmured, watching her son carefully pick out the fruit he wanted to eat, a concerned love in her eyes. “He was crying and screaming and just begging us to make it stop. He said he was in pain but there was nothing we could see that was the cause. I was so scared for him. I thought it was… what did Master Ahsoka call it? All of the people in Coruscant? That it was too much for him?”

Satine reached out to squeeze Shmi’s knee as she took up the thread of the conversation. “We hugged him and told him that he was safe, that no one was going to hurt him and nothing seemed to work. He kept saying something, over and over again, I’m not sure I remember what it was. A name, I think? Anyway, Anakin got worse and worse and then he did… something and broke all the windows in his room.”

Obi-Wan looked down at Anakin, who peered up at him, his blue eyes round and watchful. “And then what happened?”

“We don’t know,” Shmi said, stroking her son’s hair as Obi-Wan helpfully took the plate of food from her and set it back on the low table in front of them. “He looked up at the wall, murmured your name and then he seemed to collapse, as if he had exhausted himself.”

“Has he had any episodes like that since?” Obi-Wan asked, suddenly very concerned that Anakin was being left without an older, more experienced Force sensitive to protect him. “Has he broken anything else when he’s lost control of his temper?”

“No, no,” Satine reassured him, squeezing Obi-Wan’s hand again. “He’s been an angel. Now eat something and tell us when Master Ahsoka will be out of the bacta and all about this temporary master you don’t like.”

Obi-Wan spent almost the entire day at Satine’s home, hiding from his responsibilities. He turned off his com unit and pretended to be nothing more than a young man, almost eighteen years old in a month or so, visiting dearly loved and missed family.

While Satine worked through her correspondence and Shmi made sense of the household budget and her Mandalorian lessons, Obi-Wan let Anakin chase him around the various rooms in the house.
Then there was a very intense game of “How High” followed by a round of hide-and-go-seek, which Anakin won with flying colors. It helped that he was small and could fit himself under low couches that Obi-Wan did not want to crawl under to check.

Didia announced lunch shortly after noon and everyone was invited to the lush courtyard in the middle of the house. Satine told Anakin stories from Mandalorian history, tweaked in a way that toned down most of the violence. Obi-Wan listened quietly, happy to be with friends who found no fault with him.

After Shmi put Anakin down for a nap, Satine, Shmi and Obi-Wan retired to a pergola covered in vines that would bloom with vibrant orange flowers during the summer. They talked quietly about Obi-Wan situation’s back at the Temple.

“How long do they think Master Ahsoka will be in the bacta?” Satine asked, her eyes intensely focused on Obi-Wan. “Will you have to stay with this Jinn person until she recovers fully or just until she’s out of the bacta?”

“I think until she’s out of the bacta,” Obi-Wan explained, typing in a few suggested exercises Shmi could do with Anakin to help him control his powers. “If I make it that long. Master Jinn and I are not on the best of terms.”

“And yet he asked to train you?” Shmi replied, confused. “That makes no sense. He wants something from you. You just don’t know what it is.”

“Do you have to stay in the Temple?” Satine mused as she folded a dead leaf into a new shape, her eyes far away. “Perhaps you could stay here with us while Master Ahsoka recovers. Every morning you could go to the Temple for your lessons and then come back here for dinner and rest.”

“A Jedi’s place is in the Jedi Temple,” Obi-Wan replied, reaching out to squeeze Satine’s hand. “But I thank you for the offer. I will stay there, as long as Master Ahsoka recovers.”

“And if she doesn’t?” Shmi watched Obi-Wan with observant, dark eyes. “What will you do then?”

Obi-Wan frowned and picked an invisible speck of dust from the creamy folds of his tunic. “I… I haven’t thought that far ahead.”

“Perhaps you should,” was all Shmi said in response, and they dropped the matter for the afternoon.

Obi-Wan was getting ready to leave, to head back to the Temple and everything that waited for him there when Anakin came into the room, still wrapped up in Obi-Wan’s robe.

“Are you here to give that back or are you adding it to your collection?” Obi-Wan teased gently, kneeling before Anakin and resettling the fabric on his small shoulders. “It looks good on you, Little Dragon.”

Anakin looked up at Obi-Wan for a long minute, a thousand different thoughts and feelings passing across his expressive face before he settled on what he wanted to say. “I’m sorry, Obi-Wan.”

Puzzled, Obi-Wan sat down on the floor, folding his legs under him. “Why are you sorry? You’ve done nothing wrong.”
Looking away, his brows furrowed, Anakin said nothing. His aura was tinged with emotion, but not roiling like back on Tatooine, or how Obi-Wan imagined it would have been during his night terror. He was calm, mostly, and Obi-Wan felt the boy’s spirit reaching out to him, like soothing grey clouds promising a rainstorm on a hot summer day.


Confused, but not one to look a gift hug in the mouth, Obi-Wan pulled Anakin in close and wrapped him up in a warm embrace. “Are you okay now, Anakin? Is that what you’re trying to tell me? Now that you know where Master Ahsoka is?”

There was another long silence from Anakin and then a firm push against Obi-Wan’s mental shielding. He closed his eyes and accepted the image Anakin was trying to convey to him and was surprised when the boy retreated back into himself unprompted once their connection had been opened. The last time he had touched minds with Anakin, the boy had been in no hurry to return to himself, happy to bask in Obi-Wan’s mindscape like he belonged there.

But that was a thought for another time.

The image Anakin sent to Obi-Wan was of a brilliant night sky, full of glittering stars and warm sand beneath him, and it occurred to him that it was probably the night sky of Tatooine and perhaps the Dune Sea Shmi had spoken of once. Regardless, Obi-Wan was there, staring up at the stars, Anakin sitting in his lap and pointing out constellations overhead.

As they sat there, watching the endless dance of the stars overhead, Anakin spoke softly. “Ahsoka is okay. She told me so. So don’t worry, Obi-friend. She says you worry too much and don’t worry.”

Back in the townhouse, Obi-Wan opened his eyes and gazed down at Anakin, wide-eyed and confused. “Ahsoka… told you she was alright? You spoke to my master? But that’s… that’s impossible!”

Anakin frowned, clearly agitated with his inability to fully explain his knowledge to Obi-Wan. He curled his small hands into fists and let out a frustrated wail, which drew Shmi’s attention from where she was talking to Satine. “Ani? What is it?”

“It’s my fault, Shmi,” Obi-Wan standing up and picking the boy up and hugging him briefly before giving him to his mother. Anakin sniffled loudly and turned his face into Shmi’s shoulder, trying not to cry.

Feeling horrible, Obi-Wan reached over to Anakin and smoothed a hand through his soft blond hair, gently placing another protective layer of shielding over the boy’s presence as he sent Anakin a thought. I am sorry, Little Dragon. Thank you for telling me.

Anakin looked back at Obi-Wan from the safe haven of his mother’s embrace and snuffled. Come back soon, Obi-friend.

I will. Obi-Wan nodded and made his goodbyes to Satine and Shmi before walking down the stairs to his awaiting citybike.

“Oh! Obi-Wan!” Satine called out to him from the doorway, holding the door open as Shmi and Anakin watched him depart. “What about your robe?”

“It’s Anakin’s now,” Obi-Wan smiled. “He can keep it.”
And with that, Obi-Wan climbed onto his citybike and flew back to the Temple, once again using the cold and shivering ride to ice over and numb his banked anger.

By the time Obi-Wan returned his citybike to the hanger and swung by a nocturnal commissary for a steamed meat bun, it was almost time for him to go to bed. He considered activating his com and seeing how many angry messages were waiting for him from Qui-Gon but he resisted the urge, tucking it back into his pocket. He headed towards his room, munching on his steamed bun and trying to think of nothing in particular, to stay cold and empty of thoughts and emotions.

It was easy enough to do, to focus on his steps and his breathing until he found himself back in the safe haven of his room, two messages waiting for him on the door com panel. Mercifully one was from Luminara and Quinlan and the other was from the hangar bay automatic system that thanked Master Ahsoka for returning her citybike in the same manner in which she took it out.

Obi-Wan smiled at that and wondered how many citybikes the Jedi Temple went through if such a message was a standard part of the rental process.

He was about to get changed for bed when he saw the honeypot sitting against Ahsoka’s password-protected datapad. Walking over to the table, Obi-Wan picked up the small ceramic object, running his fingers against the vibrant glaze, Anakin’s words rising into his mind.

“Ahsoka is okay. She told me so.”

Obi-Wan frowned, all his Jedi training and common sense telling him that Anakin’s words were just the innocent, well-meaning attempt of a child to comfort him. There was no way that Ahsoka could have contacted Anakin, not when she was so deep in her coma that not even Obi-Wan could reach her.

It wasn’t possible.

Ahsoka’s connection to Anakin wasn’t that strong.

Obi-Wan’s connection to Ahsoka wasn’t that strong and he was her padawan learner.

There was no way Anakin had really communicated with his master.

And yet Anakin’s words continued to ring in Obi-Wan’s mind as he turned around and headed back into the dark shadows of the Temple at night.

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The front desk was staffed by a charming Nautolian by the name of Thresh who was more than happy to let Obi-Wan in to see his master after visiting hours. Apparently Nurse Solva and Healer Yagyu had told the entire Hall of Healers about him, as Thresh explained it, leading him through the halls Obi-Wan had already memorized.

“You take as long as you need,” Thresh said, keying open the door. “I won’t do another round for an
hour so you two have plenty of time together.”

With a polite thank you and an encouraging smile, Thresh was gone, leaving Obi-Wan alone with his master.

Ahsoka looked much the same as she had that morning, so long ago. Her arm and leg was still in a split and her wounds still looked horrid and painful. If there was any improvement, Obi-Wan couldn’t pick it out, although Thresh assured Obi-Wan that Ahsoka was doing well and Master Shode had high hopes for her recovery.

Walking up to the transparisteel tank that held Ahsoka, Obi-Wan found his shielding fading away, his mind and spirit reaching out longingly for his master, desperately wanting to find her on the other end of the golden link that bound them together.

“I’m here, Master,” Obi-Wan whispered, resting his forehead and both hands against the tank, as if his nearness could somehow summon his master from wherever her spirit had fled to. “I’m right here, Master Ahsoka. Please… I need you to come back to me. I need you… I can’t… I can’t do this alone! Qui-Gon says I touched the Dark side and I don’t think I did but I don’t know how I saved you! Maybe I did! Maybe I did touch the Dark and now I’m a… a… I don’t know! A Sith?”

The bacta tank hummed on, a few bubbles from Ahsoka’s respirator floating to the top of the tank. Other than that, the room was silent.

Letting out a soft groan, Obi-Wan turned his head, feeling the cool smooth surface against his hot cheek, ashamed to feel another wave of tears trying to break through his control. “I don’t want to be a Sith. I don’t want to work with Qui-Gon. I just want to be a Jedi and your padawan. I didn’t want to go to Maerai and I didn’t want to stay there while he played detective. It’s Qui-Gon’s fault you’re in there, Master. It’s his fault and now I can’t tell anyone because he thinks I’ve fallen or something just as bad.”

Opening himself up as much as he could, Obi-Wan strained within the Force, reaching out for Ahsoka, trying to push through the darkness where she should be. He strained against his limits, gritting his teeth as he tried to stretch out even an centimeter further, picturing his hand groping in dark water as he blindly searched for Ahsoka’s.

*Please, Master! I need you! You have to fight, Master. If you can reach Anakin Skywalker why can’t you reach me? Please, Master Ahsoka, I need more than faith in the Force.*

But in the end, faith was all Obi-Wan was left with as he retreated back into himself, rebuilding his shields one meticulous layer of protection at a time. Exhausted, miserable, and ready to collapse, Obi-Wan pulled out the honeypot from his pocket, looking down at the small item before he placed it on the top of monitor stand that continually read of Ahsoka’s vital signs. Keying a note about the item into his master’s medical records, Obi-Wan let out a weary sigh and headed towards the door.

“Good night, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured, waving listlessly. “I shall see you tomorrow morning, then.”

Obi-Wan was almost to the door when he heard the faintest whisper pass through his mind.

A voice he knew better than his own.

*Obi-Wan...*
PLO Koon is on the case everybody! Our favorite number 1 space clone-dad is going full CSI on this Maerai Prime bull$%^&! In the meantime, Mace Windu is watching you Qui-Gon. And I would much rather piss him off than the OG Space Mom Shaak Ti. Pick your battles carefully, Qui-Gon.

I want to apologize for the lateness of the chapter. As I said on tumblr, I gave Lily Conrad NOT TIME AT ALL to edit this chapter and she still managed to rip through it at a whirlwind pace. If this chapter isn't up to the usual snuff, the fault is all mine and not hers. This is not a reflection of Lily's ability to correctly use a semi-colon in a sentence or dangle a participle because not only does she know what a participle is, she knows how to fix it as well.

While I am still in the notes box it's time to update the Robes Obi-Wan Has Lost tally to Three confirmed lost robes. Although I don't know if we can really include robes donated to an adorable toddler Anakin Skywalker as "lost".

Thank you so much for all your comments and your patience through a very dark, painful and stressful time for our favorite ginger space peanut. I know it's been a long, hard road, and we're not there yet but I can promise that if you squint really hard, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. So hold on tight and we'll be there before you know it!

As always you can shrieking incoherently with me at tumblr at FireflyFish
Mission to Maerai Prime

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and her Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi are sent to the planet of Maerai Prime to rescue Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, who is deep in an investigation into corruption on the planet that may lead back to a familiar foe...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Maerai Prime, fifteen days ago…

There wasn’t a great deal to recommend Maerai Prime to the casual traveller or citizen of the Galactic Republic. It was a cold, rocky planet with a salt water ocean and a thin band along the equator of the planet that marked the “habitable” zone. This belt of civilization had been developed over and over again, not unlike the surface of Coruscant or Denon and the silvery grey stripe across the planet glittered like fabric embroidered with light. The rest of the planet was covered in either monumental glaciers or jagged mountains, thrusting up through the crust of the planet like the spines on the back of a ridgeback, menacing and unfriendly.

“Why can’t we ever go to nice planets full of green trees and lakes?” Obi-Wan groaned, turning to look at Ahsoka with an annoyed roll of his eyes. “Naboo was nice. Can we go back to Naboo?”

Ahsoka quirked a smile at Obi-Wan, thinking, Oh we’ll be there soon enough, Padawan mine. You, me, and a Sith Lord named Maul.

“Ahsoka is peaceful,” Ahsoka said instead, running through final diagnostics before their descent into the planet’s atmosphere. “And Jedi don’t get sent to peaceful planets.”

“Why not?” Obi-Wan asked, the faintest whine in his voice illustrating that as much as he had grown over the past year, her little padawan wasn’t quite ready to become Knight Kenobi. Not yet, anyway, but soon, far sooner than he realized. “Surely there’s some kind of… skullduggery going on there that we could investigate. Or Alderaan! I hear it’s lovely in the summer.”


“It’s the perfect place for it,” Obi-Wan insisted, starting to get a feel for the story he was spinning in his mind. “A beautiful facade masks a corrupt… uhm… what do you they have on Naboo? A monarchy?”

Ahsoka nodded with an amused smile. “Yes. An elected monarchy.”

“Fantastic!” Obi-Wan continued. “Election fraud is a perfectly valid reason for us to be called away from this… ominously pointy planet. Shall we go?”

Shaking her head, Ahsoka stood up, patting Obi-Wan on the shoulder as she walked out of the
cockpit. “We’ll bring peace to Naboo later. You’ve got the stick, Padawan. I’m going to go over the intel from the Council and meditate. Let me know when we’ve landed.”

Groaning, Obi-Wan took a breath and brought his emotions back under control, exhaling his irritation as he moved into the pilot’s seat. “Yes, Master. I shall try not to crash into one of these vertiginous mountains.”

“Thank you for that,” Ahsoka smiled as she walked back into the rest of their cruiser, fully intent on coming to a better understanding of what was happening on Maerai Prime and why Qui-Gon Jinn hadn’t been able to handle it.

According to the data packet that had been transmitted to their ship the minute they jumped out of hyperspace and into the Kiriaal system, Maerai Prime was a planet rich in rare minerals and its economy was largely dependant on the mining and smelting of them. The government was nominally democratic their last three elections has been contested by the populist party and the Republic had sent out a Jedi diplomat in the hopes of negotiating a lasting peace between the government and the people.

That was where Qui-Gon Jinn entered the picture.

According to Master Rancisis, Qui-Gon had touched down and immediately started investigating the situation: there were claims from the government that the protestors had moved from simple marches and non-violent demonstrations to outright terrorism and guerrilla warfare, while the anti-government minority parties accused the government of civil rights abuses and a refusal to compromise.

As Ahsoka scrolled through page after page of reports from the Republic, from reconciliation committees statements to legal observers’ testimonies, one thing became clear. Maerai Prime was a heartbeat away from a full-on civil war and neither side was willing to step back from the brink, especially after the government security forces opened fire into a crowd of rowdy and taunting protestors.

“Master?” Obi-Wan’s voice on the intercom interrupted Ahsoka’s reading. “They’re requesting an audible confirmation of your identity.”

Letting out a heavy sigh, Ahsoka left to join Obi-Wan in the cockpit. “I’m on my way.”

Ahsoka explained the situation to Obi-Wan as their ship sat on a landing pad, waiting for permission to disembark. Apparently the Jedi Council hadn’t notified of the government of Maerai Prime that they were sending Ahsoka and Obi-Wan.

After covering the broad details of the situation, Ahsoka sat back and waited to see what her padawan made of the whole mess.

“When was the last time the protesters and the government sat down and talked to each other?” Obi-Wan asked, frowning at the end of his padawan braid as he twisted it back and forth in his fingers.

“Has anyone confirmed that the security forces were given orders to shoot?”

“Not that I’ve read but I haven’t read the full file,” Ahsoka admitted. “What is your take on it, Obi-Wan?”
Frowning, Ahsoka watched her padawan work through the problem, folding his arms over his chest and his gaze focused on the floor. It was strangely heartening to see more and more of Master Obi-Wan’s mannerisms, to see him slowly growing into the man she remembered and admired. True, he was still young, almost eighteen, but that couldn’t hide the growing familiarity of his face and thanks to their extended mission on the Outer Rim, the familiar fall of honey-wheat hair.

She wondered what Anakin would have made of her Padawan Obi-Wan Kenobi and she hoped he would have liked him.

*It’s a little strange how much he reminds me of you, Skyguy. He’s so quick to defend his friends and family. I think he was more disappointed to leave you, Shmi, and Satine than I was.*

Obi-Wan shifted in his seat, nodding to himself as he dropped his padawan braid from his fingers. “I think they need to be given a reason to trust each other again. Or some kind of proof they can trust each other. There’s so much propaganda on both sides that it makes it almost impossible to talk to each other. Like that negotiation we went to on Raxxus. Has anyone tried to bring the leaders off-planet to negotiate in a peaceful setting?”

Ahsoka blinked at that, surprised at the connection and wondering why she hadn’t thought of it before. “I don’t know. That’s a good question, Obi-Wan. I’m sure Qui-Gon Jinn will know and if not we’ll bring that up with the Council when we get back.”

“It seems like something the Republic ought to try before letting the planet descend into civil war,” Obi-Wan huffed on behalf of the innocent civilians below. “And speaking of the old gundark, where is he? Doesn’t he know we’re coming?”

“Master Rancisis swore he was going to notify Master Jinn as soon as he ended our conversation,” Ahsoka said, turning back to the instrument panel in front of her, looking to see if they had been given permission to disembark. “I’m kind of surprised he’s not here to meet us. The Senate report made it sound like his life was in immediate danger.”

Frowning at that, Obi-Wan seemed to collect himself and sit up properly, as if he had just reminded himself to be respectful of the man who had brutally humiliated him all those years ago. Ahsoka watched as he sought out and found the most polite thing he could say. “I hope he’s alright. He is a prodigiously talented diplomat, I’ve heard.”

Ahsoka reached over to squeeze one of Obi-Wan’s hands and smiled. “I agree. And that was very mature of you, Obi-Wan. You sounded just like a Jedi Knight I knew when I was younger.”

“Speaking of that!” Obi-Wan said, his eyes lighting up. “I have a question for you that has been bothering me since Naboo. How common is the Skywalker name? Is my grandmaster related to--”

“A Jedi Cruiser Fortuitous, this is the Maerai Prime Planetary Authority,” a firm voice erupted over the com. “You are authorized to disembark and will be met by Captain Avanbae.”

“Understood,” Ahsoka relayed back and stood up. “That’s a good question for another time, Padawan. C’mon, let’s go retrieve Qui-Gon Jinn before someone shoots him.”

Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and let out a deep sigh. “Yes, Master.”

Ahsoka let Obi-Wan head out of the ship before her, feeling as if she had just managed to dodge a hit by a Separatist cannon at point-blank range. But it made one thing clear to her.

She was going to have to tell Obi-Wan the truth about Anakin Skywalker a lot sooner than she wanted to.
Captain Avanbae was a towering man with a dark complexion and a voice so low Ahsoka almost felt it before she heard it. There was a small squad of security forces behind him, all dressed in matching maroon and gold and carrying stun rifles. It was a truly impressive greeting party and if Ahsoka had been younger it might have given her pause but now it just reminded her of the countless formal introductions she and Obi-Wan had had to stand through.

“Welcome to Maerai Prime, Honored Masters,” Captain Avanbae said, bowing with both hands covering his heart and a surprisingly warm smile on his face. “I apologize for the wait but it seems there was a breakdown of communication between Home Security and the Jedi Council.”

“There’s no need,” Ahsoka replied with her own smile. “This is all very last minute and I’m sure the urgency of the matter disrupted the usual niceties.”

“If you and your padawan learner will follow me, I will take you to Master Jinn’s suite,” Captain Avanbae gestured back to a speeder that was waiting at the door leading into the space port. “He’s staying in the Prime Minister’s mansion and insisted he was too busy to come collect you himself.”

Ahsoka blinked for a moment before covering her shock with another pleasant smile. “So he’s still working on his investigation?”

I thought we were just supposed to be picking Master Jinn up? Obi-Wan thought, glancing up at Ahsoka before returning his gaze to the ground in front of him, trying to show respect.

That makes two of us, Ahsoka responded with the mental image of an annoyed headshake.

“Yes, he is. Master Jinn has been most dedicated in his pursuit of a diplomatic solution to our current troubles,” Captain Avanbae said as he held open a door and let Ahsoka and then Obi-Wan step into the backseat of the bright orange speeder. Taking a seat opposite them, he instructed the driver to take off, the rest of his security forces saluting as they departed.

As the speeder hurried through the city, Ahsoka noted that Maerai Prime’s capital city, Maeraestra, was largely vertical, with countless skyways and monorail lines high overhead. Where Sundari of Mandalore was a domed city filled with glass and durasteel cubes, Maeraestra was a city of glistening spires held together by a transparasteel circulatory system.

“How long has Master Jinn been here?” Ahsoka asked after the silence went on a little too long.

“Almost six weeks now,” Avanbae answered, one arm on the seat next to him. “It’s only been in the last week or so that threats against his life have been made. He insisted he was fine and that we let his work continue but the law dictates that we inform the Judiciary and ultimately the Galactic Senate if there are threats made against Republic visitors.”

Ahsoka glanced over at Obi-Wan, whose eyebrow pulsed upright for just an instant before the mask of well-behaved padawan learner returned, telling Ahsoka all she needed to know about his opinion on the matter.

“He had no idea we were coming, did he?” Ahsoka sighed, turning her attention back to Captain
He shook his head. “No. Not an inkling.”

Reminding herself that rolling her eyes was unbecoming of a Jedi Knight, Ahsoka did allow herself one put-out sigh. Knowing that there was nothing else she could do until they met up with Qui-Gon, Ahsoka resolved to learn as much about the situation on Maerai Prime in the meanwhile. “So Captain Avanbae, what can you tell me about the conflict on your homeworld?”

Captain Avanbae’s genial warmth turned to weariness. “I’m not sure what I can tell you that you probably haven’t already heard.”

“You could tell us your story,” Obi-Wan piped up, his brows furrowed in compassionate worry.

“My padawan and I would love the opinion of the average citizen,” Ahsoka said, trying to encourage the captain to talk. “Sometimes that gets lost when… the higher-ups do their bargaining.”

The corner of Avanbae’s mouth pulled into a smile as he glanced from Ahsoka to Obi-Wan, nodding. “Alright. But it’s not very exciting.”

Captain Avanbae told his story to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan, explaining that he came from a poor section of the capital called the Smog Farm, born to two loving and hard-working parents. Joining the Planetary Security Forces was the best way for him to pull himself and by extension his family out of that life.

His parents lived with him now and they were proud of his accomplishments.

“My little brother, he spent most of his time wandering from one job to another,” Avanbae explained, pointing to the distant grey-brown haze in the distance, where softly billowing clouds drifted towards the sky. “He still lives in the Farm, running from one crisis to another, never quite making it out of there.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Ahsoka murmured. “You must worry about him.”

“I didn’t worry too much until he fell in with the Oppressed,” the Captain explained, a pained look on his face. “That’s what they call themselves, the people from the Farms and the Bedrock. They’re little people, not the kind of folks the Prime Minister or the Legislature worry about except when election time comes around.”

“What is the Bedrock?” Obi-Wan asked, head tilted to the side.

“The Bedrock are the people who live on the edges of mountains or at the base of the cities,” Avanbae said, pointing out the other side of the speeder to the hazy cobalt peaks of mountains. “Most of them work in the mines or the dangerous jobs in the smelting plants or refineries. They’re nasty and dirty jobs but they’re the only ones available, so they’ve fought hard for years to keep them. The bosses and the politicians want to bring in droids. They think they’re safer and cleaner, but the Bedrock won’t let them.”

“Why not?” Ahsoka asked.

“They’re scared the droids will take their jobs away.”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan nodded in understanding.

“What brought it to a head?” Ahsoka inquired, glancing at Obi-Wan, who was watching Captain
“I don’t really know,” the Captain shrugged. “I suppose that will be for the history books to tell us in a hundred years. It’s the same story we’ve heard from Acromino and Lahareh. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. There were some disputes with the Trade Federation that didn’t go our way, the owners instituted higher production quotas with less workers on the floor, and—”


“The very same, Master Jedi,” Captain Avanbae said, puzzled. “Why? Is there something wrong?”

Ahsoka frowned, realizing that her reaction would make absolutely no sense to anyone involved and would just make her look crazy. She took a breath and made a note to start looking into the activities of the Trade Federation now rather than later.

I didn’t think I would have to worry about them so soon! Is this my fault? Or did it really take Sidious his whole life to pull off his con?

“Master?” Obi-Wan asked, his voice soft and respectful but worried.

“I’m sorry,” Ahsoka said, waving her hand. “I encountered the Trade Federation when I was younger and I have… unpleasant memories of them.”

“I can understand why,” Captain Avanbae sighed, folding his arms over his broad chest. “They nearly bankrupted the entire Kiraal system. I was little at the time, but my parents told me that everyone pulled together, worked extra hours, took cuts in pay, and sacrificed to meet the orders. And that’s when the droids showed up.”

“To replace the exhausted workers,” Obi-Wan said, not even bothering to pretend it was a guess. “Because they were cheaper and easy to replace.”

“That was the start of it, I suppose,” the Captain sighed as their speeder pulled up to the speeder bay that was a part of the Prime Minister’s complex. “And it only got worse from there. But that’s a story for another time. I’m sure Master Jinn can fill you in one the rest.”

“Of course,” Ahsoka nodded as she waited for Obi-Wan to step out of the speeder so that she could follow him. “I would appreciate it if you could give me a bit more information on the Trade Federation’s involvement with your planet. If you could send it to me at the Temple after we recover Master Jinn, I would be in your debt.”

“Master Jedi, if you can convince Master Jinn to leave Maerai without antagonizing the Prime Minister any further, I will be in your debt,” Captain Avanbae chuckled, stepping out of the speeder and bowing to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan as a brilliantly shining protocol droid waited for them at the end of a long maroon carpet.

The interior of the Prime Minister’s complex was as inviting and plush as the city was imposing and sharp. The walls were covered with rich golden synthsilks from Naboo and the curtains were sound and blast dampening velvet from Corellia. Ornate parquet floors were covered by thick hand loomed rugs from Chandrilla and every so often there were vases full of blooming flowers that gave the
whole building the pleasant smell of a spring garden.

As the protocol droid babbled on ahead of them, Ahsoka glanced over at Obi-Wan, who was a little slower than usual, taking full stock of the scenery. “Is something wrong?”

Obi-Wan jumped, her words startling him out of his thoughts. “Ah… I’m sorry, Master. I just… I sense something. I can’t quite pin it down but I don’t like it, whatever it is.”

Ahsoka frowned back down the hallway, trying to reach out with the Force and locate whatever it was that was setting Obi-Wan off. Besides the Trade Federation’s meddling, that was.

But what if it IS that? What if Obi-Wan is already starting to sense Sidious’s manipulations? Ahsoka wondered as she realized that whatever it was her padawan was sensing, her senses weren’t attuned to it.

“I’m sorry, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, gesturing with her head for them to pick up the pace and catch up to their droid escort. “I can’t seem to lock onto it.”

“I’m sure it’s nothing, Master,” Obi-Wan tried to brush it off, no doubt willing to bow to Ahsoka’s experience.

Shaking her head, Ahsoka explained herself. “Just because I can’t sense it, doesn’t mean we should ignore it. Keep it in the back of your mind. If it gets worse, let me know and I’ll give it another shot.”

Obi-Wan nodded, comforted that Ahsoka took his concern seriously instead of brushing it off as the over-anxious workings of a padawan’s mind. “Yes, Master.”

After taking another confusing series of turns through the complex, they were brought to the Prime Minister’s office, where he was reading over a datapad. He stood up as they were ushered into his office, a tall, slender man with grey hair and skin the color of rich ocher who greeted them with a welcoming smile. “Welcome, Master Jedis! It is an honor to have you on Maerai Prime. Even for such a short time.”

Ahsoka glanced at Obi-Wan, the two sharing a knowing look at the slight edge in the Prime Minister’s voice. It was clear he wanted Qui-Gon Jinn out of his hair, and yesterday if possible.

“Thank you for the warm reception, Honored Prime Minister,” Ahsoka said, as she and Obi-Wan bowed as one, a perfectly synchronized pair. “I wish our visit could have been under better circumstances. Captain Avanbae briefed us on the situation.”

The Prime Minister nodded, folding his hands over his chest as he looked to the side. He was silent for a long moment before speaking. “I know it seems like the government does not care for those people who feel like their livelihoods are under threat, but I’ve proposed some initiatives and training programs that I think would be a great boon to the citizens living in the Smog Farms and the Bedrock. It’s just a matter of funding them.”

“Ahsoka managed to control an instinctive reaction of suspicion and distrust, reminding herself that she had no proof of Mas Ameda’s treachery, just an instinctive dislike of the politician that came
from her time spent in the Senate with Padme and later with Bail Organa. She couldn’t exactly come out and tell the Prime Minister that she was from the future, and in that future the aide he put such faith in was the right-hand man to the devil.

But she could suggest someone who was a great deal more compassionate. “Have you tried reaching out to a system directly? Or their senator? Perhaps someone from the Alderaan system? They’re strong proponents of peace and giving aid to systems in need.”

“We’re not seeking charity, Master Jedi,” the Prime Minister huffed, shaking his head. “We’ll trust in the Senate, the Republic, and democracy before we go hat in hand from system to system.”

Sensing she would get no further on the subject, Ahsoka bowed a little in a respectful display, remembering one of Padme’s earliest lessons. “A smile and sweet word at the right time and place can get you a lot farther than an arch comment or a lightsaber.”

“I am sure the Senate will see the wisdom in your programs,” Ahsoka murmured, noting how smoothly Obi-Wan mirrored her actions, the spitting image of the man he was slowly growing into. “My padawan and I thank you for the warm welcome but I’m sure we have taken up enough of your time.”

The Prime Minister looked surprised at the ease with which Ahsoka changed the subject of the conversation and how smoothly she moved from a contentious topic to a safe and natural breaking-off point. Ahsoka almost wanted to let her diplomatic mask crack for a moment and let the poor man know that he wasn’t the only person who had a hard time dealing with Qui-Gon Jinn.

“Ah, yes, well thank you for your kind words,” the Prime Minister said, walking to the side of the room, where the wall slid away to reveal a hidden hallway and a uniformed woman waiting to escort them away. “There are some on Maerai who are seeking to undermine the peace we have built here for their own benefits but I assure you, Master Jedis, that we will not give into them. We will keep seeking a peaceful solution to the problems facing our citizens. A war against our own brothers and sisters is a war no one here wants.”

“Then I pray the Senate passes the bill for the funding of your projects soon,” Ahsoka said before she followed the young woman through the doorway, Obi-Wan trailing after her.

They followed the woman down the hallway, moving quietly past civil servants, aides and security officers as they passed, eventually coming to a long quiet hallway with doors on each side. They were led to the first door on the left, their guide touching a pad on the side of the door.

“Who is it?” came a low, gruff voice.

“Lieutenant Rhakast,” the woman said, her voice clipped to the point of almost brusqueness. “And two Jedi.”

There was silence for a long moment as Lieutenant Rhakast stood perfectly still, neither betraying her inner thoughts nor looking back at Ahsoka and Obi-Wan.

*Master, I’m starting to get the feeling that Master Jinn has worn out his welcome,* Obi-Wan commented, his arms folded over his chest. He looked up at Ahsoka, giving her one of his patented, subtle expressions that made it clear he was unimpressed.

Ahsoka allowed the quirk of a smile on her face before responding. *You might be onto something there, Obi-Wan. I get the feeling he’s not made a lot of friends in the government.*

The door opened so suddenly it started all three of them as the tall, imposing figure of Qui-Gon Jinn
appeared in the doorway, his eyes narrowed. “Lieutenant Rhakast, I have already informed your… O- Padawan Kenobi? Knight Tano? What are you doing here?”

Lieutenant Rhakast gave Qui-Gon a perfunctory bow. ‘Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano and Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi to see you, Master Jinn. If you’ll excuse me?’

Ahsoka didn’t even have a chance to thank the young woman before she was gone, marching back down the hallway they had come from and her heels marking a rapid and staccato retreat.

*All right then,* Obi-Wan mused to Ahsoka, watching the lieutenant go. *Definitely not a fan.*

*Doesn’t look like one.* “Master Jinn,” Ahsoka said, stepping forward. “The Jedi Council and Master Oppo Rancisis have sent us to collect you.”

“What?” Qui-Gon looked confused, shaking his head. “There must be some mistake. I do not need to be collected. I have not yet completed my mission.”

Smiling politely, Ahsoka continued. “So I’ve heard, but Master Rancisis was quite insistent. Captain Avanbae told us there were threats on your life and the Senator for the system reported them to the Senate.”

“Nonsense,” Qui-Gon snorted, turning on his heels and marching back into his room. “I’m glad you’re here, Knight Tano. I could use your help in my investigation.”

Master and padawan rolled their eyes in unison as they followed Qui-Gon back inside.

Qui-Gon’s room was actually a suite with a living area connected to a bedroom and a refresher. There was a stack of datapads on a desk set by a window and a data screen fastened to the wall that was covered in Qui-Gon’s notes. There were a few strange items on the sideboard under the datascreen, each placed equidistant from the other.

“Things are at a delicate place between the ruling government and the Oppressed,” Qui-Gon explained, picking up a mug of tea and frowning when he realized it was cold. He kept talking as he walked over to a small personal tea service machine to make himself more. “There are claims of vote tampering and intimidation against the current government, not to mention their belief that the Oppressed are fomenting a rebellion. My work has gotten me close to uncovering the truth, that there are outside forces interfering on this planet.”

“Such as?” Ahsoka asked, finding a seat without datapads and gently sitting down. She was curious to see if Qui-Gon had been able to somehow ferret out the Trade Federation’s duplicity and if he could, what did that mean for her, Obi-Wan and the future?

*I hope he’s found something concrete,* Ahsoka thought as Obi-Wan, who was too polite to upset Qui-Gon’s haphazardly ordered piles, came to stand behind her.

“I don’t know yet,” Qui-Gon admitted, taking his new mug of tea and walking back to his datascreen. “But it is clear to me that the government is in the pocket of someone, most likely the owners of the mines and the factories, possibly even someone off-world. There is corruption on this planet and I am going to find it and root it out.”

Ahsoka pursed her lips. “It sounds like a definite possibility from what you are saying, but the Council sent Obi-Wan and I to pick you up and take you back to Coruscant. They’re concerned for your well-being.”

“They said your life was in imminent danger,” Obi-Wan pointed out, his spirit prickly in the Force.
Qui-Gon arched an eyebrow at that as he took a sip of his tea. “They were given misleading information. Someone is trying to stop my investigation on this planet and now that I have you two here to help me, I am certain we will discover the culprit in no time.”

“Help you?” Ahsoka echoed, her voice flat and low. “We’re not here to help, Qui-Gon. We’re here to take you home. No one said anything about helping. I haven’t replaced my sabers yet. Obi-Wan and I have just barely recovered from Tatooine. We’re in no condition to help.”

“The Living Force has brought you both to me,” Qui-Gon insisted, sipping his tea and turning to face the datascreen. “It would be foolish to disregard its wisdom, Knight Tano.”

Ahsoka felt her eyes widen for just a moment, the sudden hot plume of anger in her stomach nearly drowned out by Obi-Wan’s. She reached out through their bond, trying to soothe him as he fumed behind her.

“The Living Force wants you to continue living, Qui-Gon,” Ahsoka said, uncurling her hands from the fists they had unconsciously balled up into. She splayed them out flat on her knees as she tried to convince Qui-Gon to return with them. “That’s why we’re here. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but you’re not exactly the most popular person here and if the government is corrupt as you say it is, then your life, and the lives of anyone seen talking to you or working with you, are in danger. Think about people like Lieutenant uhm… what was her name, Obi-Wan?”

“Rhakast,” Obi-Wan said, standing guard behind Ahsoka.

“Thank you,” Ahsoka said, trying a pleading gesture with Qui-Gon. “Think of people like Lieutenant Rhakast or Captain Avanbae. Your investigation could put them at risk.”

Qui-Gon frowned at the board for a moment before turning slowly to gaze down at Ahsoka.

“I cannot believe a Jedi Knight, such as yourself, would willingly turn a blind eye to these people who are clearly in need,” Qui-Gon sniffed, arms folded over his broad chest as he seemed to fill up the room with his offense. “As Jedi, it is our duty to offer help where it is needed. This planet called for a Jedi Master, and so I am here.”

“I’m not disagreeing with you on that,” Ahsoka groaned, rubbing her forehead. “In fact, I think we should both suggest to the Council that they speak to the Senate about what you’ve found here. But we were not sent here to assist you, Qui-Gon. I am not putting Obi-Wan’s life in jeopardy because you have decided to disobey the Council’s orders.”

“Obi-Wan’s life is of utmost concern to me as well,” Qui-Gon replied, glancing at the young man behind her. “I can assure you that no harm will come to him while you two are here. Now, if you’re quite done, Knight Tano, I have several interviews to conduct and I will require your assistance on these. Padawan Kenobi, grab one of those holorecorders from that pile.”

“What?” Ahsoka gasped, bolting upright. “We are not assisting you.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, Knight Tano,” Qui-Gon said, crossing through the living room with long strides into the bedroom to gather up his cloak. “But were your orders not to bring me back to the Temple safe and sound?”

Narrowing her eyes, Ahsoka frowned. “You know they were.”

Qui-Gon nodded to himself, pleased. “Excellent. Then you and Padawan Kenobi can help keep me safe while I conduct my interviews. Come along. We have a short period of time to get to the Smog Farms.”
And with that, Qui-Gon strode out the door, leaving a furious Ahsoka and Obi-Wan staring after him, gobsmacked.

“Are… are we? Do we have to follow him?” Obi-Wan asked softly, confused and suddenly worried. “Master? Can he do that?”

“No, if I have anything to say about it,” Ahsoka all but snarled. “Come on, Obi-Wan. We’re going back to the ship and contacting the Council.”

Unfortunately for Ahsoka, she didn’t have a say in the matter.

The Council would be sympathetic to her problems and understand her predicament, Master Rancisis told her, but she needed to stay with Qui-Gon while he brought the subject up at the Council’s next meeting.

“I know this is suboptimal, Knight Tano,” Master Rancisis said, shaking his head. “But Qui-Gon Jinn is one of our best diplomats and perhaps he is on to something. Do what you can to help him. Unfortunately we won’t be able to send another Jedi to assist you but I am confident that you and your padawan will rise to this challenge.”

Ahsoka made sure the comm was well and truly off before she let out a string of muttered curses that would have done Rex and the rest of the 501st proud.

Obi-Wan was no more enthusiastic than Ahsoka at their new assignment.

“Rise to the challenge? Master, I would need stilts and a repulsor lifts to rise to the level of challenge Qui-Gon Jinn presents!” Obi-Wan retorted as they made their way back to the Prime Minister’s complex and Qui-Gon’s living space, the two having wordlessly agreed they were going to sleep on the ship as a silent reminder that they weren’t supposed to be on Maerai Prime. “And even then that might not be high enough.”

Ahsoka chuckled, reaching over to squeeze Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “It’s just until the Council deliberates and orders him back to Coruscant.”

“I don’t think anyone in the galaxy could make Qui-Gon Jinn do what he does not want to do,” Obi-Wan snorted, maneuvering their speeder into a line of traffic that would take them to their destination. “The man is more obstinate than a firka pine.”

It took about two days for Ahsoka’s message to get back to the Council, be discussed and for Qui-Gon to find time in his schedule to come back to the Temple.

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan stood to the side while Qui-Gon laid out his case via holo, detailing the outside influences he suspected were at the heart of the conflict on Maerai Prime.

He wasn’t quite connecting the dots to the Trade Federation yet, Ahsoka noted, but he didn’t have the knowledge that Ahsoka did.

“There is something afoot here on Maerai Prime,” Qui-Gon insisted, bowing his head to the Council. “I only ask for more time. Two more weeks at most.”
“You have one,” Mace Windu said, leaning forward. “Gather as much information as you can and we will present it to the Senate’s anti-corruption committee at their next meeting. Then you will return home with Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi.”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan watched Qui-Gon carefully, exchanging concerned looks as they waited for the Jedi Master to speak. Will he listen to them?

“One week will suffice,” Qui-Gon finally acquiesced, glancing over at Obi-Wan before turning his attention back to the Council. “I understand that Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi have done me a great favor in stepping away from their Ilum pilgrimage and I am truly thankful for their kindness.”

Master Windu nodded. “They have, and Knight Tano? If you’re listening, you have my authority to hit this stubborn old gundark upside the head if he won’t leave after a week.”

There was the ghostly chorus of other masters laughing off-screen as Qui-Gon smiled to the Council, bowing before turning off the holo relay.

Ahsoka tried to find the inner fortitude to play the role of politely smiling junior, already dreading Qui-Gon’s smug triumph. Obi-Wan was even less of a fan of the situation, but he kept his displeasure and ire behind shielding that was as smooth as glass and as opaque as a black hole. It was only through their strong connection that Ahsoka could make anything out from the young man’s presence in the Force.

There were times she envied Obi-Wan’s innate ability to keep his emotions to himself. Ahsoka took after Anakin too much in that regard.


Ahsoka was going to say something light and nonchalant to break the tense silence when Qui-Gon nodded and turned to her and Obi-Wan.

“I want to thank you both for your patience and… determined concern for my well-being,” Qui-Gon said as he furrowed his brows, searching for the best way to word his sentiment. “I know this is not where you want to be, nor is this a situation you want to be in again, but I swear to you that your time here will not be in vain. There is something going on here on this planet and with the Force as our ally, I believe we can uncover it together. In a week. If we work very fast.”

The smile on Qui-Gon’s face was a tad nervous and lopsided, but it was better than smug and Ahsoka was willing to accept it for the peace offering it was. “My padawan has sensed something as well. Hopefully whatever it is will reveal itself to us in time.”

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The subject of Obi-Wan seemed to perk Qui-Gon up and he turned his gaze to the boy at her side, giving him a full smile. “You have come into your own, Obi-Wan. I’ve heard about your adventures on the Outer Rim. I’m sorry to keep you from your pilgrimage.”

Obi-Wan bowed his head in acknowledgement of the compliment. “You are too kind, Master Jinn.”

“Hardly,” Qui-Gon replied before changing the subject. “Well, since we only have a week, we need to get to work. I have a list of people who need interviewing and statements taken. Shall we split up or work together?”

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan exchanged a wordless glance before speaking as one. “Together.”

Chuckling a little, Qui-Gon handed over a datapad. “I thought you two might say that. Come on. Captain Avanbae is waiting.”
As the week went on, it became clear to Ahsoka and Obi-Wan that Qui-Gon was actually onto something and the conspiracy went even deeper than even Ahsoka realized. Maerai Prime’s rare minerals were used in almost every processor on the galactic market, from astromechs to hyperdrive navigation computers.

Mining them was dangerous and slow but lucrative, which allowed many Bedrock families, almost always poor and immigrants from other systems, to give their children a better way of life. Captain Avanbae explained that his family could trace their roots back to peasants on Telladoria and they moved to Maerai during a great drought that nearly destroyed them.

There was something of a societal ladder the Bedrock could climb and while it might take several generations, some would live to see their great-grandchildren born above the grey clouds, in the part of the city the Oppressed called the Haven. This system, brutish and cruel in many ways, had been in operation for centuries, and while there were many in the Smog Farms who loathed it and called for more distribution of wealth, there were equally as many who took advantage of it.

The system was working until one day it wasn’t.

One mine owner went heavily into debt and made a sweetheart deal with the Trade Federation, who brought in droids. Profits soared and soon other owners were lining up to replace their own workers. Strikes followed, then riots and finally an organized political party to resist the ones in power, those that lived high above in the sunlight realm of the Haven.

Jobs and lives were saved as the party gained power, but just barely, and the threat of the Trade Federation and the growing allure of more profits and a fashionable life off-planet started to appeal to the owners. Impossible quotas and other underhanded methods were used to slowly drive people out of the work force, and when they complained to their elected officials, it seemed there was no compassion to be found.

One of Qui-Gon’s interviews was with Captain Avanbae’s brother, who was involved in the Oppressed political movement, and something that felt oddly familiar to Ahsoka surfaced during the conversation.

“Now my brother won’t believe me,” Naeir Avanbae said while Qui-Gon sat next to him in a dingy bar somewhere miserably south of the horizon line and smelling of burnt oil and ash, about a twenty-minute walk from a refinery. “But I swear to you on my mother’s life that we were not responsible for that bombing. I don’t know who did that but it was not us. Why would we do that? How would it benefit us?”

Captain Avanbae, their unofficial tour guide to the Smog Farms, shifted in his position leaned against the far wall. “It’s not like your people don’t have radicals, Nae. What if one of them took it into his fool head to do something crazy?”

Ahsoka frowned over at Obi-Wan, who returned her look and mouthed Raxxus?

Nodding, Ahsoka made a mental note to mention it to Qui-Gon when they got back.

“I’m not saying that’s impossible,” Naeir explain, holding his hands out as if to ward off his brother’s comments. “I’m just saying I know that one wasn’t connected to us. The Oppressed are miners and factory workers. We deal with dangerous explosives every day of our lives!”
Qui-Gon nodded, listening intently to Naeir’s story.

“So why would we use this type of bomb?” Naeir said, sketching out the bombing site on a datapad provided by Obi-Wan. “This is the park right? Each of these power conduits would have been an easy target for someone with just a handful of mesphaline dust. And we can get access to this stuff any time we want. If we were going to resort to violence like that, why would we spend the money on nanodroids?”

Ahsoka felt her stomach drop. “Nanodroids?”

Barriss Offee’s face, twisted with hatred, flashed through her mind. “This Republic is failing! It’s only a matter of time!”

“Master?” Obi-Wan murmured, looking over at Ahsoka. “Is something wrong?”

“It’s nothing, Padawan,” Ahsoka murmured, grounding herself in the present moment as Qui-Gon’s gaze flickered over to her and then back to Naeir’s sharp features.

“Who told you the explosion was caused by nanodroids?” Qui-Gon asked, curious.

“I’m not the only one with family that lives above the grey ceiling,” Naeir chuckled, giving his older brother a wistful smile. “Some of them still talk to us down here.”

Avanbae returned his brother’s look with an equally pained expression. “He has a point, Jedi. Nanodroids are expensive. Naeir’s people don’t have that kind of money.”

“I heard some of our more… reactionary members talking about some kind of deal going down at Processing Plant #5,” Naeir said, pulling out a datastick and offering it to Qui-Gon. “This is the schematics of the plant. The meeting is taking place next week during the third shift. You might be able to catch them there.”

“And why do you want to help us?” Qui-Gon asked, his eyes narrowed on Naeir’s. “If the radical fringe of your party are discovered during this meeting, the government will use this to paint your whole movement as violent.”

Naeir bowed his head and was silent for a moment. “That park? Little kids play in that park. Mothers and children play in that park. If we have to stoop to killing children to get our message across? Then we don’t have a message. Then we’re just as bad as the owners.”

The meeting at Processing Plant #5 was scheduled to go down the day after they were scheduled to leave Maerai Prime.

Ahsoka insisted they leave on time.

Qui-Gon demanded they stay.

The day before their scheduled departure was spent arguing back and forth over the merits of staying versus going, as they organized Qui-Gon’s files and evidence. Ahsoka insisted they had more than enough evidence to bring a solid case before the Senate Anti-Corruption committee.

Qui-gon wanted to bring them the people behind everything, to hand in the case with a neatly tied
In the end, Qui-Gon won out.

“I am the highest-ranking Jedi here,” Qui-Gon said, standing up from his seat and walking to the datascreen and turning it off. “Your assignment is to protect me as I carry out this investigation. I do not think the Council will mind if I am two days late. I will make a note of your strict adherence to the Council’s rulings in my mission report if you are that concerned.”

Ahsoka grit her teeth and tried to relax her shoulders.

It wasn’t that Ahsoka didn’t want to help the people of Maerai Prime. She agreed with Qui-Gon’s evaluation of things, that there was something nefarious going on and it was disturbingly familiar to both Ahsoka and Obi-Wan. Perhaps if she weren’t reliant on Obi-Wan for a saber or if the Force wasn’t so tense, vibrating like the string on a technolute, then she might have been persuaded to stay. But every night she went to bed with an exhausted sigh and a haunting thought. *We’re running out of time.*

The meeting at the processing plant was scheduled for late in the evening, and that night, Ahsoka offered to let Obi-Wan stay behind and wait for her in their cruiser.

“You don’t have to come if you don’t want to,” Ahsoka said, gratefully accepting one of Obi-Wan’s sabers. “I know you’ve had a bad feeling about this since we came here.”

“I’m not leaving you alone out there, Master,” Obi-Wan sniffed, looking at Qui-Gon for a moment before turning back to Ahsoka. “Where you go, I go. We’re a team, remember? You promised.”

Ahsoka nodded, a rueful smile on her face. “All right but don’t do anything foolish, do you hear me? I need you to stay safe no matter what.”

“Yes, Master, of course,” Obi-Wan replied, a confident grin on his face bringing out his dimples. “Shall we?”

“I suppose so,” Ahsoka sighed as they stepped out of the safety of their cruiser and into the moonlit night over the city.

Processing Plant #5 was bathed in yellow and orange light, running at half capacity this late in the evening to give the machines on the main line a chance to cool down and the mechanics time to work on them. The plant itself was a sprawling industrial complex, taking up nearly the same space as the military garrison had on Coruscant when Ahsoka was younger. It was a warren of piping, catwalks and more than enough blind corners and well-hidden passageways that it was a wonder that people weren’t lost there daily.

Ahsoka didn’t like it one bit.

Captain Avanbae and a squad of his best officers were waiting at strategic points in the complex and nearby. The plan was simply to infiltrate the building, find the meeting between the radicals and the instigators behind the unrest on the planet, and hopefully catch all of them in the act.

That was the plan anyway.
The Jedi split up, taking short range coms with them to communicate as they scoured the plant, leaving only the live processing line alone, fairly confident that the exchange was not going to go down where a hundred different people could see it. Ahsoka took the ground floor, Obi-Wan the middle, and Qui-Gon the top and they agreed to meet up after an hour if they found nothing.

Forty five minutes into their search, Qui-Gon sent a message. “I think I have a visual, out near one of the storage buildings.”

“I’m on my way,” Ahsoka whispered into her com, hurrying down a hallway and relying on the Force to guide her to her intended target. “Obi-Wan? I want you to meet up with Qui-Gon before you get to me.”

“I’m already on my way, Master,” Obi-Wan grunted through the connection, the faint sound of his boots clicking against the durasteel floor coming through. “I’ll meet you there.”

“Listen to your master, Padawan Kenobi,” Qui-Gon ordered as all three Jedi hurried through the warren of machinery and shadows toward their intended target.

Ahsoka shut off her com and muttered a curse as she picked up her pace, running toward Obi-Wan’s bright light in the Force.

She finally arrived at a row of storage buildings, seven in all, made of old duracreet with faded painted signs. They were tucked up against a corner of the processing plant that felt largely empty, almost abandoned, with empty lots stretching out around them. There was little life out here and the Force felt weak and sluggish, as if the pollution and the fumes of the nearby smelting plant and the processing line were working together to cut the Force off from Ahsoka altogether.

She looked around for Obi-Wan and caught him at the far end of the row of buildings, peering through a door left ajar, his lightsaber hilt in his hand, ready for anything.

Ahsoka dashed over to him, skidding to a stop at his side. “Obi-Wan! What did I tell you? Where is Qui-Gon?”

“I’m sure he’s on his way,” Obi-Wan said, glancing away guiltily from her concerned expression. “But I could sense that I was closer and I thought that if I just… hurried, that maybe I could catch them unawares!”

Ahsoka’s wide-eyed look was enough to make Obi-Wan rethink his plan. “But thank the Force you’re here now!” Obi-Wan added with an awkward smile. “And I shan’t do anything else dangerous.”

“Damn straight,” Ahsoka muttered as she looked down the line of buildings. “Which one do we try first?”

“I say Number Seven,” Obi-Wan mused, frowning. “Either way, it doesn’t matter. It’s always the last one we check.”

“Sarcasm duly noted,” Ahsoka said, giving her padawan a look. “I think I sense Qui-Gon coming. Why don’t we wait for our esteemed Jedi Master before we go any further.”

Obi-Wan arched an eyebrow at Ahsoka’s comment but said nothing, merely pulling his robe off and folding it into a little pile to leaving it atop a box marked “couplers”. He gave his master a grin, nervous energy and adrenaline flowing from him in the Force.

“Obi-Wan!” came a low and worried hiss as Qui-Gon came around the corner, his hair splayed out
behind him as he skidded to a stop. “Thank the stars you’re all right! Does he do this often, Knight Tano?”

“It’s kind of a thing in our lineage,” Ahsoka replied, slightly apologetic, before gesturing to the storage buildings behind them. “Which one should we try first?”

“Seven,” Qui-Gon said without prompting, already moving in the direction of the building. Ahsoka and Obi-Wan falling into step behind him. The Force swirled around them, running like the current of a river, carrying them onwards, a gentle yet insistent push at their backs. As weak as it was, it felt good to know the Force was guiding them, that it was with them in the dark, unnaturally golden light cast off from the rest of the plant.

When they arrived at the door to what the label called Storage Shed #7, the lock had been broken, cut apart by a laser cutting tool from the scoring. Qui-Gon took the edge of his cloak and used it to pull open the door, mindful of possible fingerprints or biomarkers that could have been left behind. The door came open with a rusty groan, revealing nothing but pitch black beyond.

“It would seem we may be too late for the meeting, but they could have left evidence. Obi-Wan? Find the switch. Knight Tano? You’re with me,” Qui-Gon ordered as he held up his lightsaber to illuminate the entrance.

Ahsoka and Obi-Wan activated their sabers as they moved to follow, Obi-Wan scouring the wall for a power switch as Ahsoka held her saber aloft, peering into the strange misshapen shadows trying to make out what they were.

“I think this is where they keep the old machines,” Ahsoka murmured, reaching over to lift up a dust-covered tarp and peer under it. “These look like the rollers for a conveyor belt.”

“I sense something further in,” Qui-Gon murmured, holding out a hand as he unfurled his presence in the Force. “Someone was here and they… left something?”

*Any luck with the light, Padawan?* Ahsoka asked through her bond with Obi-Wan, not wanting to make too much noise.

Obi-Wan sent back an image of a complicated bit of wiring and an intense, *Almost… there!* The light kicked on in a brilliant display of yellow-orange, nearly blinding Ahsoka and Qui-Gon.

“Damnit!” Qui-Gon muttered as Obi-Wan hurried back to join them. “Warn me next time you plan on blinding me, Obi-Wan.”

“Technically he was following your orders,” Ahsoka pointed out with a teasing smile. “Now at least we know what we’re dealing with.”

The first third of the storage building was stockpiled with old machines, covered in tarps and empty chests labeled with droid parts or classifications. The back portion of the building was largely empty save for a moving crane suspended from the high ceiling, a few heavy load lifters, and some durasteel i-beams. The duracreet walls were bare, save from some old posters made of opaque flimsiplast that looked like they had seen far better days.

“There’s nothing here,” Obi-Wan said, looking around. “We lost them.”

“Sith hells,” Qui-Gon cursed, walking over to one of the load lifters and pulling off the tarp that covered it. “Where could they have gone?”
Ahsoka frowned up at the ceiling, wondering if the people they were pursuing were inclined to Jedi-esque acrobatics. Seeing no one there, she turned her gaze back down to the situation in front of her, waving off some of the dust that Qui-Gon’s actions had thrown up.

That was when she noticed the ground to the next of the heavy load lifter was empty of dust. There was a void in the grey, sooty covering on the floor, as if someone had managed to activate the load lifter or to move it without turning on a pair of repulsor lifts, which would have left a wider void in the dust on the floor.

Someone had been in the storage shed and recently.

“Qui-Gon? Do you want to take a look at this?” Ahsoka asked as she walked around in a slow circle, searching for the object that would have matched the void in the ground. She looked up and spotted an almost identical load lifter against the far wall, walking toward it.

“What is it, Knight Tano?” Qui-Gon asked as he dropped a tarp at the bottom of an incongruously new pile of packing material he had found.

Obi-Wan started to follow Ahsoka. “What is it, Master?”

“Stay with Qui-Gon,” Ahsoka ordered as she carefully crept closer and closer to the far wall and the innocuous machine sitting there. The Force was vibrating with warning, trying to tell her that danger was imminent, and she kept her steps light and careful, ready to flee if she had to.

Stay where it’s safe, Obi-Wan. Ahsoka thought as she took another step.

And then another.

And then one too many.

The Force screamed as Ahsoka made out the faintest green line of a laser perimeter sensor that let off a high pitched wail as its cluster of microbombs activated.

No! Ahsoka thought as time slowed to a maddening halt. She turned her foot, shifting her weight as, one by one, the bombs started to tick through their cycles.

Ahsoka had precious seconds, if that.

“OBI-WAN!” she heard Qui-Gon shout from somewhere to her right as her padawan came to a stop, too close, far too dangerously close to Ahsoka.

NO! Obi-Wan!

The Force, which had been so sluggish before, so exhausted by the depravations plaguing the planet, surged to life at Ahsoka’s command and in an instant, she knew what she had to do and knew that she had the strength and the skill to do it.

“Master!” Obi-Wan cried out, reaching for Ahsoka as if he could pull her free from the blast, desperate to save her from her own mistake.

I am so sorry, Obi-Wan.

I’m so sorry I can’t walk this path with you anymore.

Ahsoka felt through the Force the first bomb explode into life, and with it the galaxy sped back up, everything too fast, too hot and too bright all at once. It was as if someone had ignited a star in her
heart and Ahsoka would burn up every last bit of power there to save her padawan, to save his future, to save all their futures.

*Forgive me, Obi-Wan.*

With a sweep of her hands, Ahsoka flung away the load lifter that was between Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan and with another gesture, she tossed Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon to safety on the far side of the storage building, blocking them from the blast with every last bit of the power at her command.

As the blast engulfed her, Ahsoka closed her eyes and let go of the life she had come to love so much, of the friends and family she had never thought to have another chance with. Of the future she had wanted to help shepherd into being and the young boy, far away on Coruscant, who would now only have Obi-Wan to rely on when the Darkness came for him.

*I am so sorry, Anakin.*

*The Force be with you both.*

Qui-Gon came to, mere moments after the brunt of the explosion ripped through the storage building, setting fire to the duracrete structure and all of the old, flammable materials it contained. His ears were ringing and his head pounded as he pushed himself upright, groaning in agony as pain lanced down his back.

*What happened? Where is Obi-Wan? Knight Tano?*

The roar of fire and the encroaching heat cleared Qui-Gon’s mind and he hauled himself to his feet. “Obi-Wan! Where… Obi-Wan!”

The boy was upright and staggering towards the source of the explosion, heedless of the fire around him. He was holding his arm as he stumbled forward, croaking out, “Master! Ahsoka! No!”

Qui-Gon raced over to Obi-Wan, grabbing his arm. “Obi-Wan, we have to get to safety! There’s nothing more we can do now!”

“Let me go!” Obi-Wan raged, tears pouring down his cheeks, struggling to break free from Qui-Gon’s hold. “She needs me! My master needs me! Master Ahsoka!”

“She’s gone, Obi-Wan!” Qui-Gon shouted back, trying to be heard over the growing roar of the fire working its way up the side of the building, threatening the durasteel beams that held everything up. “We have to get out of here!”

“Let Me. GO!” Obi-Wan howled and with a jab of his elbow and explosion of fury in the Force, he broke free from Qui-Gon and took off toward Ahsoka lying motionless on the floor. “Master!”

“No! Obi-Wan, stop!” Qui-Gon gasped, taking an unsteady step after him. “The building is going to collapse! You’ll die!”

“I’m not leaving without my Master!” Obi-Wan shouted, skidding to Ahsoka’s side, kneeling to check her vitals. “She’s alive! Master, can you hear me?”

With Obi-Wan’s concentration focused on the ground, there was no way he could have noticed the
Qui-Gon looked upward in horror as the first heavy block started to shift before crashing to the ground nearby. It landed on a pile of junked machinery and threw out sharp bits of shrapnel and debris that nearly hit Obi-Wan, but the padawan didn’t seem to notice, too lost in trying to reach out to his Master.

*I can’t let this happen! I can’t let him die like this! I have to save him!* Qui-Gon reached up to the ceiling, deflecting the next block that was going to fall perilously close to Obi-Wan and Ahsoka, flinging it to safety before letting out a groan as his body protested the strain, bringing him almost to his knees.

“We have to get out of here!” Qui-Gon roared, staggering towards Obi-Wan as the Force let out a cry of warning and the ceiling overhead screamed as the struts supporting the wall and the roof gave way. “OBI-WAN!”

Obi-Wan’s head jerked up and instinctively he put his hands up to catch the massive piece of masonry and metal tumbling down toward him, the Force blooming to life around him as it struggled to do as he commanded.

The weight of it pushed Obi-Wan backwards and he let out a scream as he struggled to stay upright.

Watching in horrified awe, Qui-Gon saw the roof piece above Obi-Wan come to a stop only a few meters away from him, caught in midair like a youngling playing a game with a piece of flimsi. Taking one step forward, Obi-Wan let out a groan, trying to push the crushing piece of duracrete away from himself and his master.

For one brief and hopeful moment, Qui-Gon almost believed he could.

And then there was another explosion, a fuel line perhaps or the fire hit just the right connection in the plant’s system and another massive hunk of rubble far overhead began to tilt toward the ground.

*“Obi-Wan! Look out!”*

Qui-Gon didn’t even hear his voice over the deafening conflagration. He didn’t know if Obi-Wan heard his warning or not but the rubble fell and for a horrible heartbeat, Qui-Gon feared the worst as it shot toward the boy.

*“NO!”* Obi-Wan bellowed with a voice so full of anger and despair it no longer sounded like his.

He took another step forward, and then another, a guttural growl ripped from deep in his soul. “I won’t… let this… happen!”

That was when Qui-Gon saw it, the creature that had lurked in Knight Tano’s shadow, the creature made of rage and the Dark.

The terrifying being he saw in his first vision from the Living Force so long ago.

The burning man who did not die.

They were overlapped now, Obi-Wan and the creature that heeded his call, who gave the boy strength and power he did not, nor would ever, possess on his own. Dark and light, they moved as one, screaming in defiance at the natural order of the Living Force.

Tears streamed down Obi-Wan’s face as he pushed himself further than he should have been able to,
further than possibly even Qui-Gon could manage. Each step was slow, purposeful, heavy with strain and anguish. Obi-Wan’s arms threatened to buckle but each time the burning man gave a wordless cry and the two of them held the heavy debris at bay.

_Help them_ , the Force whispered to Qui-Gon and he lurched forward, finding himself suddenly too heavy, too slow compared to Obi-Wan fueled by a being made of the Dark. He was almost there when Obi-Wan and his Dark Side shadow cast away the heavy rubble, pushing it with a roar of duracreet into the machines off to the side.

For a moment, Qui-Gon feared that whatever it was that had taken possession of Obi-Wan meant to do Ahsoka harm as the boy collapsed at Ahsoka’s side, reaching out to touch her face.

“Master?” Obi-Wan said, his voice raw as the shadow wavered black and red behind him. “Master, please. Come back.”

Ahsoka’s eyes opened and Qui-Gon could just barely make out what she said in response as the burning man faded away.

“Skyguy?”

Chapter End Notes

Hello darlings!

Once again I did not give my darling Lily Conrad enough time to edit this chapter so please do not hold the mispellings, bad copy and incorrect use of hyphens or semicolons against her sterling reputation.

While normally I would be a bit more chatty, I’m pretty exhausted so I shall leave you with a good night and a “See you in two weeks!”
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After a disastrous mission to Maerai Prime leaves Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano in bacta tank with a long recovery time, Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn petitions the Jedi Council to be allowed to train Ahsoka's padawan learner, Obi-Wan Kenobi. In spite of Master Plo Koon's offer to supervise his training, Obi-Wan agrees to study with Qui-Gon to keep his master safe from the Council's scrutiny after Qui-Gon accuses him of touching the Dark side on Maerai Prime in an attempt to save her life.

Meanwhile, Master Plo Koon sets off for Maerai Prime to investigate the bombing that nearly ended Knight Tano's life.

For the first day of Obi-Wan’s apprenticeship, Qui-Gon woke up far earlier than normal, taking into account his new padawan’s preference for rising with the dawn. The last time he had tried to seek Obi-Wan out in his quarters, the boy had already been gone, off to brood over the unconscious form of Knight Tano as apparent penance for his imagined failures.

Qui-Gon couldn’t remember the last time he had been up so early for reasons that did not pertain to a mission or a negotiation but the weary exhaustion would be worth it in the end. The Living Force had spoken to him, had shown him the way, and he had let a mere slip of a knight keep him and Obi-Wan from their shared destiny. Until now.

Once Qui-Gon left his quarters, he swung by the nocturnal commissary for two mugs of sapir tea as a kind of peace offering. Master Yoda was fond of saying that it was hard to be angry at a person bringing gifts, and Qui-Gon knew that he would have to eventually win Obi-Wan over if the future were to be saved.

If the padawan were to be saved from the dark side spirit that haunted his steps at every turn.

The burning man who did not die.

As Qui-Gon passed through the hallways that led to Obi-Wan’s room, he did his best to put the memory of that abomination away, back into the recesses of his mind. He would meditate on it later, while Obi-Wan was in his classes and he was not likely to be disturbed.

Perhaps he would mention it to Master Dooku, who was considered one of the experts on Dark-side artifacts and the Sith heresies.

*Master might even know a way to... exorcise the shadow from Obi-Wan. If such a thing is possible, Dooku will have knowledge of it.*

But all of that could wait as Qui-Gon came to stand outside Obi-Wan’s door and waited for him to answer the door chime.
And waited.

And waited.

“Obi-Wan?” Qui-Gon called as he activated the door com. “It’s Master Qui-Gon Jinn. Are you up?”

There was no answer.

Frowning, Qui-Gon reached out with the Force, sending it outward like a billowing mist that passed through the door and enveloped everything within the nearby area. He searched for the torch-light of Obi-Wan’s presence and found nothing, only the faint glow of a Corellian jade plant.

Obi-Wan was gone again.

Letting out a heavy sigh, Qui-Gon shook his head and turned away from the door, allowing his awareness to spread out, to run down the hallways of the Temple, to snake around the monolithic columns and meander around clutches of Jedi as he sought out Obi-Wan’s unique presence. He was not as sharply attuned to the boy as he would have been if he had been his master, but Qui-Gon trusted the Force to lead him to Obi-Wan.

And it did, showing Qui-Gon that Obi-Wan was deep in meditation.

In the Halls of Healing.

Next to the flickering light of Knight Tano.

_This will be unpleasant_, Qui-Gon groused to himself as he marched off to the Halls of Healing, tossing the cooling cups of tea into a nearby trash receptacle.

Obi-Wan had risen before dawn, determined to spend time with Ahsoka before Qui-Gon showed up to make the rest of his day an exercise in patience and controlling his temper.

Obi-Wan slipped through the darkened Temple, quietly passing into the Halls of Healing with only a friendly nod from the night shift receptionist. Apparently Nurse Solva had informed the staff that Padawan Kenobi could come and go as he pleased, a kindness for which he had not properly thanked her for but would rectify later when his master was better.

Slipping into his master’s room, Obi-Wan had hoped to sense something different, perhaps improvement or more strength in her presence. After their brief connection the night before, Obi-Wan had hoped that maybe his master was going to be awake, or at least conscious enough to communicate with him beyond whispering his name.

But there were no such improvements and Obi-Wan was left with only the hum of the bacta tank and the soft beeps of the monitor, ticking off the biorhythms of Ahsoka’s existence.

“Good morning, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured, sliding out of his boots and hopping up onto the gurney he pulled in front of her tank so that they would be facing each other. Folding his legs into a comfortable pose, Obi-Wan gave his master a weak smile. “I hope you don’t mind if I meditate here. Our suite is too quiet and I thought you might like the company.”

As he expected, Ahsoka said nothing.
Taking a deep breath and exhaling it slowly through his nose, Obi-Wan began a pattern of rhythmic breathing which helped ease him into a meditative trance. He counted his breaths slowly and somewhere between heartbeats, he found himself in the dream-like inner world he usually could only glimpse in the place between sleep and waking.

*Floating. I’m floating. Why am I floating? Where am I?*

In the warm darkness of his vision, Obi-Wan felt safe and at peace, almost as if he were back in the crèche. It almost felt as if he were being rocked back and forth, gently buffeted by something cool and soothing against his skin. It almost felt like water, like he was being rocked by steady waves in a pleasant sea.

Obi-Wan opened his eyes onto a sky so blue it was almost blinding and he threw up a hand to protect himself from the sudden radiance. The next time when he tried to peer out through his fingers, the intense blue sky and the sensation of being cradled by the waves of an immense ocean were fading, already distant after-images of something that had seemed so intense and real only a moment before.

He reached out for the vision sliding away, his consciousness falling back into the cold and hard present.

Obi-Wan opened his eyes and looked back over his shoulder at the door.

Master Jinn had found him.

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Qui-Gon knocked loudly on the door, hoping it would be enough to roust Obi-Wan from his meditation. When he heard no reply, Qui-Gon decided to head inside, wondering if the boy had fallen asleep due to keeping such early hours.

As the door slid open, Qui-Gon gave a cautious greeting. “Good morning, Obi-Wan. I hope I’m not interrupting anything.”

The look Obi-Wan gave Qui-Gon was one of suspicion, his eyes dark in the dim light of the room, and he bent over to pull on his boots before sliding off the gurney and facing his new master. “Good morning, Master Qui-Gon. You need not be concerned. I have already finished my meditation for this morning.”

“Ah, yes,” Qui-Gon nodded, turning from Obi-Wan to the hovering figure of Knight Tano. “That is… admirable, Obi-Wan. Such dedication speaks to your work ethic.”

Qui-Gon mentally groaned and wondered how he could be so well-known for his skills as a diplomat when a simple withering glance from Obi-Wan Kenobi turned him into a tongue-tied idiot.

“You are too kind, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan demurred, and with a last lingering glance at the bacta tank and its unconscious occupant, he stepped over to Qui-Gon, bowing his head in a show of respect. “I am ready to begin our training.”

*At least Tano’s feral instruction seemed to cover some manners,* Qui-Gon mused as he returned Obi-Wan’s bow with his own. “Very good. Well, I don’t suppose you’ve had breakfast yet, have you? Would you care to join me?”
“I had a protein bar before I left my room,” Obi-Wan replied, his gaze focused on the space in front of him.

*Of course you did,* Qui-Gon groaned to himself as he searched for something to do or say that would warm the cold atmosphere between them. This wasn’t going at all how he hoped, but it was only the very beginning of their time together and Qui-Gon had faith that, with enough time and effort, he would be able to win over Obi-Wan.

“Unfortunately, I did not,” Qui-Gon admitted, turning towards the door. “And I hardly think one protein bar is enough to carry you all the way to lunch. Why don’t you join me for breakfast? We can discuss your daily schedule.”

“Yes, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan replied in a neutral tone, falling into step behind him as they left Knight Tano silent and still in her bacta tank.

If Qui-Gon had had a vision for how his first day of training with Obi-Wan was going to go, the reality ended up nothing like he would have hoped for.

Upon entering the dining hall, Obi-Wan was besieged by his age-mates and friends, who all wanted to know how he was doing, how Knight Tano was faring, and to regale him with tales of what he had missed in their classes.

Obi-Wan seemed to come alive for his friends, assuring them that Knight Tano was doing well and he was none the worse for wear after the trauma of the Maerai Prime mission. The loud chatter of teenage Padawans grated on Qui-Gon’s nerves as he quietly nursed his plate of scrambled eggs and Corellian sausage, waiting for a polite moment to put an end to all the squawking and gossiping that reminded him of Nemoidian fishwives.

Thankfully, the sudden appearance of Mace Windu and his padawan, Depa, put an end to the youthful chatter, the padawans scattering like pigeons at the sight of the imposing Master of the Order.

Qui-Gon watched Obi-Wan’s face fall, watched his expression smooth over like a mask before he bowed his head respectfully to Mace and turned his attention back to picking over a Chandrillian quiche.

“Good morning, Master Jinn, Padawan Kenobi,” Mace began, his arms folded over his chest. “You’re up early, Qui-Gon. Is Obi-Wan rubbing off on you already?”

Summoning a smile to his face, Qui-Gon acknowledged his night owl tendencies. “Perhaps. Would you and Depa care to join us for breakfast?”

“That’s why we’re here,” Mace replied smoothly, sitting down opposite Qui-Gon as he instructed Depa to fetch their meals from the line. “How goes your first day of training?”

“Well,” Qui-Gon replied, taking a bite of his eggs, “Obi-Wan is a most conscientious student. He had already completed his morning meditations by the time I arrived.”

“Impressive,” Mace murmured, glancing over at Obi-Wan, who flushed and took a long drink of his citrus juice. “What do you have planned for the day?”
“I… we haven’t had a chance to discuss the schedule,” Qui-Gon admitted as Depa returned. “I’m assuming Obi-Wan has classes for most of the morning and that we would meet in the afternoon for his independent studies and saber drills.”

“What do you plan on working on this afternoon?” Mace asked as he tucked into his meal, Depa making quiet conversation with Obi-Wan about a class they were both a part of. “Anything I might be able to help with?”

Qui-Gon resisted the urge to snap that he did not need anyone’s assistance.

Mace was only trying to help him, to help smooth the transfer from Knight Tano’s unorthodox and attachment-prone coddling to Qui-Gon’s more traditional training style. It was not going to be a smooth transition, but having Mace there would add weight and gravitas to Qui-Gon’s teachings.

Obi-Wan would have to listen to him if the Master of the Order supported him.

“At the moment I think we will be returning to the basics,” Qui-Gon said, glancing over at Obi-Wan, who was studiously not looking at anyone. “I would like to see for myself how far Obi-Wan has advanced under Knight Tano’s tutelage.”

“Padawan Kenobi is quite adept at his saberwork,” Mace said with what might have almost been a smile on his face. “Depa tells me he routinely bests his fellow classmates.”

“I have no doubt.” Qui-Gon replied reaching over to pat Obi-Wan on the shoulder approvingly. The boy flinched slightly at his touch and Qui-Gon quickly pulled his hand back, wondering if he had overstepped his bounds and if Mace had noticed.

“Masters?” Depa murmured, her voice smooth and gentle. “Would you excuse Padawan Kenobi and I? Obi-Wan is still behind in his xeno-biology class from his time away from the Temple and I thought I might give him some of my notes from when I took that class.”

Mace nodded, taking a sip of his caf. “Yes, of course, Depa. Same time next week, Obi-Wan?”

The boy looked up from under his thick bangs and nodded. He turned his head just a little to Qui-Gon and asked softly, “If you will excuse me, Master Jinn?”

Qui-Gon waved Obi-Wan off, a strange feeling twisting in his gut. “Yes, of course, Obi-Wan. I will see you at 1300 hours, correct?”

“Yes, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured with a stiff bow and was gone with Depa into the swirl of the morning breakfast rush.

Qui-Gon watched the two padawans go before turning back to Mace, the other man’s gaze steady. Shaking his head, Qui-Gon confessed, “I did not realize how difficult this would be for Obi-Wan. I want only the best for him and yet I feel he sees me only as an interloper.”

Mace pursed his lips thoughtfully before speaking. “The bond between Obi-Wan and Ahsoka is strong. You will find the task you have set for yourself to be quite difficult. I would have advised you against it.”

“I could not leave Obi-Wan alone during this difficult time,” Qui-Gon insisted, his breakfast forgotten. “I was with him on Maerai Prime, Mace. I was there when Knight Tano was… when she was injured. I saw what happened to him, how it almost destroyed him. How can I abandon him to that despair now?”
“Your dedication to Obi-Wan is admirable, Qui-Gon,” Mace replied, finishing off his meal before he stood up. “But you cannot let it blind you to the truth of what it is that Obi-Wan wants. Sometimes the people we care for, do not want what we think is best for them.”

Confused, Qui-Gon looked up at Mace, who had raised his hand in greeting to another master passing by. “But is that not the role of a teacher, to guide the student down the correct path? To spare them unnecessary suffering because we know better?”

“Who’s to say Obi-Wan is not on the correct path?” Mace replied, his expression hard to read and his presence in the Force distant. “In all the years I have known Knight Tano, she has shown nothing but dedication to Obi-Wan and his education. As… original as her training methods may be, I cannot deny the result of her hard work. Obi-Wan is one of the brightest lights of his age-group. Perhaps you will find more success if you walk the path Obi-Wan is already on, instead of insisting he walk yours.”

And with that enigmatic statement, Mace took his leave of Qui-Gon, who was starting to suspect that perhaps the Korun master wasn’t as entirely supportive as Qui-Gon had believed.

The morning went too fast for Obi-Wan’s taste, each class passing in what felt like the blink of an eye. It didn’t help matters any that he was still trying to get caught up from his time on the Outer Rim with Satine, but his classmates and friends did their best to help him with notes and sneaking him the answers when a master called on him.

And to make things even worse, Master Plo Koon wasn’t there for Obi-Wan’s astronavigation class. It was one of Obi-Wan’s favorite classes and it felt like one sucker punch too many.

“Good morning, class,” Master Saesee Tiin said as he walked into the room. “As you can see, Master Plo Koon will not be teaching today or for the next few weeks. He has had an urgent mission come up, so I will be instructing you in his place. Now if you will activate your datapads and proceed to the entry on the Rishi Maze, I think you’ll find today’s problem quite a fun little challenge.”

Oh that’s just great! Master Plo’s gone off someplace too? Obi-Wan grumbled to himself as he pulled up the requested star chart. The Rishi Maze flickered to life in front of him, slowly spinning around as Master Tiin began a lecture about its unique gravitational properties.

Far more annoyed than he wanted to admit, Obi-Wan glared at the strange formation, turning it this way and that as Master Tiin droned on and on about the odd little dwarf galaxy that had been pulled inexorably to its death by the larger and more powerful galaxy they called home.

Navigation through the Rishi Maze was notoriously difficult and dangerous, hence the name, and on any other day, Obi-Wan would have been just as excited as his fellow classmates to take on such a challenge. He listened with one ear as he pulled the view out from the target formation, letting his mind wander as he strolled through the nearby systems. There was the eponymous Rishi and nearby was Kamino, a system Obi-Wan knew very little about. Next came Ukio and after that a system called Scarif, which oddly reminded him of the vision he had had when he was meditating.

This is childish. Master Ahsoka would not approve of this sulking. Obi-Wan told himself, determined
to return his focus back to his studies and not be the sullen child Qui-Gon Jinn seemed to think he was. *Enough. I need to pay attention.*

And yet, Obi-Wan scrolled on, a mulish, wounded part of him refusing to bow to his good intentions. Long minutes passed in a kind of numb absorption of useless knowledge as Master Tiin gave his classmates tips on how to account for the strange gravities in play in the dwarf galaxy. Obi-Wan could feel the curiosity in the room but it did not faze him or lift his black mood in the slightest.

*What is wrong with me? I need to be paying attention to this. What if I get sent out to this part of the galaxy? How will I be able to get around? Stop scrolling and pay attention, damn it!*

Despite his annoyance with himself, Obi-Wan felt a faint inclination towards the Kamino system and pulled it up instead, watching the storms and rough oceans roil through the small information screen in the lower corner of the datapad. He admired a holo of a large flying sea-creature that was apparently used as a form of transportation on the planet. There was little information on the people of Kamino, the files only saying they were a tall, elongated species that were isolationist in nature and had not chosen to join the Republic when the offer was made a millennia ago.

Obi-Wan wondered what it was like to grow up on a planet that rarely saw the sun, to never have solid ground beneath your feet and to not know the feel of dry land or the peaceful green shadows of a forest.

He was fairly certain he would have hated it.

“I’ll be expecting your routes tomorrow morning,” Master Tinn announced as the lights came back up in the classroom and the other students started gathering their things up. “And remember, I don’t want the fastest route, I want the safest route. There’s no point in arriving at your destination first if you’re dead.”

There was a scattering of laughter from the rest of the class as they started to drift out of the room in twos and threes, and Obi-Wan was on his way to meet up with Quinlan and Luminara outside when Master Tiin called him back.

“Padawan Kenobi? A moment please?”

Obi-Wan took a breath, reminding himself to be calm, and walked up to the front of the room where the Iktotchi master was scanning through a datapad. He put it aside when Obi-Wan approached him.

“You wanted to see me, Master Tiin?” Obi-Wan asked with a respectful bow of his head.

“Yes,” Master Tiin smiled, his expression softening as much as his sharp features could allow. “I’m glad to see you back in class. But I sense you were not as interested in the Rishi Maze as your fellows.”

It was then that Obi-Wan remembered that Iktotchi were telepathic and Master Tiin could have heard every dark and angry thought that had run through his head during the class. He flushed, feeling a sudden swell of panic rise up in his gut as he searched for the right words to cover up his mistake.

“I’m sorry, Master Tiin,” Obi-Wan stammered, looking at the floor. “Please forgive my disrespect. I wi-“

“It’s fine, Obi-Wan,” Master Tiin said, waving off the young man’s apologies. “You are not the first student of mine to tune me out during a personal tragedy and you will not be the last. It is the nature of grief to sap our strength when we need it most.”
Obi-Wan had nothing to say to that so he merely nodded in a way that he hoped showed his remorse.

“I know this is hard for you,” Master Tiin murmured, looking back at Obi-Wan as he motioned toward the door for them to leave. “I can sense your anger and your sadness. It can be tempting to give into those emotions. To let the anger protect you from grief and loss, from the fear of losing your master.”

Frowning, Obi-Wan looked off to the side, wondering just how bad his shields were if Master Tiin could pick all of that up just from him sulking in Astronavigation class.

“No one expects you to recover from your loss overnight,” Master Tiin said as they stepped out into the hallway. “It will take time to work through your feelings, to process what happened to you and to your master on Maerai Prime. And if you ever need someone to talk to, someone who can be a bit more impartial than perhaps Master Jinn or Master Windu, I am always willing to listen.”

Obi-Wan nodded, giving Master Tiin a deep and thankful bow that covered his surprise. “Thank you, Master Tiin. That is a very generous offer. I… I will think about it.”

Down at the end of the hallway, his Padawan friends Quinlan, Luminara and Yuen Rast were all doing their best to hide behind a column, spying on Obi-Wan and Master Tiin’s conversation. Quinlan and Luminara were trying and failing, Obi-Wan noted, but Yuen had angled himself so that he seemed to blend into the shadows as the three waited for Obi-Wan, the trio radiating concern and worry.

“It seems I have kept you too long, Padawan Kenobi,” Master Tiin chuckled, looking down the hallway at the three padawans with a nod. “Your friends are waiting for you. Give them my regards and make sure you get a copy of Padawan Unduli’s notes. While I will not expect a route through the Rishi Maze from you tomorrow, I will expect to see one on my desk the day after.”

“Yes, Master Tiin,” Obi-Wan said, taking his leave with another bow of his head before he hurried to his friends, who surged out from behind the column to meet him.

“What happened? What did Master Tiin want with you?” Luminara asked, her brows furrowed. Quinlan peered around Obi-Wan, his lips pursed, the golden line across his nose wrinkling as he watched Master Tiin walk away in the opposite direction. “Did he yell at you? Did he read your mind? Are you in trouble? Do you have to do extra homework?”

Yuen gave Quinlan a look and shook his head. “That’s not helpful, Vos.”

“No, I’m not in trouble,” Obi-Wan explained as the quartet headed toward the dining hall for lunch. “He just wanted to ask me how I was doing, that’s all. And that I should ask Luminara for her notes.”

“My notes?” Luminara asked, confused. “Why? Weren’t you paying attention? It was a most fascinating lecture. The gravitational anomalies of the Rishi Maze are something I thought you would be interested in as well.”

Yuen and Quinlan gave Luminara a look and she held up her hands. “Yes, of course you can borrow my notes. I’m sure you’ll need them for whatever crazy mission you and your master get sent on next.”

“Speaking of Masters,” Quinlan asked as the four Padawans passed into the main dining hall and fell into line behind a clutch of giggling younglings, “how’s your first day with Jinn going?”
Obi-Wan rolled his eyes and let out a groan. “He tracked me down like a bloody kath hound. I was meditating with Master Ahsoka when he showed up. Uninvited, I might add.”

Luminara placed a hand on Obi-Wan’s shoulder as Quinlan muttered a few choice Kiffar curses on his behalf.

“Master Lia told me you are welcome to join us for our afternoon training session if you’re not ready to work with Master Jinn,” Yuen offered softly as they worked their way through the line.

“Mine too,” Quinlan confided with a wide grin. “Of course, you might not like training with me and the old man. He’s kind of tough if you’re not used to him.”

“Why didn’t you tell the Council you wanted to train with Master Plo Koon?” Luminara asked as the four headed to a table on the edges of the crowded room. “He’s your grandmaster and I know he dotes on you. I’m certain he would have taken you on while Knight Tano is recuperating.”

Obi-Wan frowned at his food, finding the nerf bangers and mash suddenly not quite so appealing. He took a long swig of his muja juice to stall for time while he tried to come up with something other than the truth: Qui-Gon was blackmailing him for maybe, possibly touching the Dark side on Maerai Prime.

“He had an important mission come up,” Obi-Wan finally said, deciding that made as much sense as anything else he could have come up with. “He didn’t have time to take me on.”

Luminara, Quinlan and Yuen all exchanged a look and decided not to press their friend any further.

“Obi-Wan! My friend! It’s so good to see you!” A warm, cheerful voice boomed across the dining hall and the four padawans looked up to see their classmate Kit Fisto heading their way with a broad smile on his face. He slid into place next to Luminara, capping their end of the long table they were seated at. “How are you? I’m sorry I didn’t say hello in class but I forgot to do my mathematics homework.”

Giving Kit a weak smile, Obi-Wan stabbed listlessly at his food. “I’m doing quite well considering the circumstances, Kit.”

“Is it true that Master Jinn is training you while Master Plo is on a mission?” Kit asked, tucking into his meal of a rich krill broth made specifically for Nautolans and the other aquatic species that lived in the Temple. “I heard in my morning calisthenics class that he’s gone to Maerai Prime to investigate what happened to you and your master.”

Obi-Wan, Luminara, Quinlan, and Yuen looked at Kit with round eyes.

“You didn’t know?” Kit blinked, confused. “But he’s your grandmaster?”

Frowning back at his food, Obi-Wan tried to process this new information. Master Plo had gone to Maerai Prime? What did that mean? Was he going to look for the terrorists that planted the bomb that nearly killed Ahsoka? Was he going to look into the earlier attacks? Why was Master Plo going and not someone else?

Why couldn’t he have stayed on Coruscant?

Why didn’t Obi-Wan just tell the Council and damn the consequences? Satine had already said she would let Obi-Wan come stay in her home if the Order kicked him out, hadn’t she? And as Anakin got stronger, he was going to need someone to protect him and teach him the ways of the Force if Shmi didn’t want to let the Order train him. And if Ahsoka passed into the Force then he knew, Obi-
wan knew, that Qui-Gon Jinn was going to petition the Council to take him as his permanent Padawan Learner and Obi-Wan would not agree to that.

He would take his chances on Mandalore and with Culling Blade before he let Qui-Gon Jinn become his real Jedi Master.

“Who sent Master Plo on the mission?” Quinlan asked, greedily working his way through his lunch. “I tried to ask the old man but he wouldn’t tell me anything. Just muttered something about people sticking their noses in where they didn’t belong.”

“He said Master Plo is sticking his nose in where it doesn’t belong?” Yuen said, looking scandalized.

“Nah,” Quinlan shook his head. “I think he was talking about somebody else. That old guy who does Makashi and scowls at you if you so much as breathe in his presence. What’s his name?”

“Master Dooku,” Luminara said, her voice cool and remote as it always was whenever she referred to a superior. “But he can’t send anyone on a mission. He’s been off the Council for ages.”

“No, no!” Kit shook his head, his head tails twitching with annoyance. “Master Windu sent Master Plo on the mission. And I heard, that when he comes back, if Knight Tano isn’t better, he’ll take Obi-Wan on himself.”

“From who?” Yuen asked, not believing a word of it without a proper source.

“Depa Billaba,” Kit grinned with a big toothy smile.

Obi-Wan’s head jerked up and he turned to look at Kit. “Are you serious? Depa said that? She didn’t tell me and I saw her this morning.”

Kit shrugged enigmatically. “I’m just telling you what I heard. Maybe she heard it later? She’s almost ready for her trials, you know. That’s a lot of intensive personal training with Master Windu, so she probably overheard them while she was working on Vapaad in the training rooms.”

Like the first brilliant ray of sunlight after a week of torrential storms, Obi-Wan felt something like hope return to him.

Master Plo hadn’t abandoned him after all.

He wasn’t doomed to spend the rest of his time at the Jedi Temple tied to a man who had nearly gotten his master killed and was convinced Obi-Wan had fallen to the Dark side. If he could just bide his time, if he could get through the next few weeks, then Master Plo would be back and Obi-Wan would be free of Qui-Gon Jinn again.

“Speaking of that, can you believe he’s teaching her Vapaad?” Luminara gasped in a combination of shock and awe. “My master thinks it’s most unusual to train one so young in such a dangerous form.”

“I asked the old man if I could study Vapaad with Master Windu and he told me to mind my own business,” Quinlan grinned. “What about you, Kit?”

“I don’t think Vapaad is for me,” Kit laughed, enjoying his lunch. “I’m sure I’d cut one of my tails off. I tried jar’kai with Obi-Wan and his master once and I had to go to the Halls of Healing!”

Finding that his hunger had returned to him, Obi-Wan pointed a finger at Kit as he shoveled in a large mouthful of buttered mash. “That’s because you didn’t turn the power in your saber down like
Master Ahsoka told you to. She’s got montrals and head tails and she knew yours were too sensitive for any kind of strike.”

“I’m not a youngling!” Kit gaped, offended. “I just… wasn’t watching where my saber was going.”

“This is why you tie your hair back,” Luminara retorted, straightening her own headdress. “Honestly, how do you ever get anything done with those things waving about?”

Kit responded with another cheeky grin and what Obi-Wan could only describe as a threat display, his myriad of head tails all twitching and wiggling like a mass of Galenta grass snakes and just as harmless. Quinlan burst out laughing as Luminara rolled her eyes and Yuen smiled at the game attempt at humor.

“I’m sure that’s terrifying underwater, Kit,” Obi-Wan replied with a smirk. “Next time we have scuba classes you’ll have to show us.”

“I’m not sure you dry-landers could handle it,” came Kit’s swift retort and the five padawans spent the rest of their lunch chatting and gossiping about much lighter topics, to Obi-Wan’s great relief.

After lunch, and a quick check up with Nurse Solva in the Halls of Healing— Yes, his master was fine and, no, she hadn’t improved since that morning— Obi-Wan was standing in the Northern Solar room waiting for Qui-Gon Jinn to begin his first lesson.

Obi-Wan stood in the middle of the room, his hands resting on his hips just above his sabers as he watched Qui-Gon consult a datapad before stepping out of the shadows of the benches and onto the sparring floor.

“Put one of those away,” Qui-Gon said, gesturing to Obi-Wan’s belt, tone dismissive. “I will not be instructing you in jar’kai.”

The way he said “jar’kai” made Obi-Wan’s hackles rise in defense of his master and a sharp retort came to mind, but he pushed it down and tried to remind himself that his time with Master Jinn was temporary at most. Either his master would recover or Master Plo Koon would return and take Obi-Wan on as his padawan learner.

He needed to think of Master Jinn as just a momentarily bit of unpleasantness before his life returned to normal. Obi-Wan would be polite as Ahsoka and Plo Koon would expect of him but he would not give the hulking man in front of him the satisfaction of his respect or even the faintest stirrings of affection.

Obi-Wan would never give him the satisfaction of the warm, friendly relationship Qui-Gon Jinn seemed to want to have with him. He was not his master, not his mentor, and after the way Qui-Gon had treated him, Obi-Wan saw Qui-Gon Jinn as little more than an obstacle he had to patiently find a way around.

“Obi-Wan?” Qui-Gon said, a slight edge in his voice. “The lightsaber? Pick one and we shall begin.”

Resisting the desire to roll his eyes, Obi-Wan pulled both blades off his waist and compared them, trying to decide which one to leave on the bench. They were equally matched, balanced for each hand, and while Obi-Wan initially wanted to go with his right blade, the Force gently nuded him
towards the left blade, the one he had given to Ahsoka after she had pawned her sabers to save Shmi and Anakin.

Nodding at the Force’s wisdom, Obi-Wan gently floated his other blade over to the far benches, turning his best expressionless gaze to Qui-Gon.

“Does Knight Tano permit such flagrant use of the Force?” Qui-Gon asked, an eyebrow arched over his disapproving face. “The Living Force does not exist to aid your laziness, Padawan. You disrespect it and your teachers when you use it in such a manner.”

His lips pursing just slightly, Obi-Wan inhaled and gave Qui-Gon his best attempt at an apologetic bow. “I’m sorry, Master Jinn. I thought it would… expedite the beginning of my lesson.”

“You let me worry about the lesson plan,” Qui-Gon said, walking towards Obi-Wan and then around him. “Let’s see what you can do. Shall we spar?”

Surprised, Obi-Wan looked up at Qui-Gon. “You want me to spar with you?”

Qui-Gon nodded. “Yes. Is that something you are not capable of? Do you find your skills with a single blade not up to the task?”

Anger simmered deep in Obi-Wan’s gut and he shook his head, still polite. He was nothing if he was not polite. “Not at all, Master Jinn. What is the end goal? A time limit? Disarming?”

First blood? Obi-Wan grumbled to himself as he relaxed back into a Soresu stance his master favored. It wasn’t that he wanted to bring harm to Qui-Gon but wasn’t particularly in the mood to have his entire style of fighting excoriated by a man who had lost in a duel to his master. On top of that, he felt strangely lopsided and unbalanced without his other blade.

“Let’s just see how far you get, young one,” Qui-Gon chuckled and took the basic Shii-cho opening position. “I will even give you the benefit of the first--“

Obi-Wan didn’t wait for Qui-Gon to invite him to attack: he charged at him with an overhead strike in the Djem Sho style, flowing into a spinning attack his master called the Whirlwind.

If Qui-Gon was a master of Ataru, the dynamic form full of leaping attacks and powerful attempts to overwhelm and enemy’s defenses, then Obi-Wan felt the best form of defense was to go on offense against it. Djem Sho had been Ahsoka’s master’s preferred form of combat and Obi-Wan knew it well.

“That’s a very aggressive opening,” Qui-Gon chuckled after they spun apart, tossing his long hair over his shoulder. “Djem Sho, is it? Is that Knight Tano’s favored form?”

Obi-Wan didn’t have a chance to answer. Qui-Gon took up the offensive himself, moving into one of the basic Ataru attacks, twisting his massive body in the air and using the momentum to bring extra strength to bear on his opponent’s blade.

Managing to dodge the attack, Obi-Wan was kept on the defensive as Qui-Gon methodically advanced strike after strike, never using the full breadth of his experience to defeat Obi-Wan while showing that there was no comparison between the two of them.

Obi-Wan was clearly outmatched, and it showed.

After about five minutes, if that, Qui-Gon came to a stop and held up his hand. “That’s enough, Obi-Wan. I’ve learned what I needed to. As I thought, you rely too heavily on your second blade.
You’ve neglected the basics of your practice in the name of style.”

“Jar’kai is not ‘style’,” Obi-Wan retorted before he could think better, and he bit his tongue and stood up a little taller.

*You have to be better than he is. You have to be the Jedi Master Ahsoka and Plo Koon believe you can be.*

“It doesn’t matter, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon sighed, shaking his head. “Your forms are too casual, too… sloppy. While they may be effective paired with whatever unorthodox defenses Knight Tano employs, they are not doing you any favors right now. I could have disarmed you at least four or five times during that bit of work. An opponent, a true enemy, will not be as kind as I was.”

“Yes, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan managed to grit out, returning his blade to his belt. “How do you wish to proceed?”

“We’ll start with the basics,” Qui-Gon said, stepping away from the middle of the dueling floor. “Show me Shii Cho Seras Kai.”

“Seras Kai?!” Obi-Wan protested, gaping at Qui-Gon. “I am not a youngling! I do not require remedial lessons in basic forms, Master Jinn.”

It had taken every bit of Obi-Wan’s schooling and manners to remember to add Qui-Gon’s title in his retort.

“That’s not what our sparring tells me,” Qui-Gon replied, shaking his head, a frown on his face. “The basic forms are the fundamental building blocks of combat. If your Seras Kai form is weak, everything that flows from it, particularly Soresu and Djem Sho, which you seem to favor, will be weak as well. But why listen to me? Prove me wrong, Padawan Kenobi. Show me a perfect Seras Kai formation.”

Glaring at Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan marched into the center of the training floor and took up a flawless first stance, his saber at his side and his weight balanced evenly between the balls of his feet. Although he hadn’t thought of the movements and footwork for any Shii Cho form in years, let alone Seras Kai, the memories of the steps and movements came easily to him, stored in his muscles for just such an occasion.

An upward strike flowed into an overhead block, which spun into a side block and a defensive turn. Then there was the attacking portion, a series of overhead strikes pieced together by simple movements that culminated in a dramatic swing of his blade and a return to the opening stance.

It was as easy as breathing and once he was done, Obi-Wan turned to Qui-Gon, an almost smug expression on his face.

“Again,” Qui-Gon said, his brows furrowed, his arms crossed over his chest. “Your stance isn’t low enough.”

Returning to the middle of the floor with a brusque, “Yes, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan repeated the form, sinking deeper into each stance and trying to make each move sheer perfection, struggling to find the balance within himself without his second blade.

Obi-Wan was almost done when Qui-Gon called out. “You’re moving too fast. Start again. Focus on your breath and deepening your stance. Each movement should correspond to an inhale or an exhale.”
“Yes, Master Jinn.”

Obi-Wan began again, trying to meet some kind of imagined, impossible ideal that he was sure Qui-Gon had in his head. He worked through each movement, trying to slow down and exaggerate his actions.

“You’re not breathing, Obi-Wan. Connect to your breath and feel the Living Force flowing through you. From the beginning, please.”

“Yes, Master Jinn.”

This continued on for almost three hours, although thankfully Qui-Gon allowed Obi-Wan to move onto another form after an hour of Seras Kai practice. That form, Seras Kal, was more involved and Obi-Wan did not get very far into the form before Qui-Gon ordered him to stop, emerging from the shadows of the bench to correct his form by hand.

“You have to keep your elbows in,” Qui-Gon said, reaching out to pull Obi-Wan’s left elbow closer to his body. “Try the turn now. I think you’ll find it much easier and faster.”

Much to Obi-Wan’s annoyance, it was.

“Yes, that’s much better,” Qui-Gon nodded, stepping backwards. “You have talent for the blade, Obi-Wan. With some hard work, you could easily catch up to your age mates in a few months.”

“If you say so, Master Jinn,” was all Obi-Wan said, wiping the sweat from his forehead as the hourly chimes echoed through the Temple. “Do you mind if I get a drink of water, Master Jinn?”

Qui-Gon narrowed his eyes for a moment before the expression melted away and an attempt at understanding took its place on the aquiline features of the master. “Why don’t we call it a day? You’ve done very well today, Obi-Wan. I’m certain you’ll see the wisdom of my plan at your next sparring class with Master Drallig. That’s tomorrow, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Obi-Wan said, pushing his hot and heavy bangs back from his forehead. “At 0900 hours.”

“I shall be in attendance,” Qui-Gon replied with a small smile. “Now if you’ll pardon me, I have an appointment I cannot be late for. Do not forget your evening meditations and your assignments, Obi-Wan. I will see you tomorrow morning.”

And with that, Qui-Gon Jinn turned away from Obi-Wan and strode out of the training hall without a backwards glance, leaving the young man a combination of confused and relieved.

Reaching out, letting the Force swirl around and through him, Obi-Wan called his second lightsaber to his hand and tucked it into his belt, balance and order restored to his world for the time being.

Please get better soon, Master Ahsoka. I’m not sure how much more of this I can take.

Chapter End Notes

Hello my dears! How is everybody doing?

I'm sorry this is soooo late. I know I said I was going to postpone for a week and then Life Things(tm) happened and the chapter was postponed again. My partner Lily
Conrad was diagnosed with epilepsy so things have been very hectic and stressful in the Death Star these days. This means that if there are egregious grammar and spelling mistakes, they're all my own because Lily's not going over my work with a fine toothed comb anymore.

Yes, now you all know my dark secret. I cannot spell for sht. XD

But we're back in action now! Woohoo! Obi-Wan is working on his inner sass master, Qui-Gon is... continuing to disappoint everyone really and Obi-Wan's friends are adorable! No Anakin, Shmi or Satine this time but they're there in spirit and more than willing to hide Obi-Wan away from the galaxy's most annoying Jedi Master. XD

And as always, you can join me for Star Wars fun at Fireflyfish
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

After being assigned to study with Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi finds himself frustrated with the pace of his instructions. Vowing to patiently wait until his master, Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano, recovers from her time in the Halls of Healing, Obi-Wan struggles with his anger and finds a safe haven in the home of the Duchess of Mandalore, where the newest additions to House Kryze, Shmi and Anakin Skywalker, are trying to get used to life in the Galactic Republic.

But recovery is a slow process, trying the patience of even the most stalwart and loyal of padawans...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Again.”

“Yes, Master Jinn.”

Obi-Wan took up the opening stance of Shii-cho Seras Kae and closed his eyes, letting the cool air of the training room fill up his lungs as he pictured his anger and frustration icing over. It would do no good to argue with Qui-Gon, who would only make him go through the whole movement again as punishment. The last time Obi-Wan had asked to work with both his sabers, or at least move onto one of the more complex forms, had resulted in a half-hour lecture on the importance of listening to one’s elders and an in-depth review of how Shii-cho’s basic formations represented the fundamental aspects of a Jedi’s life.

“You may begin when you are ready, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon said, his arms folded over his chest and his face impossible to read.

*It is against the Jedi Code to murder your elder,* Obi-Wan told himself as he exhaled and moved into the first upward strike and then lost his dark feelings to the movement and the impossible search for perfection Qui-Gon Jinn had set up for him.

Four minutes later, panting and his legs quivering, Obi-Wan waited for instruction.

“Again,” Qui-Gon shook his head. “You’re not breathing in time with the movements, Obi-Wan. You must flow through each strike and block, as if powered by the Force itself. You are too stiff. I can see you thinking through each step. Each action—” Qui-Gon paused to break into a leaping kick, followed by a twisting attack that ended with his lighstaber ignited, the green blade humming at his side. “Must be instantaneous. If you have to think of what your next move is, you’ve already lost.”

Obi-Wan tried not to roll his eyes and bowed his head. “Yes, Master Jinn.”

*I did not have these problems when I trained with Master Ahsoka!* Obi-Wan scowled to the ground as he marched back over to his starting position. *In fact, before you showed up and blackmailed me*
“Again, Obi-Wan. Try to move without thought this time,” Qui-Gon instructed as he stepped back to the edge of the training floor.

Gritting his teeth, Obi-Wan moved again through Shii-cho Seras Kae, too busy thinking of colorful explicatives to call Qui-Gon in a wide variety of languages, to really pay much attention to his bladework. Each insult and invective was matched with an offensive strike.

By the time Obi-Wan was finished he had made his way to Huttese and was moving on to Mandalorian, muttering “Skanah” under his breath as he held the final position and waited for Qui-Gon’s decree.

“Impressive,” a deep voice rumbled from behind Obi-Wan and he glanced over his shoulder, surprised to see Master Dooku standing in the doorway, a faintly pleased look on his face.

“At ease, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon said, gesturing for Obi-Wan to take a break as he hurried across the training floor to greet their guest. “Master, what a surprise. I didn’t know you were coming to watch Obi-Wan train.”

“That was because I did not tell you I was coming,” Dooku replied coolly, somehow towering over Qui-Gon even though he was only a few inches taller at most. “I wished to observe your work with Padawan Kenobi absent the added pressure of my presence.”

Obi-Wan took a long sip of water from the canister and sat down with an exhausted sigh on one of the benches in the cool shade and watched the former master and padawan talk about him as if he wasn’t there.

“Ah, well, as you can see I am working with Obi-Wan on the fundamentals,” Qui-Gon said, not even bothering to look back at the young man in question. “I felt… given the unorthodox nature of Tano’s training that I needed to…”

“Insult Cin Drallig’s teachings?” Dooku said look down at Qui-Gon with an almost withering sigh. “Is that not who trained Kenobi in the basic forms?”

Qui-Gon opened his mouth to say something and then thought better of it, taking a moment to collect himself. “Of course not, Master. I was merely ensuring that Obi-Wan had a firm grounding in the fundamentals of lightsaber combat.”

Obi-Wan watched in a kind of bemused exhaustion as the two Jedi masters talked, Qui-Gon putting far more thought and care into what he said to Master Dooku than he ever did with Obi-Wan. It was strange to see Qui-Gon’s power stripped away by the presence of his master and in a moment of insight, Obi-Wan realized that no matter how old a Jedi was, they would always be a padawan learner to their former master.

I can’t imagine what life would have been like as a part of this lineage, Obi-Wan thought to himself as he took another long sip of water and watched Dooku and Qui-Gon argue over whether or not Obi-Wan could advance onto studying Makashi, which he had mastered three years ago if anyone had bothered to look at his record. Not exactly “mastered” but I passed all my tests with excellent marks. Even Master Ahsoka was impressed!

Of course that was the primary difference between Qui-Gon and Ahsoka, Obi-Wan thought. Where Qui-Gon was serious and autocratic in his instructions, Ahsoka brought a sense of play and generosity to her teachings. There were no lectures with Ahsoka, or at least not many, and especially
not unasked for ones that were more punitive than instructional.

Oh how he missed her.

“Master, perhaps we should continue our discussion at another time?” Qui-Gon finally managed to grit out, his arms folded over his chest. “Obi-Wan and I have much work to do and—”

“And you are wasting both our time with your prideful nonsense,” Dooku shook his head, turning his gaze to Obi-Wan, who sat up straight and set his water canister to the side. “Come here Padawan Kenobi and show me Makashi Taerasi Kai.”

Obi-Wan could feel Qui-Gon bristling as he stood up and walked into the middle of the training floor and took up the opening stance, his blade at his side, feet spaced evenly apart. He could hear his master’s words in his head as he activated his blade and saluted the central spire of the Temple.

*Makashi is all about skill and observation. Your movements should be fast and precise to take advantage of an opponent’s weakness.*

Fast and precise, Obi-Wan could do.

The formation opened with a sharp flurry of offensive strikes and then a quick and fluid retreat, covered by a flash of bladework. The form carried Obi-Wan back and forth across the floor, moving through a defensive block and then into offense before he ended with a lunging strike. Panting heavily, Obi-Wan held the pose until Master Dooku indicated he could relax.

There was silence in the training room as the two masters observed the exhausted padawan trying to ignore the pain in his arms and legs.

After what seemed like an eternity, Master Dooku spoke. “Although you lack a certain elan in your movements, Padawan Kenobi, it is clear you paid close attention to Master Drallig’s instructions.”

Obi-Wan glanced up at Master Dooku and then over at Qui-Gon, who nodded at Obi-Wan to indicate that he could stand up and relax out of the pose. Trying not to let out an audible gasp of relief, Obi-Wan deactivated his blade and bowed his head to both masters. “Thank you, Master Dooku.”

Was that a compliment?

“As I told you before, Obi-Wan is a very conscientious student, Master,” Qui-Gon said, stepping between his master and Obi-Wan, struggling to take control of the situation. “I am sure we will move into Makashi shortly.”

“Then you will be wasting this boy’s time as well as my own,” Dooku sniffed, turned away and walked to the far side of the room and exit.

And without another word, Master Dooku turned the corner and vanished into the Temple, leaving Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan to stand awkwardly in the middle of the training room which suddenly seemed cavernously empty.

A long moment passed, Obi-Wan studiously avoiding Qui-Gon’s gaze, before the Jedi master spoke, exhaustion in his voice. “You are dismissed, Obi-Wan. I will see you tomorrow morning.”

“Yes, Master Jinn.”
“What did that mean?” Satine asked Obi-Wan as she sat with Anakin on her lap, trying to bring some semblance of order to his pale blond curls. “Does that mean he supports your jar’kai?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea what it meant,” Obi-Wan groaned, slumping backwards against the plush indigo squabs of Satine’s couch. “It might mean I don’t need all this karking remedial instruction or he thinks Jinn should jump ahead to Makashi or maybe it means I should just forget about Makashi altogether and take up nerf herding on Gingensu.”

“Nerfs!” Anakin giggled, clapping his hands together before explaining in Mandalorian that he liked nerfs.

Satine smiled as she parted Anakin’s soft, fine hair on one side. “I do too, Anakin. They’re quite sweet and gentle creatures. Aunt Julia has a herd of them on Kalevala. Bo-Kat and I saw them the first time we visited Uncle Tiber’s estate.”

But Anakin had already moved onto playing with the eternity knot Obi-Wan had just brought him from the Temple. It was designed for the creche and it was made of three, large interlocking rings, made of what looked like milky crystal but were light enough to be picked up by even the smallest of youngling. Obi-Wan had managed to convince his old Wookie creche master to let him borrow one from her group under the condition that he came and played with her latest clutch of children. Obi-Wan had agreed, reluctantly, but the delight on Anakin’s eyes when he received the Force imbued toy made it all worth it.

“Speaking of Bo-Katan, how is she?” Obi-Wan asked, plucking a delicious looking sandwich off the tray of snacks helpfully provided by Didia. “Is she still on Kalevala?”

“Yes, unfortunately,” Satine sighed, bowing her head. “I have asked to have her sent to me on Coruscant but Cousin Pre does not think it is safe for her to travel. Not after what happened to me.”

“Ah,” Obi-Wan nodded, seeing the wisdom in that. “It must be very hard for you both, to be away from each other for so long.”

“Yes, it is,” Satine nodded, finishing up her work on Anakin’s hair and lifting him off her lap. “There we are, Little Dragon. You look quite dashing if I do say so myself.”

Anakin flashed a bright smile and both Obi-Wan and Satine before he darted into the next room where his mother was working. “Mama! Look! Obi-Wan brought it!”

Satine chuckled softly, watching the little boy run off before turning back to Obi-Wan. “Before you went to Maerai Prime, I had hoped maybe you and Master Ahsoka could go to Kalevala to bring her back to me on Coruscant but I will not ask that of you now.”

“I cannot see Master Jinn agreeing to that, I’m afraid,” Obi-Wan sighed, shaking his head. “But that doesn’t mean another Jedi couldn’t go in my stead and I know how much you miss your sister.”

Trying to summon a smile to her face, Satine nodded as she stood up. “Yes but enough about me. You have come here seeking reprieve from a truly odious man and I am being a terrible hostess.”

“Nonsense,” Obi-Wan said, standing as well and offering the Duchess his arm. “I am here to see my friends, that is all. There is no need to stand on ceremony with me.”

“Yes, well, be that as it may, Shmi and I have every intention of spoiling you while you’re here with
us,” Satine said, as they walked out into the courtyard, where an spray of flowering grass tumbled out of a artfully arranged rectangular planter. “It’s the least we can do after your help on the holo last night with Anakin’s episode.”

“There is no need, truly,” Obi-Wan shook his head as they made a leisurely circuit of the inner courtyard, the hustle and bustle of Coruscant nearly forgotten in the middle of such beautiful gardens. “I’m sorry I couldn’t be here in person to help Anakin but there was no way I could have snuck out of the Temple without someone noticing and telling Master Jinn.”

“I know,” Satine nodded, glancing over at the room where Shmi was talking with Didia as she worked, Anakin happily trying to levitate his new toy. “But the minute he saw you, he started to calm down. It was like day and night. Whatever nightmare terrified him seemed to flee when confronted with your presence.”

“I’m just glad I could help,” Obi-Wan confessed as they finished another lap in the courtyard and moved towards the room where Shmi and Anakin were. He held the door open and they walked in together, arm in arm. “In whatever small way I could.”

“He slept with the holoviewer for the rest of the night, you know,” Satine confessed, leaning against Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “And he always insists we tuck him in with the robe you gave him the last time you were here.”

Obi-Wan felt a sudden swell of affection for the little boy. “Well… it was one of my more comfortable robes. I can understand why he’d like it.”

“He likes it because it reminds him of you,” Shmi said as she stood up, walking over to Obi-Wan for a hug and a kiss on the cheek. “I’m sorry I didn’t come to see you sooner but I wanted to finish the household inventory first.”

“Hello, Shmi,” Obi-Wan smiled, responding in kind to Shmi’s greeting. “I hope I didn’t cause too much of a distraction with my unexpected arrival.”

Shmi laughed at that, shaking her head as if Obi-Wan had just told the best joke. “Unexpected? Anakin told us you were coming.”

Stunned at this, Obi-Wan glanced down at Anakin, who had pulled the hood of Obi-Wan’s old robe up over his head and was grinning proudly as he tried to “hide” behind his mother’s leg. The eternity knot was now bundled up under his arm, wadded up brown wool wrapped around it. “Anakin? Did you know I was coming to see you?”

Peeking out from under his hood, his blue eyes sparkling with mischief, Anakin let out a torrent of excited giggles. He darted over to Satine and tried to burrow himself into her voluminous skirt, hiding from Obi-Wan’s questioning gaze. Satine just rolled her eyes and fluffed the layers of her skirt to aid in Anakin’s protection. “Well it wasn’t so much that he told us but…”

“He started chanting your name and ran to the front parlor,” Shmi chuckled as she went to pick up her son, who was a very happy, squirming boy. “Ordus was kind enough to alert us both.”

“Obi!” Anakin laughed, holding out the creche toy for one and all to admire. “It’s from Obi!”

“I was meaning to ask you, Obi-Wan,” Shmi said as she gently lowered Anakin’s arm and led the four of them out to the courtyard. “What is this for?”

“It’s a training toy,” Obi-Wan explained, offering Satine his arm as they moved back outside. “It will teach Anakin the rudimentary basics of moving objects with the Force. Hopefully it will teach him a
“Why is that?” Satine asked as she took her seat under the vine wrapped pergola, making sure there was enough room for Shmi on the couch with her.

Obi-Wan sat down in a comfortable side chair, the anger and frustration from dealing with Qui-Gon for the past two weeks slowly draining out of him. “Because when I used it, I felt like I was a real Jedi, like my heroes.”

“That is positively adorable!” Satine gushed, reaching over to squeeze Obi-Wan’s hand, much to his embarrassment. Shmi was also sighing over how sweet he was and the combined might of their cooing was enough to make Obi-Wan want to pull his own hood up over his head and hide just like Anakin.

“Yes, well, enough about my terribly boring childhood,” Obi-Wan grumbled, waving off any more praise from his friends. “How goes the naturalization process?”

Satine rolled her eyes and let out a long groan. “It’s hell, Obi-Wan. Absolute hell.”

“It is not,” Shmi chastised Satine, gently patting her leg as Anakin tried to wriggle his way to freedom. “You are always so dramatic, my dear. And to answer your question, it is going very slow, Obi-Wan, and patience is not something they teach Mandalorians.”

“I’ve noticed,” Obi-Wan replied, giving Satine a wry smile, who folded her arms over her chest and glared at him. “I thought you said Count Vizla convinced the Ruling Council to acquiesce to your request to bring Shmi and Anakin into the House of Kryze?”

Shmi explained that getting the Ruling Council’s permission was the easiest part of the citizenship process. There needed to be a formal investigation into Shmi’s background to ensure she was not a danger to Mandalore or the Republic, followed by more interviews than Satine thought were strictly necessary. While all of that was going on, Shmi and Anakin needed to have visas procured for them so that they could leave Satine’s official residence, which was considered Mandalorian sovereign territory.

“The only place they can go is either to the embassy, to the senate building or stay at home!” Satine moaned, covering her face with her hand. “Didia says it could take up to six months for the visas to be procured.”

“How long have you been waiting for them?” Obi-Wan asked as he leaned over to pick up Anakin, who had managed to slip free during the retelling of his family’s fight for citizenship. Happily ensconced in Obi-friend’s lap, Anakin proceeded to play with his new toy, trying to figure out how it worked and why it felt so wonderfully warm and happy to his special senses.

“Two weeks already,” Shmi replied with a patient smile. “And the visas will come. We simply must be patient until then. Like you and Master Ahsoka. How is she? Do you have any news?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. I thought I might have heard her… through the Force but… Maybe I was just imagining it? Master Shode, the head healer of the Order, said that Master is improving daily and not to worry.”

“Easier said than done,” Satine grumbled in defense of her friend, glancing at Shmi when the older woman reached over to squeeze her hands. “I’m sorry. I’m not helping at all, am I?”

Shmi gave her a patient smile before turning to Obi-Wan. “And what about your other master? The one with the mask?”
“Master Plo?” Obi-Wan was surprised that Shmi remembered him mentioning his grandmaster from
and earlier visit. “He’s gone to Maerai Prime to investigate the bombing. He… He didn’t believe me
when I said I was willing to train with Master Jinn. So he went to Maerai to find out what happened
for himself.”

“Smart man,” Shmi said with an approving look. “Why did you agree to train with him?”

Obi-Wan turned his gaze down to Anakin, who had managed to levitate one of the toy’s rings off his
lap but couldn’t quite get the whole thing into the air. His little face was scrunched up into a look of
intense concentration.

Gesturing with one finger, Obi-Wan helped Anakin lift the rest of the toy a few inches off of his lap.
This allowed it to spin properly, lighting up and playing soft music as it responded to Anakin’s
gestures.

“That’s amazing,” Satine marveled at the now bright blue object.

Shmi was not so impressed. “Yes, it is. But that still doesn’t answer the question, Obi-Wan. If you
find this Master Jinn so terrible, why didn’t you tell them no?”

Letting out a heavy sigh, Obi-Wan looked up at Shmi and Satine. “He… He thinks I did something I
shouldn’t have, when I tried to save Master Ahsoka’s life. He thinks I touched the Dark Side, which
I didn’t! But he threatened to tell the Council and that would have gotten Master Ahsoka in trouble
because I’m her student. Please don’t tell anyone. I could be expelled from the Order if the Council
finds out.”

Shaking her head sharply, Shmi vowed, “We would never betray your trust like that, Obi-Wan.”

“Thank you,” Obi-Wan replied, relief evident in his voice.

“What is the Dark Side?” Satine asked, puzzled.

“It’s when a Jedi uses the Force in anger, in hatred,” Obi-Wan said, glancing down at Anakin, who
was still deeply involved in trying to make his toy work. Reassured that the boy wasn’t bothered by
the somber turn of the conversation, he continued on. “When a Jedi acts from a place of selfishness
and greed, when we only think of our own pain and how to ease it, when we do not consider how
our actions will affect others? That is when a Jedi touches the Dark Side.”

“Like Culling Blade,” Satine murmured, her eyes round and a hand over her mouth. “And he thinks
you did that? That you tried to save your master’s life because you were selfish? Obi-Wan, you
could have died!”

“I do not think this Master Jinn knows you very well,” Shmi huffed, shaking her head. “You and
Master Ahsoka are selfless to the point of foolishness. Loca jedai. And he thinks to make trouble for
you and your master with the Council?”

Obi-Wan nodded, feeling a little sheepish but comforted to hear his friend’s indignant anger on his
behalf. He had carried his guilt alone for weeks now and it felt good to have someone else on his
side, even if they couldn’t do anything but listen to him complain about the infuriating gundark.

“He thinks he should have been my master,” Obi-Wan said, explaining Ahsoka and Qui-Gon’s duel
back when he was still a senior initiate. Satine and Shmi were loudly offended on Ahsoka’s behalf
and only too glad to hear how she had won thanks to the help of some quick thinking on Obi-Wan’s
part.
“Obi-Wan, you need to tell this smart man, Master Plo? Tell him what Qui-Gon said to you,” Shmi insisted, her brown eyes shining with indignation.

Satine was equally furious, nodding in firm agreement. “Shmi is right. He cannot treat you like that! I have half a mind to go to that Temple and give that Council of yours a piece of my mind!”

“Mama… ‘Tine… too loud!” Anakin groaned, dropping his toy and putting his hands over his ear and turning his face into Obi-Wan’s chest. “Too loud, Obi. Make it quiet!”

“Oh, I’m sorry, Ani,” Shmi cooed, standing up to gather his toy from the tile floor and place it on a side table. “We’re both sorry. We didn’t mean to be so loud, did we, Satine?”

“No, we didn’t,” Satine nodded, reaching out to squeeze Anakin’s knee. “Why don’t we give you boys a moment alone? I can see Didia waiting for us in the hallway and I’m sure she has something we need to look at.”

As Satine walked to the double doors leading back inside, Shmi stood up and stepped over next to Obi-Wan and Anakin, dropping a kiss on the top of her son’s head. Anakin let out a soft sound of relief and waved a chubby little hand to his mother as she followed after the Duchess.

Once they were gone, Obi-Wan looked down at Anakin, his brows furrowed. “Does this happen often, little one? Does your head hurt badly?”

Anakin looked down and nodded. “Ah huh. Last night too.”

“I know,” Obi-Wan murmured, stroking Anakin’s back. “Your mother called me at the Temple. She said you had a nightmare and it scared you.”

“Yes,” Anakin mumbled, his voice muffled in the layers of Obi-Wan’s robe. “He said… He said he was coming.”

In a sudden flash of power, Anakin sent the memory of the image that had terrified him last night. A tall man stood in the shadows, garbed in black and wreathed in smoke and ash. There was a cruel smile on his face as he tilted his head to the side. But when he spoke, there was something about it, something almost gentle and kind. There was affection in the voice of the man who was burning alive as Anakin, now Obi-Wan, watched.
“How is Snips?”

Deep in the Halls of Healing, Ahsoka Tano floated in bacta, dreaming things half-true.

She dreamed she stood on an ornate marble and granite balcony on Naboo, overlooking a sea of tall grass, her arms clasped behind her back and legs firmly planted. She inhaled the sweet fragrance of a nearby flowering bush, the air heady with the aroma of spring blossoms. In the distance, snow-tipped green mountains and the waterfalls overflowing with the spring thaw fed the nearby lake district and Theed further downstream.

But Ahsoka saw none of that, her eyes closed against the warm sunlight and wisps of white clouds across the brilliant blue sky. The only thing Ahsoka could see, playing on repeat against the black screen of her mind’s eye was their first moments on Naboo, when Shmi and Anakin Skywalker took their first steps as free people.

When Satine graciously offered them the shelter and protection of her family and her home planet.

When Obi-Wan Kenobi, her Padawan Learner and the best and brightest thing her in life, heard the name Skywalker fall from someone else’s lips.

“I would like to be the first person to officially welcome Shmi and Anakin Skywalker to the Galactic Republic. Welcome home, my friends.”

Obi-Wan blinked, confused as he looked from Shmi and Anakin to his master and back again.

His question echoed in Ahsoka’s mind, over and over again, a riptide that threatened to drag Ahsoka from the safer waters of her meditation into the dark and stormy depths of fear and worry.

“Did she just say Skywalker?”

Ahsoka took another deep breath and straightened her posture, rolling her shoulders down and back as she tried to breathe through her anxieties, to find a steady and calming rhythm that would let her face the immediate problems before her with a clear mind and a still spirit.

Clasping her hands more tightly behind her back, Ahsoka rooted herself to the ground, the steady pulsing glow of Naboo, as wave after wave and gust after cold gust washed over her, and she slowly released her fears into the rhythm of her meditation. Her emotions battered her, trying to tear loose pieces of her, to find a way past the protective radiance of her spirit. To pry open a crack just big enough to let the darkness in, to let fear and doubt undo everything she was trying to do before she had even begun to truly change anything.

To damn Obi-Wan and Anakin to the Dark side and the Empire once again.

No. I will not let my fear win. Fear is the first step on the path to the Dark side and I will not falter now. Not when Obi-Wan and Anakin need me now more than ever.

The future ran out before her, an endless list of engagements to prepare for, pitfalls to avoid and a murky and dangerous future to hopefully avert.

If that was even possible.
What if it isn’t? What if nothing you do prevents the Empire and Darth Vader? What if all of this is just a pointless waste of time?

Ahsoka frowned at the new voice within her meditative trance. It sounded familiar, warm and rich, with an undercurrent of confidence and something else. A barely banked fire that threatened to ignite at a moment’s notice.

A voice that should not be there.

“Anakin?” Ahsoka whispered, opening her eyes onto the face of her master, his beautiful face twisted into a cruel smile underneath blood-shot eyes of menacing gold. “No… Vader!”

“Hey, Snips,” Darth Vader grinned, sharp and amused, tossing his head back. “Miss me?”

“H-how are you here?” Ahsoka asked, staggering backwards her hands reaching for her sabers only to remember a heartbeat too late that she had sold them on Tatooine. She was defenseless before the Sith Lord that had devoured the good man she knew as her master. “This… this isn’t possible!”

“Says the woman who travelled back in time and decided to take Obi-Wan Kenobi as her padawan learner,” Vader snorted, folding his arms over his chest as he looked down at Ahsoka, his predator’s eyes narrowing. “Speaking of the old man, how is he? Is he as much of a pain in the ass as you were?”

“Obi-Wan is fine,” Ahsoka shot back, casually shifting into a defensive stance, prepared to fight or to flee if the Vader in front of her turned out to be far more than just a figment of her imagination. “He’s incredible. He’ll be a better Jedi than me. Maybe even better than you.”

“Will he?” Vader snickered, stepping away from the railing of the balcony and stalking towards Ahsoka, his lips quirked into a sneer. “Aren’t you the overconfident Jedi? So certain that your padawan will succeed where Qui-Gon Jinn failed. That this time, you will teach Obi-Wan Kenobi what he needs to know to keep me on the straight and narrow.”

Ahsoka tried to back away from Vader’s encroaching presence, but she was fastened to the spot, unable to move as the Sith Lord prowled around her, his voice low in her montrals. “Does he know what his destiny is, Ahsoka? Have you told him about me yet?”

Gritting her teeth and struggling to breath, Ahsoka managed to turn her head and glare at Vader as he finished his circuit around her, coming to a stop at her side, his gloved hand squeezing her right shoulder hard. Pain lanced through her and she gasped for air.

“Does Obi-Wan know?” Vader whispered. “Does he know what I’ll become?”

“Commander Tano?”

A warm voice, strong and confident with that familiar Kamino accent, broke Vader’s hold on Ahsoka and she staggered away from him, surprised to find her sabers in her hands again as the world around her started to shift and warp. The greens of Naboo seemed to wash away, to leave Vader standing alone on black slab of volcanic rock.

Vader scowled back at the owner of the voice, his golden eyes narrowed before he turned his gaze back to Ahsoka. “You’re going to fail him too, you know. You can’t stop me any more than you can stop the suns from setting.”

“Commander Tano!”
“I will not fail them,” Ahsoka spat at Vader, igniting her blades and taking a defensive stance, her blades crossed and glowing bright blue. “I won’t let the Clone Wars happen. I won’t let you destroy the good man who was my master!”

Shaking his head, Vader stood in place at the ground beneath his feet started to crack, revealing red-gold veins of lava that seemed to catch fire on the ends of his cloak. The fire crawled its way up Vader’s tall, black figure, but he did not move, seemingly unaffected by the blaze.

“I am your master, Ahsoka,” Vader said, the fire nearly engulfing him as thick, black billows of smoke started to obscure Ahsoka’s vision. She held up a hand, trying to protect herself from the heat and the flames. “That is why you’ll fail.”

“No! Anakin!” Ahsoka shouted, summoning a wave of the Force to clear out the dark clouds and finding that when she did, she was back on the balcony in Naboo. Back in her memory of the brief time they had spent on the planet before continuing on to Coruscant.

But instead of Vader standing before her with a sneer on her face, Rex was there, smiling warmly, his helmet under his arm and his twin blaster pistols holstered at his side.

“Rex?” Ahsoka gaped, confused. “What… How are you here?”

“I’d think that’s obvious, Commander,” Rex answered with a twinkle in his eye. “You needed back-up. So here I am.”

Ahsoka shook her head, running a hand over her face. “No, that’s not what I… I mean, yes, I did and thank you. I heard you before when I was, when Anakin was… You know what? You’re right. I needed back-up. But why are you here on Naboo?”

You don’t even exist yet.

“I came to get you,” Rex explained, looking down at his helmet and buffing off some imagined scuff she couldn’t see. “It’s time to go, Ahsoka. They’re waiting for you.”

“Go?” Ahsoka echoed, confused. “Go where? Is this… This isn’t Naboo, is it?”

Rex shook his head. “No, sir.”

Ahsoka looked down at her hands, at the elegantly curved blades made with crystals she had stolen from an Inquisitor back in a future she could never return to. Would never return to, if there was a way to change it in the past with Obi-Wan.

The lightsabers she had pawned to save Shmi and Anakin on Tatooine.

“I don’t… I don’t have these anymore,” Ahsoka murmured, looking up at Rex. “I was going to Ilum, with Obi-Wan. To get new crystals to make myself some new sabers.”

Nodding, Rex took his helmet in both hands and placed it over his head, his filtered voice coming out of the vocoder soothingly familiar. “Yes, sir. You were.”

“But… I didn’t get them,” Ahsoka frowned, looking up at the blue and white armor-clad figure. “We were called away, to save Qui-Gon Jinn. On… what was it called?”

“Maerai Prime, sir,” Rex answered, checking the charge on his blaster pistols. “You took a big hit too. Scared the chagas out of Obi-Wan, that’s for sure.”
“Obi-Wan… He saved my life, didn’t he? I… I’m in a bacta tank, aren’t I?”

“Yeah, and he’s waiting for you,” Rex continued, as the sun overhead grew stronger, hotter, burning away the greens and blues of Naboo into something hard, sunbaked and brown. The distant snow capped mountains melted into organic spires and twisted towers of weathered sandstone. The sun scorched the wind as it scoured over the ground and whistled through the caverns within a nearby plateau of rock.

Slowly, irrevocably Ahsoka found herself in a place she had not seen since the Clone Wars.

“Geonosis?” she asked, peering up at distant dogfights, grimacing as vulture droids screamed overhead and the cannons of Republic tanks sounded far too close for comfort.

“Yes, sir. General Kenobi’s waiting for you,” Rex explained as he pulled out a holomap of the area, indicating the flat plain where Master Obi-Wan and the 212 had crash-landed during the second siege of Geonosis when Ahsoka was a very young padawan. “Right here, sir. We’ll have to fight our way through but I think we can make it.”

Ahsoka glanced up at Rex, her heart full of emotions, complex and bittersweet. She wanted to hug Rex, to cry on his shoulder and beg him for his forgiveness. Even though Ahsoka knew in her gut that he wasn’t really there, she already felt braver, ready to face what was waiting for her on the battlefield and whatever she would find waiting for her when she woke up. “Thank you, Rex. For always being there when I need you. And… I’m sorry I left you. I… I didn’t mean to. I didn’t know this was going to happen.”

“I’ll understand,” Rex said, checking the pouches of his belt for extra DC-17 blaster charges. “C’mon, let’s move. I think I see a break in the droids’ formations and your padawan needs you. He’s training with that old gundark Qui-Gon Jinn, of all people.”

“What?!” Ahsoka’s mouth fell open as Rex peered over a rock, eyeing an approaching squad of droids. “The hell he is! How did that happen?”

“Beats me,” Rex replied turning to look down at Ahsoka. “The only way to find out is to make it to General Kenobi. You ready for this, Commander?”

Ahsoka took a deep breath, ignited her blades and stood up to face the oncoming wave of droids. “Let’s go, Rex. I have to get back to Obi-Wan.”

“That’s the spirit, Commander!” Rex cheered and stepped out from behind their rocky hiding place and took off running towards the droids, firing away, Ahsoka hot on his heels and determined to make her way to back to the waking world and back to Obi-Wan.

After a making his goodbyes to Shmi and Satine, and reluctantly prying Anakin from his leg and promising to return soon, Obi-Wan traveled back to the Jedi Temple, taking his citybike on a more circuitous route in the hopes of extending the last bits of freedom for as long as possible. His com already had two messages waiting for him, one from Qui-Gon Jinn and the other from the central communications hub. No doubt the second message was sent at Master Jinn’s behest, trying to track the wayward padawan down.

For a white-hot moment, Obi-Wan wanted to throw his com to the wind just to spite Qui-Gon.
It wouldn’t do Obi-Wan any good but he relished the idea of flinging the little device into the riotous
drama of Coruscant, to picture Qui-Gon’s thunderous voice trailing after it as he droned on and on
about “the Living Force” and “releasing one’s attachment into the Force”.

Stars! He is so pompous!

Of course if Obi-Wan flung his com down into the belly of Coruscant’s business district he wouldn’t
be able to receive calls from Shmi or Satine and his friends wouldn’t be able to send him warnings
when Qui-Gon was storming about the main dining hall looking for him in the mornings.

And he wouldn’t be able to contact Master Plo with something he had remembered while chatting
with Didia as he was waiting for his citybike to be brought up from the garage under the Kryze
family home.

“The Duchess tells me your master was injured in the terrorist attack on Maerai Prime,” Didia said,
her voice and manners exceedingly polite, like all professional diplomats were. “I am so sorry to
hear that, Master Jedi.”

“It’s Padawan Kenobi, technically,” Obi-Wan tried to explain with a smile, hoping to lighten the
mood before he returned home. “But Obi-Wan is perfectly fine, Didia. And, yes, she was. I… I am
hoping for her swift recovery.”

“As is the Duchess and Madam Skywalker,” Didia nodded, looking out the window for a long
moment before she spoke again. “It must be hard for you, to have to go through this again.”

“Again?” Obi-Wan blinked, confused. “What do you mean?”

Didia glanced over at Obi-Wan, worried compassion on her face. “Forgive me, but weren’t you and
Master Ahsoka two of the Jedi assigned to the peace talks on Raxxus? Between Acromino and
Acromae? The peace talks that were a target of terrorists as well? I confess to looking you both up
when I first learned of your involvement with the Duchess’s flight from Mandalore.”

Stunned at Didia’s observation, Obi-Wan found himself thinking back to the discussions he and his
master had had back on Maerai Prime. They had noticed a striking similarity to the bombing on
Raxxus they had barely survived.

Terrorist bombings that never seemed to end up benefiting the people who supposedly planned the
attacks.

Obi-Wan frowned as he piloted his citybike towards the Temple district, letting his mind drift over
the memory.

Didn’t Captain Avanbae mention Acromino too? I know Master wanted to mention the similarities
to Raxxus to the Council. I doubt Master Jinn’s told them anything about it, given how quickly he
leapt at the chance to bully me into his tutelage. I have to tell Master Plo the next time he contacts
me. Or maybe I should take this to Master Windu instead?

Frowning as he cleared the Temple’s perimeter, Obi-Wan navigated his way to the side speeder bay
he prefered, making a careful landing before turning off the engine. He weighed the consequences of
waiting for Master Plo or going straight to Master Windu the next morning and came out on the side
of telling Master Windu, only slightly motivated by the promise of putting off another confrontation
with Master Jinn for a few hours more.

It wasn’t particularly mature of him. Obi-Wan understood that, but he found it hard to care given
how difficult Qui-Gon Jinn was making everything.
If he would just stop treating me like I was a bloody youngling, I wouldn’t be so impertinent. Stars, but he gets under my skin like Tatooine sand fleas!

Wandering back through the halls of the Temple, Obi-Wan steered clear of the central hallways and turbolifts, taking the back way to his rooms. He was in no mood to listen to one of Qui-Gon’s lectures about his unnatural attachment to Satine, Shmi and Anakin. All Obi-Wan wanted to do was to make it to his room, have his dinner delivered and finish his work on repairing a model ship he was going to give to Anakin the next time he fled to sovereign Mandalorian soil.

As the door to the turbo lift opened onto his floor, Obi-Wan felt relieved to sense that Qui-Gon was nowhere to be seen. He sped down the hallway to the haven of his rooms and slipped inside without anyone seeing him, locking the door behind him with a sigh of relief.

“Thank the Force for its small mercies,” Obi-Wan said as he tossed his robe onto the couch, pulling his sabers from his belt as he walked into his room. Placing the matching blades on a stand Master Ahsoka had purchased for him as a life day present two years ago, he divested himself of most of his outer layers and wandered back into the shared living room, looking for the datapad embedded into the wall, where he ordered a light dinner with his master’s identification code and password.

Technically only knights and masters could arrange to have their food delivered to their rooms, a perk of seniority that Obi-Wan was looking forward to enjoying when he was finally knighted.

Assuming he didn’t leave the Order before his master recovered.

His meal taken care of, Obi-Wan walked into the kitchenette, filling a tea kettle with water and placing it on the hot plate to start heating up. With the promise of imminent tea and food, Obi-Wan found himself with nothing to do, not wanting to get started on fixing up his model only to be interrupted by the delivery of dinner.

Looking around the room, Obi-Wan caught sight of one of Ahsoka’s datapads on the kitchen table. There was something about it, something that tickled at the back of his mind and Obi-Wan wandered over to it, picking it up as he wound a path to the couch. Settling down into the comfortable tan cushions, Obi-Wan activated the device, the initial greeting screen reminding him why he had picked up the pad.

Password Required: _

“Hmn,” Obi-Wan frowned, tilting his head to the side as he looked at the datapad. Bored and in need of a distraction, he reached out and keyed in Ahsoka’s usual passcode.

Obi-Wan watched as the datapad processed the code and blinked in surprise at the response.

Incorrect Password. Access Denied.

“But that’s her password,” Obi-Wan muttered to the small device, sitting up a little in the chair. “Maybe I typed it in wrong?”

Working over the keypad more slowly and making sure he was hitting all the correct keys, Obi-Wan tried to access the datapad again.

Incorrect Password. Access Denied.

“Sith hells!” Obi-Wan protested, trying the passcode one more time in a flurry of annoyance and growing curiosity. “What can she possibly have on this that she wouldn’t want me to see?”
Incorrect Password. Access Denied.

“Well, we’ll just see about that,” Obi-Wan vowed as he set to work trying to slice his way into Ahsoka’s datapad, happy for a momentary distraction from his troubles.

Chapter End Notes

Hello my darling little guppies! How are we doing today?

Thank you all so much for your lovely comments and questions! I read each and every one and really, I cannot thank you enough for them! Especially with Qui-Gon being so... beastly in the last few chapters.

BUT!!!! WE!!! HAVE!!!! GOOD!!! NEWS!!!!

AHSOKA IS COMING BACK!!!!!

Slowly but surely, and probably not the next chapter but the end is in sight! Our Snips is coming back and everything will go back to normal! There will be ice cream and noodles and everything will be just fine. Okay? Just. Fine. Pay no attention to that datapad, Obi-Wan. There's nothing to see there, okay?

Hooooo boy...

As always, come shriek with me about Star Wars at FireflyFish
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Frustrated with the pace of his instruction with Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, Obi-Wan Kenobi fled to the safe haven of the home of Satine Kryze, Duchess of Mandalore, and his friends Shmi and Anakin Skywalker. While there he learns of a strange dream Anakin had, a dream of a burning man who did not die.

Meanwhile, while in a bacta tank recovering from her terrible injuries, Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano dreams of the ghosts of futures past and fights her way back to the present, a dearly-missed friend at her side.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I know this might come as a shock to you but I really don’t think you should be messing with Master Ahsoka’s datapad,” Quinlan Vos told Obi-Wan as he sat down next to him at their usual lunch table and, as predicted, got an incredulous eyebrow raise for his troubles. “No, I’m serious, Obi-Wan. If Master Ahsoka wanted you to get into that datapad she would have used a passcode you already knew. You’re not supposed to see what’s on that thing.”

“Master and I do not keep secrets from each other,” Obi-Wan replied, a touch offended at Quinlan’s implication that there was a part of Ahsoka’s life he didn’t know about. He pulled his master’s datapad back from Quinlan, setting it down to his left where it would be spared any further admonishments. “Besides… It’s most likely my marks or notes on our mission report from Mandalore and Tatooine, which is overdue I might point out. I could really use her notes to refresh my memory.”

“Ah huh, sure you do,” Quinlan snorted, turning his attention back to his fragrant meat pie. “Well I’m not helping you. I’m already in hot water for knocking over that visiting Senator-what’s-his-face.”

“Senator Antilles?” Luminara asked as she sank into her seat opposite Quinlan. “He is an important senator with a seat on not only the Appropriations committee but on the Security Council as well. I’m surprised you only got out with detention and Temple grounding for six weeks.”

“Where is Senator Antilles from again?” Yuen asked, taking a seat next to Luminara and trading off one of his bread rolls for Obi-Wan’s rice ball that was stuffed with something nutritious but too pickled for his taste.

“Alderaan,” Luminara explained after a long sip of berry juice. “He’s a cousin or something to the current king of Alderaan.”

“Or something?” Kit Fisto gasped as he joined his friends with his own tray and his usual broad smile. “Is there something our resident green goddess does not know?”
“There are many things I do not know, Kit Fisto,” Luminara sniffed as she tucked into her salad. “And stop doing that thing with your headtails. It’s not dignified.”

Kit responded by wiggling his head tails a little harder.

“Yuen,” Obi-Wan said, hoping his question would go unnoticed in the midst of Luminara and Kit’s strange flirtation. “I don’t suppose you could help me with this datapad. Master locked me out and I’m positive it will have her notes from our Mandalorian mission and I need them to finish my report.”

Yuen looked up from his lunch, puzzlement in his golden eyes. “You want me to slice your master’s datapad? Your former-Shadow master? The same master who was raised on the Outer Rim fighting pirates and defeated Qui-Gon Jinn in a duel? You want me to hack into her datapad?”

Obi-Wan pursed his lips and glanced sidelong at the table. “Yes…? I suppose when you put it that way, Master Ahsoka does sound intimidating.”

“Just a little bit,” Yuen replied with a nod and turned his attention back to his pickled rice ball.

“So is that a no?” Obi-Wan prodded, giving his friend his best pitiful face and hopeful smile. “I have a large stash of brand-new snacks I would be more than happy to trade for your assistance.”

Luminara and Kit agreed to a lunchtime truce with the promise of a rematch later that day in the training salon and Quinlan, deprived of his show, turned his attention back to Obi-Wan and Yuen. “Are you trying to get Yuen to slice into your master’s datapad? Even after I, the best slicer in your age group, turned you down?”

Obi-Wan opened his mouth to retort that he didn’t see what all the fuss was about a datapad that was probably full of his grades and his progress reports on his studies when Yuen narrowed his eyes at Quinlan. “Who said I turned Obi-Wan down? And you are not half the slicer you pretend to be. Gimme the pad, Kenobi.”

“It’s not really that important!” Obi-Wan lied even as he handed over the object in question. “You two needn’t get so worked up about this.”

Waving Obi-Wan’s concerns away, Yuen got to work with the pad, pulling up the base menu and searching while Quinlan watched with a disapproving face.

“I have a bad feeling about this, Obi-Wan,” Quinlan muttered as he took a bit of his lunch. “What if it’s some kind of top secret Shadow mission you’re not supposed to know about? What if you’re compromising someone’s secret identity? What if it’s… Mace Windu’s baby pictures?”

That made everyone at the table burst out laughing, releasing whatever tension was left over from their teenage squabbles.

“I’ll have you know that Mace Windu emerged from an egg fully grown,” Kit Fisto grinned, tossing an egg from his plate and catching it in his mouth.

“That must have been some egg,” Luminara giggled as she shook her head. “Do you know what I heard? I heard that he came walking out of a crack in the Temple foundations, already a Jedi Knight!”

“Hardly!” Obi-Wan laughed. “Master Windu is eternal, like Master Yoda, just taller and better looking.”
“No, no! He was found at the site of a meteorite landing and was raised by Rancors on Dathomir!” Quinlan insisted with a flourish of his fork. “I heard it from Depa Billaba herself!”

“You heard what from me, Vos?” Depa said as she walked over to them, her voice like crystal clear lake water. She stood at the end of their table, resting her weight on one hip as she gave the small clutch of giggling Padawans a Look. “All I told you was there was absolutely no truth to that rumor that my master was found as a baby in an impact crater. I can neither confirm or deny any Rancor parentage.”

“See?” Quinlan laughed, pounding his hand on the table as he beamed up at the senior padawan with adoration. “The Lady of Vaapad herself confirmed it!”

Kit grinned, his usual charming Natolian self. “Would her ladyship care to join us humble, mortal, non-senior padawans?”

“Oh please do!” Luminara gasped, delighted. “And save us from discussions of whether or not Master Windu grew from an egg or not, which he clearly did not, Kit, because he is a mammal and mammals don’t hatch from eggs.”

“Chandrillian beaked beavers do,” Kit shot back with a grin as Depa joined the younger padawans for a bit of light-hearted ribbing.

Obi-Wan let himself be distracted by the conversation, which moved from Master Windu’s origins to Master Yoda’s which became more and more convoluted and dramatic in each retelling. By the time lunch was over and Depa remembered why she had come to the table in the first place, to tell them Master Drallig wanted them to assist with a demonstration class that afternoon, Obi-Wan had all but forgotten about the datapad he had given his friend Yuen.

But Yuen hadn’t. He had tried all his best coding tricks while the others joked and chatted, hoping for some kind of back door or an exploitable loop in the coding but nothing had come up. As the group of padawans got up from their table, ready to head off to their lesson with Master Drallig, Yuen caught up to Obi-Wan.

“Here,” Yuen said, holding out the datapad. “I couldn’t get into it. The security is pretty strong for a personal datapad. I could maybe get you the data that’s on it if I cracked the housing and tried to mine it from the core inside but I imagine you’re not that desperate to see what’s in there.”

Obi-Wan blinked down at the datapad, a little confused and disappointed as he took it back. “No, no. I wouldn’t want to destroy Master’s property. I… I shall have to rely on my own recollection for the report then. Thank you for trying, Yuen. I appreciate it.”

“You’re welcome, Obi-Wan,” Yuen replied with a smile and a pat on the shoulders. “Master Lia is taking me out tonight to that new fried flatbread place on the edge of the Temple District. You want to come?”

“No,” Obi-Wan shook his head, holding up Ahsoka’s datapad reluctantly. “I still have to finish my report. Another time?”

“Sure,” Yuen nodded, as he moved on ahead of Obi-Wan. “And be careful with your log-in attempts. There might be a limit on how many attempts you get, and if you go over that limit, it will brick the pad.”

“‘Brick’?” Obi-Wan asked, confused. “What does that mean?”

“It means there might be a line of code in there that, once triggered, will turn your master’s datapad
into a very expensive hunk of duraplast and circuitry. It will wipe out anything that’s on there,” Yuen explained with shrug. “See you in class?”

Glancing down at the datapad, Obi-Wan nodded. “Yeah, see you in class.”

“‘Tine?”

“In a minute, Anakin. I need to finish this letter.”

Anakin frowned up at Satine, hugging his special toy to his chest as he looked back out the window. There was something strange outside, something he didn’t understand and it was something he felt he should tell someone about. Unfortunately Obi-Wan wasn’t there and his mother has stepped away to the kitchen which left Anakin with only Satine or Didia to alert to the incoming… thing.

After waiting for what felt like an eternity, during which Anakin grabbed his robe from the sofa for protection from the imminent something, he marched back over to Satine and tugged on her skirt again. “‘Tine! It’s important!”

Satine let out a heavy sigh and looked up at the ceiling, a cloud of prickly emotions swirling around her before she inhaled and focused her smile on him. “Yes, Little Dragon. What do you need to tell me that is so important?”

Anakin loved it when Satine smiled at him, when any of his family smiled at him. Each one was different and special, the feelings and sensations unique in the swirling mess of everything around him. When his family smiled at him, when he could feel their love, it made everything stop for a moment.

“Anakin?” Satine said, narrowing her eyes at him as the moment of perfect joy faded into the background warmth of her spirit. “What is it? Is it too loud again?”

“No!” Anakin shook his head furiously, holding his toy tighter against his chest, trying to draw strength from the leftover parts of Obi-Wan’s spirit. He needed to be brave like Obi-Wan and Ahsoka. He needed to tell Satine that a bad thing was coming. “It’s not loud. It’s bad.”

“Bad?” Satine frowned, her blue eyes darkening as she slipped out of her chair and knelt in front of Anakin, touching his forehead and then his cheek with her cool, smooth hand. “What is bad, Little Dragon? Is the Force talking to you again?”

Frustrated with his inability to explain his feeling to Satine, Anakin simply pointed at the window. “It’s coming. The bad thing.”

“Should I get Shmi?” Didia asked, already at the doorway, her dark eyes watchful as she looked down at Anakin. He didn’t like the way Didia looked at him sometimes. He much preferred it when she taught him Mando’a and snuck him sweets before dinner.

Satine gathered Anakin up into her arms, something he liked very much, and carried him over to the sofa as she spoke to Didia. “Yes, please, Didia.”

Once they were on the sofa, and Anakin was wearing his Obi robe properly, pulled down over his head to keep the noise out, Satine sat him on her lap. He could feel her thinking, could hear the whirl
of her thoughts like a wind through the courtyard outside.

“Anakin?” Satine asked, her voice soft and gentle. “Where do you feel this bad thing?”

Pursing his lips, Anakin closed his eyes and reached out with his special eyes to find the answer. “In my head.”

Nodding, Satine continued on. “Does it hurt? Like before?”

Nothing hurt like that night, when he heard Obi-Wan crying and Ahsoka wouldn’t answer him no matter how hard he screamed at her.

Anakin never wanted to feel like that again. “No. It’s… cold and yucky, like suruli stew.”

“What is like suruli stew?” Shmi asked, as she hurried into the room, rushing to the sofa and hugging Anakin. “I came as soon as Didia told me.”

“The bad thing,” Anakin explained, immensely relieved that his mother was there. Everything would be fine with Mama and ‘Tine and if it wasn’t, they would get Obi-Wan to come make everything better.

“What bad thing?” Shmi asked Satine as she pulled Anakin into her arms and let him hide himself deeper into Obi-Wan’s cloak.

When Ahsoka was better, he would need her cloak too, so no more bad things could find him.

“I’m not sure,” Satine explained to his mother. “He said there is a bad thing coming, that he could feel it in his head but it didn’t hurt like before. I was trying to remember the questions Obi-Wan left us but I haven’t gotten very far. What is suruli stew?”

“It’s a fermented spike melon soup from Tatooine,” Shmi said, rubbing her hand up and down Anakin’s back, which made him feel better, even as the bad thing drew closer. “Anakin does not care for it. He finds it slimy.”

“Yucky!” Anakin added for emphasis, so that his family understood. “The bad thing is yucky!”

“Yucky?” Shmi and Satine echoed, looking down at him.

Anakin was about to say yes when the bad thing arrived.

Satine was very confused.

Anakin’s episodes were not to be taken lightly but this “bad thing” he was telling them about seemed to have no basis in reality.

Perhaps he was acting out for attention?

Shmi had been very busy with Ordus, going over the fleet of vehicles owned by House Kryze on Coruscant and after that, the droid staff. And to top it off, Satine had been busy writing letters to important members of the Senate, trying to gain support amongst prominent Senators for an aid shipment to be sent to Mandalore and the people affected by Culling Blades’ brutal attacks. She had
assumed Anakin was content to play with his eternity knot and run about underfoot pretending to chase after Obi-Wan and Ahsoka but maybe she had been wrong.

“Has he had a nap today?” Shmi asked, stroking her son’s head. “It is still early but Obi-Wan said he could tire easily due to all the noise in the city.”

“I haven’t put him down for one,” Satine said. “He had lunch and Mando’a practice with Didia but… What’s that?”

The sound of a speeder pulling up in front of the residence reached Satine’s ear and for a moment she felt ice-cold fear run down her spine as memories of Culling Blade’s attack flashed through her mind.

“Satine?” Shmi leaned forward, her hand on Satine’s leg, her face concerned. “What is it?”

“Yucky!” Anakin repeated again just to make the moment even stranger.

Upon hearing a guard call out a friendly greeting that was returned in kind, Satine relaxed, feeling foolish and paranoid for the sudden flash of terror. “It’s nothing. Just… a memory of Mandalore. Do forgive me for frightening you.”

Shmi shook her head, her dark eyes narrowed even as a reassuring smile blossomed on her face. “First Ani, and now you? Do I need to call Obi-Wan to talk you down as well?”

Satine turned bright red, embarrassed and affronted at the same time. “I do not need Obi-Wan Kenobi’s help in this. Besides I do not think Anakin is inclined to share the spotlight when it comes to his favorite Jedi’s tender ministrations.”

“That sounds like a very long and complicated ‘yes’,” Shmi responded with a quirk of her brows and chuckle. “Shall we see who has come to the door? And just what makes them ‘yucky’?”

“No,” Anakin sulked but let Shmi pick him up and place him on her hip all the same.

“I suppose so,” Satine sighed, still feeling the hot sting of Shmi’s clever words and wishing she wasn’t so observant. “Although I’m not expecting any visitors so I have no idea who it could be.”

The trio walked to the front hallway, where Ordus was greeting the guests in a surprised tone. “Yes, of course, the Duchess is in but I have not notified her of your arrival and-”

A tall, slender girl Satine had not seen in over a year strode into sight, wearing what looked like a pilot’s jumpsuit.

For a moment time came to a stop as Satine took stock of the girl in front of her, the familiar green eyes, the fall of strawberry blonde hair and the freckles that Satine had loved to tease her about. Yes, she was taller and a bit leaner and there was a wary edge to her that hadn’t been there before but there was no mistaking the young girl in front of her.

A soft gasp escaped Satine, and she felt such a well of emotion she nearly broke down as the weight of just how much she had missed her precious little sister hit her all at once.

“BO-KAT!” Satine cried, all pretense at elegance and maturity cast aside. She ran the rest of the way down the hallway, happily catching Bo-Katan in her arms, tears already falling. “Oh, Bo-Kat, you came! Oh my darling, you’re here! I am so happy to see you!”

For a moment, Bo-Katan felt stiff in her arms, like she wanted to resist the overwhelming evidence of
how much her sister had missed her but that quickly gave way to a fierce, tight hug and a muffled, “I thought you were dead!”

“I am so sorry, my dearest,” Satine said, pulling back just enough to get a proper look at Bo-Katan. “Oh you’ve grown so much! You must tell me everything that happened while I was away. How did you get here? Who brought you? However did you convince Uncle Tiber to let you come to Coruscant?”

“I brought her,” Pre Vizla said as he stood at the foot of the entryway, pulling off his helmet, garbed in the armor of a mercenary. “There was an attack on Kalevala and Father felt it best that Bo-Katan rejoined you here on Coruscant.”

Satine gasped, pulling her sister closer. “There was an attack? Is Aunt Julia alright? Were you hurt?”

“She’s ok. And I wasn’t hurt, thanks to Pre,” Bo-Kat said, shaking her head as she burrowed herself into Satine’s side. “But it was close.”

“A little too close,” Pre explained with a sad head shake. “We took an unmarked freighter the next day and made it here, relatively unscathed.”

“Relatively? Do we need to call the med droid?” Shmi asked, somehow finding the perfect reason to enter the conversation. “Is everyone alright?”

“Who are you?” Pre asked, his brows drawn in confusion.

Bo-Katan peered around Satine to peer at Shmi, but refused to let go of her sister. “Is this the woman you told me about? The woman from Tatooine?”

“Yes!” Satine said brightly, happy to have her family all together. “Bo-Kat, this is Shmi Skywalker and somewhere in that mess of brown robes is her son, Anakin. Shmi? Ani? This is my little sister, Bo-Katan Kryze. That is my cousin, Pre Vizla. Shmi saved our lives when we were stranded on Tatooine.”

Shmi smiled at Bo-Katan and bowed respectfully to Pre, greeting them both in Mandalorian, or as best she was able to. “Welcome. It is an honor to meet the family of my family.”

Pre blinked in surprise, glancing from Shmi to Satine and back before replying in kind. “Long may our fires burn together, family of my family.”

“Well now that the introductions are out of the way, I am certain you two must be exhausted from your journey,” Satine announced with a happy flourish. “Which would you rather do first? Have a meal? Take a nap? Me, personally, I spent an hour in the refresher trying to see if I could use every last drop of Naboo’s hot water supply.”

Bo-Katan looked at Pre who gave everyone a broad smile. “Well I can’t speak for Bo, but I’m famished. The rations on that freighter were terrible.”

“You must have so many questions,” Satine began, sitting next to Bo-Katan on a small sofa after lunch. Pre was standing in the corner admiring a portrait of a long dead family member. Shmi and Anakin had gone upstairs during lunch to give them all a bit of privacy, but Satine was sure Anakin
would find his way back down soon. “I know I have at least a million, possibly more.”

Bo-Katan nodded, looking at her hands. “Yes… I do. I-”

“Suc’uy!” Anakin announced from the doorway, still wearing his Obi robe and looking very dramatic for a toddler as he stood with both hands on his hips. “Ner aliit Anakin Skywalker!”

Satine laughed softly at Anakin’s grand entrance and held out a hand to him, which he happily raced over to grab as Shmi appeared in the doorway, leaning against it. “I’m sorry, but he insisted on introducing himself properly. We couldn’t convince him to wait any longer.”

Anakin giggled, leaning against Satine’s leg, a warm, energetic presence. He peered up at Bo-Katan from under the brown hood over his head, his blue eyes bright with curiosity. “‘Tine? Is she Bo-Kat?”

Nodding, Satine looked over at her sister, whose green eyes were narrowed a little as she looked at Anakin. After she pushed down a momentary fear that her sister wouldn’t like the newest additions to their family, a thought she could consider at another time, Satine reached down to pull Anakin into her lap. “Yes, Anakin. This is my little sister, Bo-Katan Kryze. I told you about her before, remember? I hope you two will be friends.”

Anakin looked back at Bo-Katan for another long moment before he nodded, his decision made. “Okay!”

“Well that was fast,” Satine laughed, stroking Anakin’s back. “I’m happy to hear it all the same.”

“Bo-Kat is a friend,” Anakin said, leaning against Satine but looking up at Bo-Katan with a twinkle in his eye. “‘Cause Bo-Kat is a dragon.”

“A dragon?” Bo-Katan asked, confused but amused at being compared to a dragon by a little boy she had just met. “I don’t understand.”

“We call Ani ‘Little Dragon’,” Shmi explained from the doorway, her arms wrapped around her waist and a smile in her eyes. “On Tatooine, the most fearsome creature is the Krayt Dragon.”

“Rwar!” Anakin roared for emphasis, just in case Bo-Katan didn’t understand.

Satine giggled softly, smiling at her sister. “I’m jealous. I’m just ‘Tine. I don’t get to be a dragon.”

“No,” Anakin shook his head solemnly. “‘Tine is soft and nice. Bo-Kat is a dragon. Like me. Bo-Kat is ‘Big Dragon’.!”

“Big Dragon, huh?” Bo-Katan said, the corners of her mouth almost lifting into a smile as she reached out to tickle Anakin, which made him burst out into a torrent of happy laughter. “I don’t know. You look pretty soft to me.”

“You named your son after a Krayt Dragon?” Pre asked Shmi as he looked at her, the faintest whiff of disapproval in his voice. “Why would you do that?”

“Because he is a dragon,” Shmi replied simply, not returning Pre’s gaze as she watched Anakin explain to Bo-Katan what he meant.

“Not soft,” Anakin boasted from Satine’s lap. “Dragons are strong. Bo-Kat is strong and brave, like me. I can see. You are ‘Big Dragon’.”
Bo-Katan tilted her head to the side and gave Anakin a quirk of a smile before she acquiesced to her new nickname. “What does a big dragon do?”

“What does a big dragon do?” Anakin happily explained, patting Satine on the shoulder. “‘Tine is soft and nice. So you protect her. Like Canderous Wren.”

At the mention of Canderous Bo-Katan seemed to brighten up at the idea of being compared to a great warrior, finally getting a feel for what Anakin was trying to say. Satine watched in great relief as her sister’s green eyes lit up, a heavy weight leaving her shoulders.

“Canderous is my favorite member of the Wren clan,” Bo-Katan said, a real grin on her face now. “Who told you his story? It couldn’t have been Satine. She thinks those stories are too violent.”

“Oh really!” Satine grumbled, not liking where the conversation was headed. “He decapitates his enemy in combat! How is that an appropriate story for children? I still can’t believe Pre told you that story when you were five. Mother nearly had a fit.”

Pre had the decency to look remorseful when Satine and Shmi looked over at him. “I’m sorry?”

“What’s ‘decapitate’?” Anakin asked, letting out a squeal as Bo-Katan picked him up and set him down on her lap. “Big Dragon!”

Bo-Katan leaned down to stage whisper in Anakin’s ear. “Do you want to know what ‘decapitate’ means, Little Dragon?”

“Bo-Kat don’t you dare!” Satine gasped, horrified that her little sister was going to traumatize Anakin. “He’s just a boy! He’s too young for that.”

“I don’t know,” Bo-Katan grinned, enjoying the look on her sister’s face. “Do you think you can handle it, Little Dragon? Or is this for Big Dragons only?”

Anakin looked from Bo-Katan and Satine, before he nodded, vigorously. “Yes! Tell me!”

“After your nap, Little Dragon,” Shmi cut in before Bo-Katan could tell Anakin the story of how Canderous cut off the head of his enemy with an old Vizla family heirloom, the Dark Saber. She marched over to pick up her son from Bo-Katan, who clung tenaciously to his new friend before Shmi gently but firmly disentangled him. “Come along, Ani. Bo-Katan will be here when you wake up and I’m sure she can tell you all sorts of stories Satine does not approve of when her back is turned.”

Satine let out a huff of indignation as Shmi walked off with Anakin, who waved back at Satine and Bo-Katan over his mother’s shoulder.

“Bye, Big Dragon! Bye ‘Tine!” Anakin called out as Shmi turned a corner, the two of them vanishing from sight.

Sighing softly, Satine shook her head and looked back at her sister, who seemed a lot more cheerful and relaxed than she had been when she first arrived and her green eyes sparkling. “I like them. Anakin is very charming.”

Rolling her eyes, Satine elbowed her sister a little. “You just like being called Big Dragon.”

“Who wouldn’t?” Bo-Katan laughed in response.
Six weeks into his training with Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon was extremely frustrated.

This was not what he had expected when the Council gave him permission to train Obi-Wan. Not the constant visits by Mace Windu or other members of the Council while they were training in the lightsaber salons.

Not the erratic interruptions by Obi-Wan’s agemates to whisk him away to a class or a lecture that he suddenly had to attend.

Not the perfunctory obedience that masked a simmering anger that burned in those grey eyes.

This was not what the Force had shown Qui-Gon, what it had promised him all those years ago back before he lost his fateful duel with Ahsoka Tano.

At Dooku’s urgings, they had moved onto Makashi, which Obi-Wan was well-suited for in spite of Tano’s attempts to turn him into some kind of hacking and slashing barbarian with her ridiculous insistence on jar’kai. Obi-Wan had shown an impressive skill and mastery as they worked through the movements but there was never any engagement.

The boy never reached out to him, never deviated from his harshly polite and frozen demeanor.

What galled Qui-Gon all the more was that he could see Obi-Wan light up the minute someone he truly cared for entered into their training space, such as his annoying and constantly interfering friends or masters he deemed worthy of respect. His own grandmaster, Yoda, earned the broadest smile whenever he hobbled into the room.

“Master Yoda!” Obi-Wan beamed as the master in question appeared in the doorway after a particularly intense bit of sparring, almost as if he were delighted to have a distraction.

Qui-Gon swallowed his annoyance and told himself that Jedi Masters did not roll their eyes at their elders. He turned to face his grandmaster with a respectful bow. “Good afternoon, Master Yoda. To what do we owe your visit?”

“Need reason, do I, to see my grandpadawan?” Yoda asked with a chuckle, smiling at Qui-Gon as he hobbled into the center of the training floor. “Heard you were studying Ataru, yes? Learn something, I might. Rusty, I am.”

Obi-Wan bit his lip and looked to the side, mirth crinkling at the corner of his eyes.

“Oh,” Qui-Gon smiled, or at least tried to, at his grandmaster. “Well if you would like, I’m sure Obi-Wan could demonstrate what we’ve been studying.”

“Oh? Teach me, will you, Padawan Kenobi?” Yoda cackled, turning slowly to face Obi-Wan, who looked a bit surprised at this request.

“Ah, if Master Jinn says I must,” Obi-Wan replied with a bowed head. “Although I am certain there is little I could teach you, Master Yoda.”

“Always learning, a Jedi master is,” Yoda replied, looking up at Qui-Gon, an almost concerned expression in his green eyes, his ears perked up. “From their mistakes. From their victories. From their students. Always learning we are. Even when old, like me.”
“Wise words,” Qui-Gon agreed, a bit relieved to find that Yoda was not going to lecture him in front of Obi-Wan, unlike Dooku. “Shall we give Obi-Wan some space, Grand Master?”

Yoda nodded, moving toward the far side of the training floor, a peaceful expression on his face. He leapt up onto the long row of benches and settled into a cross legged position, patting the seat next to him, which Qui-Gon took with a soft exhale. “Sit with me, Qui-Gon. Let Obi-Wan teach us something, we will.”

“I… I don’t know what to teach you,” Obi-Wan said, running his hands through his shaggy hair that was almost long enough to be pulled back into a tail. “You are both masters of Ataru and I…”

“Only what you know, can you teach,” Yoda explained, closing his eyes and raising his hand, the Force rising to meet his command like an old friend, so warm and gentle was the feelings there.

Confused and a bit surprised, Qui-Gon heard a rattle a few feet away and saw Obi-Wan’s other saber rise up from his pile of effects, gently spinning through space. Yoda cracked one eye open, locking eyes with the boy and nodding.

Stunned, Obi-Wan reached out with the Force, reclaiming his other saber with a simple tug, the blade flying to his hand with the surety of a much older Jedi.

Qui-Gon pursed his lips, folding his arms over his chest, his earlier relief fading away. Clearly he was due for another lesson in how he was instructing his padawan incorrectly, something he had never seen Master Dooku or any other Jedi master have to deal with. If the Council found his instruction so objectionable, why had they even bothered giving Obi-Wan to him in the first place?

What was the point of all of this if he could not guide Obi-Wan back to the path the Force had laid out before him?

“What you have learned, share with us, Obi-Wan,” Yoda said, settling into his position, both eyes open now and a pleased smile on his face. “From the student, we will learn.”

What was the point of all this if everyone around him seemed determined to keep Obi-Wan on the path that would only lead straight back to that Dark-side spirit?

“Master Yoda,” Qui-Gon began, hoping to bring this well-meaning instruction to a close. “We have not been studying jar’kai. I’m sure Obi-Wan could easily demonstrate Makashi Fesro Kai. Master Dooku was quite impressed with his mastery.”

I think anyway. Damn old fool is still impossible to read.

Yoda shook his head and placed a hand on Qui-Gon’s knee. “Learn you cannot, with a head full of knowledge. Teach us, Obi-Wan will. Go on, show us what you have learned.”

Taking a deep breath, Qui-Gon bowed to his grandmaster’s wisdom. “Please begin, Obi-Wan.”

Nodding, Obi-Wan stepped into the middle of the training floor, spinning one of his saber hilts around in his hand for a moment as he thought. Qui-Gon watched the boy, watched thoughts and ideas pass over his face, his presence more open in these last few minutes than it had been during the entire time they had been working together. Obi-Wan moved through a few things in his mind, his hands ghosting through forms and poses Qui-Gon did not recognize before something came to his student and a smile spread across his face.

Obi-Wan moved to the far end of the training floor and took up a defensive position. “Master calls this form The Torrent. She says it can protect a small army when done right.”
“Oh hoho!” Yoda laughed, nodding. “Show us, please, this Torrent.”

“Yes, masters,” Obi-Wan said, taking a deep breath as he centered himself in the Force.

“I don’t understand why a Jedi would need to protect an army,” Qui-Gon murmured to Yoda as they watched Obi-Wan begin his form. “What use could this possibly… have?”

Obi-Wan darted forward, sabers flashing around him, a veritable maelstrom of defensive postures from Soresu and Djem Sho. He leapt and flipped lightly across the floor, never presenting an opening or a weakness to be exploited by saber or blaster. If there truly were an army behind Obi-Wan, or perhaps a group of refugees, not a one would have fallen to any attack as he moved with grace and ferocity to protect them, as he became a wall of defense for others to shelter behind.

It was a strange and violently beautiful form, something Qui-Gon had never seen the like of before.

It was not a form he had taught Obi-Wan. It was Ahsoka Tano’s and he could feel her presence in each unorthodox reinterpretation of standard dueling.

And yet…

Here or there were flashes of what Qui-Gon had taught Obi-Wan, a quicker turn from Shii-cho Seras Kai or salvo of attacks from Makashi. His acrobatics were tighter and better controlled than they would have been six weeks ago, or even last week.

_He’s… he’s amazing. He will be a truly great Jedi._

Yoda seemed delighted by the demonstration, clapping his hands as Obi-Wan finished his form and bowed to both masters, a flush of pride on his face.

“Well done, Padawan,” Yoda said, tapping his stick on the bench they were sitting on for emphasis. “Very impressive. Learned much, I did.”

“Yes, very well done, Obi-Wan” Qui-Gon agreed, standing up to congratulate the boy. “Very creative, I must say.”

“Thank you, masters,” Obi-Wan gasped, trying to catch his breath as a flicker of confusion crossed his face. “It is… ah… it’s Master Ahsoka’s… form. Would you please excuse me for a minute?”

Qui-Gon watched as Obi-Wan went pale, his hand coming to his chest and rubbing it as if he were in pain somehow. Glancing at Yoda, he could tell his grandmaster saw the change come over Obi-Wan as well.

They stood together as the young man darted to his things, pulling out his personal com and scouring over the messages there. One in particular seemed to upset Obi-Wan and with a muttered curse, he shoved the device into the pocket of his robe and looked back at Qui-Gon and Yoda, stricken for a moment at what to do, his eyes wide with fear and worry.

“I’m sorry, masters, but I have… I have to…” Obi-Wan’s hands were squeezed into fists as he sought the courage to say what he felt he needed to. “I have to leave.”

“Go,” Yoda spoke before Qui-Gon could stop Obi-Wan. “May the Force be with you, young Obi-Wan.”

“Thank you, masters!” Obi-Wan cried as he ran out the door and pounded down the hallway to the nearest turbolift.
There was a long moment of silence before Qui-Gon spoke. “Knight Tano?”

“No,” Yoda murmured, his eyes closed as he immersed himself in the Force. “But equally as important, they are.”

Equally important? Qui-Gon looked in the direction Obi-Wan had gone and covered his mouth with his hand, searching for answers.

Who was as equally important to Obi-Wan as Ahsoka Tano?

“Incoming!” Rex shouted, shielding Ahsoka from a too-close-for-comfort mortar shell, the sandy bits of fragmented stone raining down over the two of them as they sat penned in under a Separatist defensive turret.

Once the last of the rubble and smoke had cleared, Rex sat down next to Ahsoka, checking the charge on his blaster pistols, switching one empty cartridge for another.

“You know this seemed a lot easier when I was younger,” Ahsoka grumbled, wiping sweat out of her eyes as she peered over the back of the large rock they were hiding behind. “And I was a lot smaller then, so what gives?”

Rex chuckled, lifting up his bucket to give Ahsoka an encouraging grin. “You can’t rush bacta, Commander. And you did almost die back there.”

“Don’t remind me,” Ahsoka groaned, rolling a shoulder to loosen it up. “And don’t think I don’t appreciate your help here but shouldn’t we be there by now? I’m a whole head taller, faster and definitely stronger. What’s taking so long?”

“Well,” Rex looked up at the sky as vulture droids screamed overhead, engaged in a balletic dogfight with Republic fighters. “As I recall, last time you were here, you had the whole of the 501st and General Skywalker with you. It’s a bit easier to mow down the enemy with an army at your back, sir.”

“So where are they?” Ahsoka asked, closing her eyes and using her montrals to get a better picture of the territory they needed to cover. “Bring the whole crew. I have to get back to Obi-Wan.”

Rex activated a thermal detonator, tossed it into the air so that Ahsoka could levitate it into the sniper nest up ahead they were trying to get around. There was a loud and satisfying boom, marking the end of the blaster fire they had been hiding from. “That’s better. We should be able to make better time now.”

Ahsoka and Rex stood up slowly, looking at the seemingly silent field of battle, Point Rain, and the faint glimmer of Obi-Wan, still achingly far away.

“I feel like I’m never going to get there,” Ahsoka confessed, looking at Rex, who had pulled his helmet off and ran a hand over his buzzed blond hair. “Like I’m going to be stuck here forever.”

“That’s your fear talking,” Rex said, rubbing at the back of his neck. “You were on death’s door, Ahsoka. You don’t just bounce back from that. And look at how far you’ve come.”
Commander and Captain turned to look back at the distance they had covered, the obstacles they had conquered together and it made Ahsoka feel better, feel stronger in her determination to make it to Point Rain where Obi-Wan and the outside world were waiting for her.

Turning back to the field they were about to cross, Ahsoka suddenly became aware of people beside her and behind, of men in identical armor painted the blue of a Kamino sky, each one a little different to suit the man underneath the helmet.

“Well it’s about time,” Rex chuckled, reaching over to squeeze Ahsoka’s shoulder. “I wondered when the cavalry would get here.”

“Sorry we’re late, Commander,” Echo said at Ahsoka’s left, hoisting his blaster rifle. “I told Fives we needed to leave earlier but you know how he is.”

Ahsoka bit her lip and told herself not to cry at the sight of all the familiar painted faces she hadn’t seen in decades. They weren’t real. There was no possible way they could be there with her in the Force.

Ahsoka knew that but it didn’t matter. It had been so long and she missed them all so much.

The men standing next to her, standing at her back, were conjured up from the depths of her mind, give her support and to help her fight her way back to full health. Once they would have given their lives for her and she for them. It seemed a simple thing really to ask their memories for help just one more time.

_I have to get back to Obi-Wan and Anakin. They need me. They’re alone out there with no one to protect them from what’s coming._

“Sir?” Echo’s voice interrupted Ahsoka’s worried thoughts “Are we moving out?”

“Ah… yes. Of course! We’re heading towards Point Rain. I’m sure Rex briefed everyone on the mission objective?” Ahsoka asked, turning to look back at the perfectly regimented lines of Torrent company and the others, waiting for her command.

“Commander Tano!”

Ahsoka, Rex and Echo turned to the west, where Fives was running towards them, explosions and the noise of a nearby battle practically chasing after him. He skidded to a stop, panting for breath as Rex reached out to steady him.

“Easy there, Fives,” Rex said, Ahsoka half-listening as she tried to make out with her montrals what Fives had been running from. “What’s the situation?”

“General Skywalker! He’s… he’s in trouble!” Fives gasped out, pointing back at the valley he’d just emerged from. “He needs our help!”

“Anakin?” Ahsoka asked, staring into the distance, trying to see through the slowly clearing smoke the ARC trooper had emerged from. “You saw Anakin?”

Fives nodded. “Heard him more like it. He’s calling for you, sir. We have to help him!”

Frowning, Ahsoka closed her eyes and reached out with the Force, slowly, painfully stretching out to the place beyond her own spirit, to claw her way to the outside world that she was hidden from by the cool, protective darkness of bacta and unconsciousness.
Ahsoka was so close. If she could only make it a little bit further.

Anakin’s cry of pain exploded through Ahsoka’s mindscape like someone had dropped a bomb not even a meter away from her.

She grabbed at her head, as if she could somehow protect her mind from the overwhelming pain and fear radiating outward from Anakin, from her master.

No. Not her master.

From Shmi’s son, the little boy they saved on Tatooine. The little boy living in Satine’s home on Coruscant.

Something was wrong and he needed her help.

“We have to get to him,” Ahsoka groaned, letting Echo help her upright. “Anakin… he can’t… he can’t control whatever it is that’s happening.”

There was a crackle of radio static and the muted sounds of com chatter as Rex listened to a message in his helmet before speaking. “Copy that. We’ll convene on your location.”

Confused, exhausted but determined, Ahsoka looked over at Rex, unholstering her sabers. “Who was that?”

“Cody,” Rex replied, pulling out his pistols. “I guess we’ll meet General Kenobi there.”

Relief washed through Ahsoka as Rex called the 501st to move out.

Somewhere, far beyond Ahsoka’s awareness and yet not, warm and steady like sun the 212’s yellow had always reminded her of, Obi-Wan was on his way to save Anakin, rushing off to save the day like he always had when she was younger.

*Obi-Wan will get to him in time.*

*Anakin will be all right.*

*Please let him be all right.*

Obi-Wan didn’t bother to park his citybike or wait for the valet or attendant droid to show up as he screeched to a stop outside of Satine’s townhome. Anakin’s pain and anguish had only gotten stronger the closer Obi-Wan got to the Kryze home and whatever it was that had upset the boy showed no signs of stopping.

Pounding up the steps, Obi-Wan burst through the front door and gave a panicked look to Didia, who was already waiting at the top of the entryway steps.

“He in his suite with his mother and the Duchess,” Didia replied, remarkably cool-headed for the sounds of hysterical sobbing that emanated from the back of the house.
Bowing his head in thanks, Obi-Wan ran up the stairs and past Didia, letting his senses and the Force guide him when his memory failed to pull up the fastest route. He took the stairs two at a time up onto the second floor, grinding to a halt when a particularly powerful wave of despair and anger exploded outward, slamming into his mental shielding like a tidal wave against sea walls.

Somewhere nearby, Obi-Wan heard a pane of glass crack.

*I'm coming, Anakin! Hold on just a little longer!*

Taking a breath and pushing forward through the swirling hurricane of cold and dark emotions, Obi-Wan was able to pick out Satine and Shmi from the darkness as well as two other lights that seemed familiar.

“One-Wan!” Bo-Katan gasped, rushing over to him and grabbing his hand. “You’re here! Satine! One-Wan’s here!”

They both hurried down the hallway to the door where Pre Vizla seemed to be standing guard over the entrance to Shmi and Anakin’s room.

“Out of my way,” Obi-Wan ordered as he barreled past Pre, Bo-Katan following him into the room.

It looked as if a concussion grenade had gone off inside it.

Doors had been knocked off their hinges and chairs knocked over and shoved to the far corners. The transparisteel windows were cracked and anything fragile looked as if it had been used as a gundark’s play thing.

Shmi sat on the floor in the middle of the room, holding Anakin close to her chest as he sobbed, making incoherent sounds of agony and fury. He felt so sad and so alone, reaching out desperately through the Force and shaking the world around him when no one reached back.

*Help me!*

*Mama! ‘Tine! Help me, please!*

Over and over, Anakin cried into the Force, his face red and tears pouring from his eyes, his misery so overwhelming Obi-Wan felt his own tears well up before he realized what was going on.

Satine looked over at him, gesturing helplessly. “We can’t get him to stop! I don’t know what I did wrong!”

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” Obi-Wan explained, gently turning Satine away. “Bo-Kat? Take your sister and your cousin outside. I’ll take care of Anakin.”

Bo-Katan nodded, resolute in her determination to protect her sister. Satine tried to protest but Obi-Wan shook his head.

“You can’t help him,” Obi-Wan said as Bo-Katan led Satine out. “You’ve done the best thing you could do. Now let me help him.”

Nodding, her misery and anger at her own uselessness clear on her face, Satine left the room, Bo-Katan telling her it would be all right.

“The only good jetti in the galaxy is here,” Bo-Katan murmured, hugging her sister close as Obi-Wan closed the door.
“Obi-Wan!” Shmi gasped, reaching out for him as Anakin continued to wail.

Hurrying over to Shmi, Obi-Wan knelt down in front of her, putting a hand on Anakin’s back. “How long as he been like this?”

“Almost an hour?” Shmi guessed. She looked pale and exhausted, her hands trembling as she held her son close. “He was fine this morning but something happened. I don’t know what but he got angry. Earlier this morning he said something bad was coming but when nothing happened, I thought everything would be all right.”

“NO!” Anakin bellowed with another blast of furious power. “Bad thing! Bad thing! It’s here! Mama, help!”

Shmi looked up at Obi-Wan, close to her breaking point as her son’s agony threatened to swamp her own mind. “Obi-Wan… please help us.”

Nodding, Obi-Wan closed his eyes, taking stock of the storm churning around Anakin, around the conflicting emotions battering the boy and everyone around him. There was anger there, dark and filled with fire and smoke, but there was also fear there, burning cold and gnawing at the edges of Anakin’s psyche.

And there was something else.

Something warm and familiar, desperately trying to protect Anakin from whatever it was that had triggered his episode. In the chaos of his emotions, Anakin’s spirit clung to the small bright spot of golden light like a baby shadow pup to its mother and the glow grew brighter, stronger, illuminating a path through the maelstrom, a way to save Anakin.

We don’t have much time. A voice whispered in the back of Obi-Wan’s mind, one that sounded achingly like his master before fading away before he could focus on it.

Right now all that mattered was getting to Anakin and protecting him from the storm of his own making.

Anakin! Obi-Wan cried out, sending his spirit rushing down the weakening path, reaching out to the soul of the little boy so lost and alone in the midst of all the noise and chaos of Coruscant and the middle of the galaxy. Anakin, it’s me! I’m right here! Give me your hand!

Shaking his head, Anakin clung even more tightly to the little golden light in his hands. No! Can’t! Too scared!

Obi-Wan grunted as another wave of fear scoured his mental shielding, ripping pieces of it away like a tornado. I’m here to help you, Anakin. You just have to trust me! Please! I know you don’t want to be here.

The bad thing is here! Anakin cried, looking up from where he was curled up, no, crouched around a small little egg, covered in swirling patterns of green and gold. It’s here, Obi-Wan. It’s here and it’s bad! And it’s loud and it hurts and I can’t stop! Make it stop!

I know, Little Dragon. I know. But I can’t help you until you give me your hand, Obi-Wan sent back to Anakin, along with a wave of a memory from when Ahsoka had just made him her padawan and he had given her a hug. It was one of his most cherished memories, that moment when they became partners on their journey through life and Obi-Wan hoped that the strength in that memory, the peace and contentment there, would be enough to block out at least some of the swirling cacophony in the Force around them.
Please, Anakin. Let me help you.

Anakin looked at Obi-Wan and then back at his egg, his lower lip quivering. I'm scared.

I am too, Obi-Wan replied, almost there. But I promise I'll protect you.

If he could just reach a little further, he could gather Anakin into his arms and shut everything else out.

Gotcha! The same voice as before said as he managed to grab Anakin, pulling his spirit within the boundaries of Obi-Wan’s own mind, shutting out every last intrusive thought, emotion and sensation from the outside world, leaving only the sound of the ocean and Anakin’s soft crying as he clung tightly to Obi-Wan.

Obi-Wan? Anakin sniffed, clinging to his friend as they seemed to float in the middle of the ocean, Obi-Wan staring up into a night sky that was quickly clearing of clouds. Are you mad?

No, Little Dragon. Obi-Wan said with a slow shake of his head, stroking Anakin’s back. Right now I'm just tired. I imagine you’re tired as well.

I think we’re all tired, the voice that sounded like home whispered, warm concern suffusing the little vision as it pulled away. Good night, Skyguy.

Good night, Snips, Anakin yawned as he let his heavy head rest against Obi-Wan’s shoulders. Good night, Obi-Wan.

Good night, Anakin.

Back in the physical world, Anakin went limp in Shmi’s arms, the fury and pain gone from his face and his body relaxing as if he had finally fallen asleep. “Obi-Wan! He’s stopped. It’s stopped.”

Slowly opening his eyes, Obi-Wan felt the world spin as he tried to pull all the pieces of himself back together, sloppily repairing his shielding as he went. He felt spent, drained of energy and in need of a long nap or three. “How is he?”

“He’s asleep,” Shmi said, kissing her son’s forehead and holding him closer. “Oh thank you, Obi-Wan. Thank you so much! I was so scared. I thought it would be like the night you and Master Ahsoka were attacked.”

“No, no,” Obi-Wan shook his head, running his hands through his hair and wondering why it felt like he had gone several rounds with Master Drallig himself. “It’s not… Anakin is… prodigiously talented. More powerful than I was at his age.”

“I know,” Shmi sighed, slowly standing up, grimacing at how her muscles protested the movement after kneeling on the floor for so long. Obi-Wan hurried to help her and walked with her as she carried Anakin to her bed, tucking him under the covers. “Master Ahsoka, she said the same thing. That Coruscant will be a challenge for him.”

Obi-Wan nodded, glancing down at the sleeping boy in question. “I think anywhere that’s not a desert planet might be a challenge for Anakin but Coruscant seems particularly ill-suited for him.”
Shmi closed her eyes, sinking onto the bed. “What do we do?”

Pursing his lips, Obi-Wan went to pick up the robe he had given Anakin a few weeks ago, draping it over him from the other side of the bed. Seeing that the eternity knot was somehow still sitting on the side table, Obi-Wan closed his eyes and used a tiny curl of power to activate the object, pulling forth a particularly soothing lullaby he had always liked as a child.

“Obi-Wan?” Shmi asked, looking up at him as if he were a wise Jedi master who knew the best path forward for her son.

The weight on his shoulders was almost too much for the young man.

*I'm just a padawan. I don't know what to do! I've never encountered anyone like Anakin before.*

No one has.

“I don’t know,” Obi-Wan finally admitted as he walked over to Shmi and offered her his arm to guide her to the door. “For now all you can do is love him and make him feel safe. I will protect him as best I can but…”

“But?” Shmi echoed, coming to a stop and looking Obi-Wan dead in the eyes. “But what?”

“His powers will only grow,” Obi-Wan said, glancing back at Anakin. “And there is only so much protection I can offer him. Perhaps when Master Ahsoka regains consciousness, she will have a better solution. But for now, this is all we can do.”

Shmi sighed, looking at her son, curling into Obi-Wan’s robe. “Then we wait.”

As they walked out of the room, Obi-Wan asked a question he was increasingly certain he knew the answer to but wanted to check out of thoroughness. “Shmi? Do you know someone named Snips? Someone who might be Force-sensitive?”

Pausing in the doorway, Shmi looked up at Obi-Wan, confused and afraid. “No, but that… that is what Anakin kept saying, that horrible night when Ahsoka was hurt.”

*Could Snips somehow be Ahsoka?*

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Exhausted and full of worry and conflicting emotion, Obi-Wan dragged himself back to the Jedi Temple, waving off Satine’s well-meaning order to stay the night. As much as he wanted to stay with Anakin, to make sure the boy would be all right when he woke up, there was just too much swirling around inside Obi-Wan for him to stay.

And that didn’t even include the lightsaber lesson with Qui-Gon Jinn he had fled from.

To be fair, Master Yoda had given him permission to go but it definitely wasn’t the highest point in Obi-Wan’s educational career.

As the Temple district grew closer and the main spire started to climb into the sky, Obi-Wan tried not to think about anything, to simply focus on the path in front of him and the steps necessary to get him back to the haven of his room.
First he needed to land the speeder, then sign it back in at the terminal. After that was the torturously long walk to the turbo lift and then another cruel trek over a skybridge that led to yet another turbo lift. Push the button for the right floor and gaze vacantly up at the floor lights as they lit up, one after the other. Notice that the four in that number was flickering and would need to be replaced soon. Wonder who replaced the lights in the turbo lifts.

Obi-Wan stepped out of the turbo lift and shuffled down to his room, keying in the entry. He pulled off his robe as he walked inside, tossing it over a nearby chair as he made a straight line for the sofa. Collapsing onto the soft squabs of the couch, Obi-Wan stared up at the ceiling and tried not to think of anything.

_Snips. That’s the second time I’ve heard that. Both times around Anakin. Both times connected to Ahsoka. Why would he call her that? What does it mean? Why can’t I stop thinking about it?_

Thoughts battled inside Obi-Wan’s head, each one vying for his attention and concentration but he refused to give any of them the energy they wanted.

Feeling like he had wandered too deep into the mysterious eddies of the Force, Obi-Wan searched around for something mundane to occupy his frazzled mind with. Something boring and tedious that would require all of his attention in the here and now. Something other than his overdue mission report.

Obi-Wan’s gaze fell upon his master’s locked datapad resting on the low table next to him, and he slowly sat up.

Calling the datapad over to his hand, Obi-Wan activated it and the same log-in screen appeared.

**Password Required: **

Letting out a sigh, Obi-Wan punched in his master’s code.

_Incorrect Password. Access Denied._

“As I expected,” Obi-Wan sighed, scrubbing a hand through his hair. “Let’s try this one.”

Obi-Wan keyed through password after password, trying to use his rudimentary bit of slicing to guide him in his attempts.

None of them worked, but it seemed the pad wasn’t going to ‘brick’ itself, as Yuen had warned.

_Incorrect Password. Access Denied._

Groaning loudly, Obi-Wan was about ready to give up.

He’d spent most of the day pretending to be well behaved with Qui-Gon, walking a Force prodigy back from a dangerous fit and then trying to explain to his family there wasn’t really anything non-Force sensitives could do for him besides stay calm and keep his environment as serene as possible.

How Shmi and Satine planned on keeping a Mandalorian household serene and peaceful was not a task Obi-Wan envied.

Not when Anakin was so bloody powerful and strange things kept happening around him.

**Password Required: **
Obi-Wan sighed and shrugged. “Why not? It won’t work either.”

**Password Required: snips_**

As the datapad worked through the password just like it had his previous attempts, Obi-Wan tried to think if there was anything in the kitchenette he could make into dinner. He was pretty confident there was some soup and maybe some bread that he could fashion into a dinner and was about to go check the cupboards when the datapad let out a beep.

**Password expired six months ago.**

**Password Required:_**

Obi-Wan leaned forward, reading and rereading the words on the screen.

Password expired six months ago?

*So it had been a password once?*

Just to make sure he wasn’t imagining things, Obi-Wan put ‘snips’ in again, almost hoping that the old screen would appear, that this would just be the hallucination of an exhausted mind.

**Password expired six months ago.**

**Password Required:_**

Obi-Wan frowned, his fresh memories of Anakin’s episode pulling up a memory of Maerai Prime.

What had his master said when he was straining to save her life, when Qui-Gon Jinn claimed he touched the dark? What had that voice that sounded just like her said to Anakin just hours ago?

Swallowing hard, Obi-Wan keyed in the new password.

**Password Required: skyguy_**

Obi-Wan waited, still and breathless, almost afraid of what he was going to find.

**Password Accepted: Welcome back, Knight Tano.**

Chapter End Notes

Oh Obi-Wan... What have you done?
Night Terrors

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Satine Kryze, the Duchess of Mandalore, was reunited with her sister, Bo-Katan Kryze, and their cousin, Pre Vizla after an attack on the Vizla estate on Kalevala. Shmi and Anakin Skywalker are introduced to the family and while Pre has his doubts about Shmi and her strange son, Bo-Katan is charmed by him and her new title of "Big Dragon".

Later that day, Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi receives a distressing call during the middle of a demonstration before his temporary Jedi Master, Qui-Gon Jinn and Master Yoda. He rushes to the aid of young Skywalker who suffering from another Force-powered breakdown.

It is during this same breakdown that Obi-Wan finally learns the password that allows him to unlock his master's database and the terrifying future that Ahsoka Tano comes from.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Quinlan Vos didn’t think much of Obi-Wan’s absence at breakfast that next morning as he clutched his mug of caf and waited for the pleasant buzz of sentience to return to him. Obi-Wan often spent the early mornings in his master’s room in the Halls of Healing, meditating with her and hiding from Master Jinn.

There was a tacit understanding amongst Obi-Wan’s friends to play dumb if Master Jinn happened to ask them where he could find his temporary padawan learner. Luckily, Jinn didn’t stop by their table and no such lies had to be manufactured.

As it turned out, Obi-Wan didn’t make it to their astro navigation class or their advanced Force theory seminar, and while Quinlan thought it odd, he didn’t worry overly much.

It was possible Master Jinn had somehow found Obi-Wan on his way to class and had absconded with him for a long meditative session and lecture on the currents of the Living Force.

Obi-Wan had once confided in Quinlan that they spent nearly an entire afternoon identifying plants in the Room of a Thousand fountains. When he asked Obi-Wan what had been the point of the exercise, his friend had just shrugged and said, “He found my ability to identify edible lichen lacking.”

When lunch rolled around, and there was still no sign of Obi-Wan, Quinlan brought it up with his friends, doing his best to not start a rumor.

“Have you see Obi-Wan today?” Quinlan asked, leaning in closer so that he wouldn’t be overheard. “He didn’t come to breakfast or any of the classes I share with him. Did you see him, Luminara?”

Shaking her head, Luminara said, “No. I haven’t seen him since yesterday at lunch. Which was odd
because we were getting our marks back from Master Sinube on our historical analysis project. I
know Obi-Wan was looking forward to a good score on it.”

Kit finished off his seaweed salad and pointed to Qui-Gon Jinn across the dining hall, who was
talking to Master Sifo-Dyas and looked unhappy about the topic of conversation. “It does seem a bit
odd that Master Jinn is here and not Obi-Wan. Maybe he came down with a cold? I heard a bunch of
initiates and padawans came down with Denon fever. Maybe he did too.”

“Perhaps Yuen has seen him?” Luminara murmured, looking around the dining hall and spying their
friend, who was chatting with a tall blond friend. She stood up and waved, trying to catch his gaze.
“Yuen! Over here!”

Yuen glanced over at Luminara and, nodding, held up his hand to indicate he was on his way. The
three padawans watched as their friend made his goodbyes and hurried over to them. “Hey! What’s
wrong? I haven’t even gotten lunch yet.”

“Have you seen Obi-Wan today?” Quinlan asked, the feeling of something wrong getting stronger in
his gut. “Don’t you have that ancient languages seminar with him?”

“That’s this afternoon,” Yuen said, his face pulling into a frown. “Why? Haven’t you seen him
today?”

“No one has,” Kit explained. “Not one of us.”

“Maybe we should check with… someone else?” Luminara suggested, feeling a bit uneasy. “I know
Obi-Wan is not overly fond of Master Jinn-”

“The understatement of the century,” Quinlan interjected with a snort.

“But he is responsible for Obi-Wan’s well being,” Luminara continued, ignoring Quinlan’s sarcastic
comment. “I’m sure he wouldn’t want Obi-Wan to unduly suffer, especially if he were sick.”

“Are we sure he isn’t just in the Halls of Healing?” Yuen asked, glancing in the direction of that
wing of the Temple. “Perhaps he just didn’t want to leave his master’s side today.”

Kit finished off what remained of his lunch and stood up. “I’ll go check the Halls and see if he’s
there. I’ll com you if I find anything.”

Quinlan looked up at Kit, his mouth pulled into a wane smile. “Thanks, Kit. I’ll keep you updated if
I see him between now and saber class at 1500 hours.”

“I think I see Depa and a few other older padawans,” Luminara said, her lower lip caught under her
teeth as she spotted the group on the far side of the room sitting down to their meal. “Doesn’t Obi-
Wan have breakfast with Master Windu on occasion? Perhaps Depa will know where he is. I think
I’ll go ask her.”

And with that, Luminara gathered up her tray and hurried off to see if she could work her way into
Depa’s circle of friends. Both young men watched as Luminara was easily welcomed into the group,
giving her friends a wave before joining the conversation at that table.

With Luminara and Kit gone, that left just Yuen and Quinlan, and Quinlan waved his friend off to go
get lunch and return to the blond friend he had been talking to earlier. “Let me know if Obi-Wan
doesn’t show up to your class.”

“I’m sure he’s fine,” Yuen said, trying to be reassuring even as his worried face said otherwise.
Quinlan nodded, his voice full of doubt despite what he said. “Yeah. Me too.”

Later that afternoon, Obi-Wan’s friends gathered in a tight huddle in the far corner of the western saber arena to compare notes while Master Drallig worked with group of new padawans.

“He wasn’t in the Halls and the receptionist said she hadn’t seen him at all today,” Kit said, his eyes narrowed. “And Nurse Solva? The one he likes? She said she hadn’t seen him either and that she was worried about him.”

“Depa hasn’t seen him either,” Luminara spoke next, her arms folded over her chest, concern wrinkling her forehead. “She said he did speak to Master Windu about something yesterday at his weekly breakfast with him but she didn’t know what it was because she got there late.”

Quinlan nodded, taking all of this information in. “And what about your seminar class, Yuen? Did he show up?”

Yuen shook his head, his hands folded in his lap, his eyes on the floor as he recalled the class. “No, he didn’t. And we had a test today. Obi-Wan never misses a test. Remember when he came to class with a nasty case of nerf pox?”

“He missed a test?” Luminara squeaked in surprise and dismay. “Oh no! Can he make it up?”

As Yuen and the others discussed the particulars of the test Obi-Wan had missed, and whether or not he could make it up, Quinlan came to a decision.

Something was very wrong with Obi-Wan and it was up to them to figure it out.

“C’mon,” Quinlan announced as he stood up. “Something isn’t right. Obi-Wan would never miss a test. Let’s go find him.”

“But we have class,” Luminara said, glancing over at Master Drallig, who had moved on to a group of their fellow agemates and was paying little attention to them. “We can’t just leave without permission.”

“Obi-Wan needs us,” Quinlan stated, holstering his sabers as he walked towards the exit, gesturing for Kit to come with him. “Cover for us, okay? Tell Master Drallig… I don’t know. I ate something from Kit’s lunch that didn’t agree with me.”

“All right,” Luminara pursed folded her arms over her chest and looked back at the blade master, who was still hadn’t made it to their corner of the room. “But don’t be gone too long.”

“We won’t,” Kit promised as he scrambled upright and loped after Quinlan.

Luminara and Yuen watched them go, concern and worry written across their faces, and Yuen spoke softly as Quinlan and Kit disappeared around the corner. “I hope he’s all right.”
Standing before the door to Obi-Wan and his master’s apartment, Quinlan felt strangely nervous, as if there was some kind of monster guarding his friend’s room. For all the times he had barged in, basically unannounced, and spent an evening gossiping and studying inside the cozy suite of rooms, it seemed as if something had changed. He couldn’t quite put his finger on it but the air around the room, the Force itself, felt different, cool and remote, like the winter ocean at low tide.

Kit stood back from the door, looking down the hallway, his eyes narrowed. “I don’t like this. I know he’s in there but… he feels…”

“Strange,” Quinlan agreed. “Yeah, I know.”

Taking a breath, Quinlan knocked on the door, the three sharp raps loud enough to be heard back in their friend’s bedroom. “Obi-Wan? It’s Quinlan and Kit! We came to see you.”

Silence was their only answer.

Kit stepped closer, projecting his voice just in case Obi-Wan hadn’t heard them. “Obi-Wan? It’s Kit. You didn’t come to any classes today. Are you feeling okay? Do we need to get a healer?”

Still no answer.

His frown deepening, Quinlan increased his volume, not quite yelling but somewhere in the neighborhood. “C’mon, Obi-Wan! Talk to us. Did something happen with Master Ahsoka? Did you and Jinn fight?”

Quinlan was about to start pounding when Kit held up a hand, his eyes narrowing as he leaned closer to the door and then backed away just as quickly, whispering. “He’s moving. Coming to the entrance, I think.”

They stepped back and, true to Kit’s words, the door slid open, revealing Obi-Wan. There were shadows under his eyes and he looked like he hadn’t slept at all the night before. His clothes were rumpled and his hair stuck up at odd ends, like he had been running his hands through it over and over again.

He looked, in a word, terrible.

Obi-Wan spoke before Quinlan or Kit could, his voice flat with a hoarse edge to it. “What do you want?”

Stunned by such a brusque response from their friend, Kit and Quinlan shared a glance before Quinlan spoke. “We… we’re worried about you. You didn’t come to breakfast, you didn’t go to any of your classes and you missed a test. You never miss exams.”

“All right?” Kit asked, concern in his voice as he stepped closer. “You look exhausted.”

Inhaling slowly, Obi-Wan looked away from them, his hands curling into fists for a moment before he muttered, “I do not require the assistance of the bloody healers, Kit. I’m fine. I just… I couldn’t… I did not feel up to it today.”

“Fine?” Quinlan replied, his arms on his hips and his voice full of disbelief. “You don’t look fine. You look like chagas. What’s wrong? Did Jinn say something to you? Did something happen to Master Ahsoka?”

That seemed to strike a nerve and Obi-Wan snapped his gaze back on Quinlan, his eyes slate like a storm. “When I say I’m fine, I mean it, Quinlan Vos. Force, you are nosy! Mind your own damn
business!”

Kit’s eyes went round as he gaped at Obi-Wan in shock. He had never heard his polite and well-mannered friend speak in such a rude fashion to anyone, let alone one of his best friends. “Obi-Wan! What is wrong? This isn’t like you.”

“What do you know, Kit?” Obi-Wan shot back, his aura black and spiky within the Force, full of dark emotions his friends didn’t understand. “Forgive me if I’m not in the mood to play Padawan Learner today. Go back to your classes! Be dutiful Jedi and leave me the kriff alone!”

Finishing in a near shout, Obi-Wan whirled around and slammed his fist against the door control panel to close it. Stomping back inside, Obi-Wan didn’t give either boy a backwards glance as the door to his apartment hissed shut.

For a long moment, Quinlan and Kit stood in the silent hallway, shocked, confused and even more worried than before.

“That…” Kit murmured, his headtails twitching in anxiety, “was not like Obi-Wan, at all. Something must be very wrong.”

Quinlan scowled. ‘C’mon. We need help, and not from that gundark the Council stuck him with.”

Back in the murky half-light of the central living room, Obi-Wan sat on one end of the sofa, staring at his hands while he waited for the spirits of his friends to drift further and further away. In his mind’s eye, the unique lights that represented them grew smaller and more dim, eventually swallowed up by the shifting grey and taupe shadows of the Temple.

*Good.* Obi-Wan thought, running a hand down his face before he stood up and walked to the refresher.

The lights kicked on as he stepped inside, flickering against the dark before they finally surged to blue-white clarity. Obi-Wan walked to the sink and placed his hands on the cool, smooth stone and took stock of the face in the mirror.

The young man in his reflection looked haggard and tired, with the faintest shadow of scruff on his chin and hair that looked to be in serious need of a shower. His clothes were rumpled and looked slept in, even though sleep had been terribly elusive the night before.

Mirror Obi-Wan looked almost as bad as Obi-Wan felt.

*Quin was right. I do look like Bantha scat.* Obi-Wan groused to himself, running his fingers over his chin in a kind of numb confusion. A stray thought drifted over his mind, a wisp of a cloud across the darkening skies.

*I wonder how long it would take me to grow a beard?*

“No!” Obi-Wan growled, wrenching the hot water on in the sink and yanking open the cabinet behind his mirror, scrounging around for shaving gel and a razor. “No karking way!”

He had only recently begun to worry about facial hair, something padawans were not allowed to
grow unless it contravened their birth cultures. Thankfully the tawny, soft fuzz on his chin was easily
dealt with, leaving Obi-Wan with his face again.

His face and only his face.

Of course now that he had shaved, it only made the rest of him look like an unkempt wookie and
into the shower Obi-Wan went, a hot blistering attempt to scrub every last inch of himself raw and
pink. To try and scour himself as if it could somehow erase the thoughts and feelings swirling around
and around in his head.

“After the Purge… I couldn’t find anyone. I heard rumors, of course. And Kanan told me what
happened to Master Luminara…”

No. He wouldn’t think of that. Food. Obi-Wan needed some food.

“It’s so strange to be in a galaxy where Anakin Skywalker isn’t even born yet. I have to find Master
and his mother as soon as I can.”

No, Anakin Skywalker was a toddler and incapable of being anyone’s master.

“Obi-Wan is growing so fast. He’s finally convinced me to ‘formalize’ my fighting style, which is so
like him. My padawan is always so proper and civilized, just like Master Obi-Wan. I think I’ll name
the first move after Rex and Torrent Company.”

“No, no, no!” Obi-Wan shouted at the tin of soup he was attempting to heat up on the hot plate in the
kitchenette. “It’s not real! I’m imagining things. It’s not real. It’s not real.”

He repeated the words over and over to himself, trying to crowd the thoughts and words out of his
head through sheer force of will. Obi-Wan didn’t stop until he had sat down at the table by the
window to try to eat.

In the seat that faced the window, Obi-Wan reached out with the Force to open the blinds, hoping to
let the busy monotonous hum of Coruscant drown everything else out. He counted speeders, counted
ships, counting lights on in distant buildings and anything else he could think of to keep the thoughts
at bay.

Anything to keep the pounding horror of Ahsoka Tano’s journal out of his head and out of his heart.

“That makes five Lutani,” Obi-Wan murmured to the dying afternoon sunlight, mechanically eating
his soup. “Five Lutani speeders, twelve Corellian freight sledges, a KSE Firespray, and four shuttles
heading to the Senate.”

Obi-Wan’s gaze drifted from the buzzing ships overhead to the distant blue dome of the Senate
building, his jaw clenching even as he told himself to pay it no mind.

“The Emperor, well, Chancellor Palpatine, before he convinced the Senate to make him dictator for
life, was a Sith Lord, hiding in plain sight.”

Closing his eyes, Obi-Wan took a deep breath as he tried once again to block out everything he had
learned from his master’s datapad. To keep out the nightmare that would not go away no matter how
fervently he told himself it wasn’t real.

That it couldn’t possibly be real.

But if it wasn’t real, then what did that mean?
That Ahsoka was crazy?

Or that his master had imagined some kind of bizarre parallel world where everything was some kind of horrible nightmare?

The Jedi Order eradicated?

The Republic destroyed and replaced by an oppressive Empire?

The Sith, not only real and back from the dead, but triumphant and ruling the galaxy?

Obi-Wan dead, and all his friends and masters, murdered at the hands of…

Everyone murdered at the hands of Obi-Wan’s apprentice, a young man named Anakin Skywalker?

How could any one person come up with an idea so horrid and wrong, so fiendishly baroque and full of such heartbreaking betrayal?

If it weren’t real, if Ahsoka’s claims of being from the future were just the workings of a delusional mind, then what did that mean? Was Ahsoka only crazy when Obi-Wan wasn’t around? How could she have possibly fooled the Jedi Council for long?

How had she hidden her insanity from Obi-Wan? They had hardly spent a day apart in the last five years. Was he not that observant? Was he only seeing what he wanted to see to protect his place in the Temple?

Had Ahsoka always been crazy and he had just ignored it? Desperate to have a master, any master, so long as he could stay at the Temple and realize his dream of being a Jedi Knight?

Maybe he should have listened to Qui-Gon all along.

Maybe Obi-Wan should have gone to Bandomeer and given up his selfish dream and accepted the will of the Living Force.

But Ahsoka’s datapad, her archive full of an alternate past and possible future all rolled into one terrifying mass of words and holo recordings, said that Qui-Gon Jinn had been Obi-Wan’s master before.

No, not Padawan Obi-Wan’s master, but Ahsoka’s grandmaster, the almost mythical Master Obi-Wan she spoke of in such reverent terms.

The master who trained Anakin Skywalker.

The master who failed his padawan learner.

The man who let Anakin Skywalker Fall and become Darth Vader.

The man Ahsoka wanted Obi-Wan to grow up into.

Is that… is that why you chose me? Because you weren’t going to let me fail again?

As that one thought slipped past his defenses, others followed, one after the other until they were too many to be counted, too many to be parsed out and understood. It was a heavy wave of pain and grief, washing over Obi-Wan and dragging him down into the depths, trying to drown him in Ahsoka’s pain, trying to bury him with another person’s actions.
Obi-Wan curled forward, letting out a silent sob that became a wordless scream and another and another as the world he knew was systematically destroyed.

*It cannot be real!*

There was already a senator from Naboo named Palpatine. Ahsoka’s database had an extensive collection of articles and holos about him. He was considered a rising star amongst the younger Senators.

*This cannot be happening!*

The Trade Federation was already involving itself in sovereign systems. Hadn’t he not spoken to Master Windu about that at breakfast the day before? Telling him to notify Master Plo Koon while he was conducting his investigations on Maerai Prime?

*Master, please!* Please, *you have to wake up! Tell me this is all a dream!* Please!

Anakin Skywalker, the boy who would become his padawan learner, who would Fall and become Darth Vader, was real.

Obi-Wan had met him, saved his life and cared for him, unaware of what they had been to each other in another world, another life. He was the most powerful Force sensitive Obi-Wan had ever met and he was only a toddler. Hadn’t he told Shmi that Anakin would only get stronger? How strong would he become?

Strong enough to destroy the Jedi Order and the Republic they served?

Mace Windu made his way through the hallways of the Temple, hurrying around a pod of amphibian initiates, who chorused a greeting at their creche master’s instruction.

“Good afternoon, Master Windu!” the cheerful little group of brightly colored children called out, wiggling head tails and flippers as he turned around to bow to the assembled group.

“Good afternoon, young ones,” Mace said, giving them a smile even as he continued on his way. “Forgive me but I late for a meeting and cannot stay. Enjoy your swimming lessons.”

The pod of initiates chorused that they would and then proceeded to gossip in delight at receiving that most rare of gifts, a smile from Master Windu.

“He was smiling at me!” one Mon Cala exclaimed even as his agemates protested that, no, Master Windu had clearly been smiling at each of them.

“Now, now,” their master, a kindly elder Selkath, quieted the class down. “I do believe Master Windu smiled at you all, and, even better, you lived to tell the tale!”

The group of initiates burst into happy laughter, making Mace smile as he turned a corner into the communications of hub of the Temple, shaking his head ruefully. *Maybe Yoda’s right. Perhaps I should spend more time with the younger members of the Order.*

“Good afternoon, Master Windu,” a recently promoted Ithorian knight, Xefaly if he remembered correctly, stood up at the receiving desk. “We’re establishing a connection with Master Plo Koon as
“Thank you, Knight Xefaly,” Mace replied, accepting a datapad from the knight in question. “And congratulations on your recent knighting.”

“It is my honor and pleasure to serve, Master Windu,” Xefaly said, his translator not quite capturing the pride in his native words but the Force making his feelings crystal clear.

“Master Windu?” a Rodian communication tech stepped out of the hallway that led to chamber four. “Master Plo Koon is waiting for you.”

“Thank you,” Mace said, nodding to the tech before taking his leave of Knight Xefaly. “We should discuss your goals as a new knight. Sometime next month, perhaps?”

Xefaly nodded as he watched Mace head into the chamber. “I plan on it, Master Windu.”

Thanking the Rodian tech as he took a seat within the secure room, Mace waited for the door to close before he turned to address Plo Koon. “Hello, my old friend. What news do you have from Maerai Prime?”

Plo Koon was standing next to a window, his arms folded over his chest as he spoke. “Nothing good or definitive I’m afraid. While I have met with Captain Avanbae from Qui-Gon’s mission report, it seems his younger brother Naeir, his contact within the Oppressed, has gone missing.”

“Do you suspect foul play?” Mace asked, not liking where this was headed. “Was the attack that injured Knight Tano an assassination attempt against the Jedi investigating the earlier bombings and unrest?”

“I can’t say for certain until I can make contact with the representatives of the Oppressed,” Plo Koon replied, his voice sounding grave even through the distortion of his mask and the holoprojector. “As you can imagine, they are not in a hurry to be seen speaking with a Jedi. The bombing has not swayed the public to their side, in spite of their valid grievances with the government.”

“So you have confirmed there was tampering with the last election?” Mace questioned, picking up the datapad that contained Plo Koon’s findings thus far and scrolling through it.

“It certainly seems that way,” Plo Koon agreed, glancing out the window before turning to face the holoprojector and Mace head on. “Something is not right on this planet. I cannot put my finger on it, Mace, but the Force, the bombings, all of it feels like pieces of a larger puzzle.”

“Funny you should mention that,” Mace said, putting away the datapad and folding his hands in his lap. “I spoke to Padawan Obi-Wan yesterday about something very similar.”

“Oh?” Plo asked, his concern for his grand padawan evident in his voice and posture. “How is he? Is Qui-Gon treating him well?”

“Obi-Wan is doing quite well considering the circumstances,” Mace answered, his mouth quirked in a half smile. “His friends have taken to running interference for him, so Depa tells me. We have breakfast regularly and while it is clear Obi-Wan has not softened to Qui-Gon, it seems like he will make it through this trial stronger for it. He is very mature for such a young Jedi.”

“Agreed,” Plo Koon nodded, relieved to hear Obi-Wan was all right, all things considered. “When I return, I have every intention of taking over Obi-Wan’s training if Ahsoka has not recovered by then.”
“I imagined you would but Master Shode reported to the Council earlier today that he expects Ahsoka to wake up soon,” Mace shared, leaning back in his chair and happy to share some good news with his friend. “He said that she has recovered from most of her injuries and is showing increased levels brain activity, so it’s only a matter of time before she wakes up.”

Plo Koon’s relief and joy were so intense, Mace could almost swear he felt it in the Force, in spite of the distance between the two masters. He felt a smile rise up on his face to match the one no doubt hidden behind the Kel Dor master’s rebreather. “This is most wonderful news, Mace. I thank you for telling me. Have you told Obi-Wan?”

“Not yet,” Mace said, shaking his head. “I’ve only just received the information from Master Shode about an hour ago. But that reminds me that we’ve gotten off track. I spoke to Obi-Wan yesterday about his and Ahsoka’s time on Maerai Prime and he said something I think you might find pertinent to your investigation.”

“Oh? What’s that?” Plo Koon asked, head canted as he listened.

Mace folded his arms over his chest, his brows furrowed. “According to Obi-Wan, he and his master have encountered something similar before, on Raxxus?”

“Yes, the bombing of the negotiations between Acronae and Acromino. I was there as well,” Plo Koon nodded in agreement, not quite understanding what Mace was getting at. “I fail to grasp the point of his observation.”

“Obi-Wan said he and Ahsoka felt that there were strong similarities between the bombing that took place on Raxxus and the bombings on Maerai Prime,” Mace explained. “He also said that Ahsoka felt strongly that the Trade Federation was somehow involved.”

Mace watched his friend in the holoscreen as Plo Koon turned away for a moment, picking up a datapad and flipping through a few entries before nodding. “Here it is, in a statement given by Captain Avanbae. He said he told Ahsoka and Obi-Wan about planets dealing with similar situations, specifically Acromino and Lahareh.”

“As I understand it, Qui-Gon negotiated a peace treaty for Acromino. I wonder if the Trade Federation became involved in the system after that?” Mace murmured, making a note to look into the records of that mission as soon as he was out. “As far as I know the Order has not sent any Jedi to Lahareh. Is that system connected with the Trade Federation?”

“I’ll need to look into it but… I sense there might be something to this hypothesis,” Plo Koon replied, adding something to his datapad. “I will need a few more days on Maerai to conclude my investigation but I will return to the Temple after that. If you could relay this information to Obi-Wan, I would greatly appreciate it.”

Mace nodded, standing up as he sensed their conversation was coming to a close. “Yes, of course, Plo. Be careful in your investigations, my friend. These… terrorists are very bold. They’ve already tried to kill a Jedi once and nearly succeeded. They are not to be treated lightly. Especially if they have… connections with deep pockets.”

“I agree,” Plo Koon replied, stepping forward toward the holocamera on his end, moving to cut the feed. “May the Force be with you, Mace.”

“May the Force be with you too, Plo,” Mace said, as he ended the connection.

Taking a long, deep breath, Mace Windu sat in his communication chamber for some time, trying to
understand the complicated web of conspiracy it seemed Qui-Gon, Ahsoka and Obi-Wan had stumbled into while out on Maerai Prime.

“I don’t like this at all,” Mace muttered as he stood up and headed out of the chamber, heading straight for the Archives and sending a com to Depa to meet him there. “Why do I feel like someone is trying to kill Jedi?”

Mace needed more information on the Trade Federation and to find out just how they had become involved with this growing mess.

Obi-Wan woke in the middle of the night, not remembering how he had gotten from the living room back to his bed. He rolled over and picked the chrono off the bedside table, letting out a groan at the unbearably early hour of the morning. Tossing the small object away, he rolled back to the wall and tried to bundle himself back under the covers and into his pillow, hoping for the blissful, silent darkness of sleep. He closed his eyes and tried to picture his mind emptying of all thoughts and emotions, studiously avoiding what had upset him so much earlier.

Sleep. I need to sleep. I hardly slept at all last night.

Time passed, Obi-Wan laying still in his bed and the chrono quietly clicking off the time, somewhere on the floor against the wall.

This is stupid. I should be sleeping. Why can’t I sleep? I’m exhausted. My head hurts and my shoulders are stiff.

Sleep. I need to get to sleep.

On the count of three, I will fall asleep. One. Two. Three.

Unfortunately it came as no surprise to Obi-Wan when sleep did not wash over him and free him from the torment of the waking world. He tried to fluff up his pillow and straighten his blanket but that was useless. Flopping over to his other side didn’t work either.

It seemed the Force wanted Obi-Wan awake so he sat up from his bed and quietly walked into the living room. He moved through the weak light coming in from the window and collapsed into the wing chair set at a right angle to the sofa.

Turning his face to the window, Obi-Wan stared out at Coruscant, watching glittering lights flickering past, others blinking in and out of existence like dying stars. It was strangely alluring in its own way, an artificial galaxy of lights made up of trillions of beings, coming and going, all part of the great dance of civilization, a mirror to the spiraling arms of the galaxy overhead.

It’s beautiful, Obi-Wan thought to himself, trying not to think about what he read earlier, to exist only in the present moment.

To be one with the Living Force, like Qui-Gon was always telling him.

Standing up, Obi-Wan decided that he was finally calm enough to meditate on what he had discovered on Ahsoka’s datapad. He walked over to the meditation cushions in front of the window and took a seat there, facing the dazzling skyline of Coruscant.
Obi-Wan took a deep breath and closed his eyes, immediately sinking into the chaotic ocean of his thoughts and feelings.

The first thing he felt was fear, cold and bitter, followed almost immediately but a humiliating wave of confusion and betrayal. If Ahsoka’s datapad was true, if what she claimed to be was true, then what did that mean?

Was everyone Obi-Wan knew and loved destined to a brutal, horrible death at the hands of their enemies and one senator from Naboo he had never heard of before?

Anakin Skywalker was just a little boy, powerful, yes, but there was nothing within his spirit to indicate that he possessed the seed of the Dark side within him. Obi-Wan had spent more than enough time just trying to protect Anakin’s mind from his own powers to know just how devoid of darkness the boy was. The idea that Shmi’s son was capable of such monstrous acts was laughable.

True, Anakin had a temper but how could anyone blame him for it after he was taken from the relative calm and quiet of Tatooine and dropped into the middle of the screaming cacophony of Coruscant’s psychic jungle? Even Obi-Wan found Coruscant exhausting at times, and he had grown up there. Anakin’s fits of temper were perfectly natural given the situation and it was not impossible for a young Jedi to learn to control their anger.

After all, hadn’t Obi-Wan learned to do just that thanks largely in part to his master’s instructions?

Why would Ahsoka say such a thing? It made no sense, none at all.

Not only that but now that Obi-Wan thought about it, his master was ascribing almost a ridiculous amount of power and skill to this Senator Palpatine, the putative Darth Sidious who almost seemed to haunt his master’s datapad like a ghost in a story Obi-Wan and his friends would tell each other during field trips when he was an initiate. He knew his master wasn’t fond of politicians, for a very good reason he felt, but her claims were bordering on the fantastical.

Since Obi-Wan was reconsidering what he had read with clearer eyes, a part of him wondered if that was why Ahsoka had locked up the datapad, to keep prying eyes, like his, out of her own personal fears.

Perhaps the entries were visions or dreams his master had been having. Perhaps she was still tormented by the loss of her master when she was younger and her subconscious mind was trying to work through her grief in this strange way. Ahsoka had sought to exorcise the nightmares and visions from her mind in some kind of attempt to preserve her sanity, perhaps even to protect Obi-Wan from the trauma that he knew haunted her, like a phantom wound that would never heal.

And Obi-Wan had invaded her privacy, betrayed her trust in him and rifled through a journal of his master’s nightmares in an attempt to distract himself from how much he missed her and how greatly he disliked Qui-Gon Jinn.

Quinlan was right. I never should have tried to slice into Master’s datapad and now look at what I’ve done! Master Ahsoka will never forgive me for this.

What if she repudiates me? Do I have to leave the Order? Where would I go?

What have I done?

Obi-Wan yanked himself out of his meditation, breathing hard as he tried to take stock of the situation. Yes, he had sliced into his master’s personal datapad filled with notes on the terrifying nightmare world she kept seeing in her visions.
But that was all he had done.

Yes, it was an egregious violation of his master’s trust and Ahsoka would be well within her right to castigate him. But if he came clean, if Obi-Wan explained that he knew what he did was wrong, that he had acted from a place of fear and loneliness and understood now that his attachment to his master had resulted in his selfish actions, perhaps they would be able to find a way forward. Perhaps Ahsoka would forgive him for trespassing into her private world.

Perhaps Obi-Wan wouldn’t have to leave the Jedi Order and take up the life of a mercenary for hire or throw himself upon the mercy of Mama Ohnaka and beg for a position within her crew.

Obi-Wan decided that the best course of action was to make sure his actions from this moment forward were impeccable and those of a model padawan learner. If he could do that, if he could prove to his master that he was capable of learning from his mistakes then perhaps she would forgive him for his actions.

The first thing he would have to do would be to let go of his childish and passive-aggressive dislike of Qui-Gon Jinn, which had been one of the twin seeds that started all of this.

Hadn’t Ahsoka always gently chided him for his sullen behavior whenever his temporary master had been brought up? Maybe that was why she mentioned Qui-Gon training him in her datapad. He had bristled with fury when Qui-Gon had tried to steal him away from Ahsoka and a small part of him had never let go of that imagined insult to his chosen master.

Obi-Wan took a deep breath and pictured all of his anger and annoyance leaving his body, like a black cloud of smoke rising higher and higher into the night sky, and when one exhale didn’t quite burn out his darker emotions, he practiced the visualization again and again until the smoke was pure white and clean.

There. That’s better and, he hesitated before running a hand through his long hair, I suppose I’ll have to do something with this mess before breakfast. Obi-Wan pushed it out of his eyes as he stood up from the meditation cushion. Stars, I’m exhausted. I wonder how much sleep I can get before I have to wake up for class?

Shuffling back into his room, Obi-Wan called his chrono to his hand, read the time there and let out a loud groan of complaint.

He was going to need a lot of tea tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Obi-Wan... You poor, sweet young man...

Author’s note: There are three chapters left before the end of Season Three.
Doubts and Revelations

Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi has unlocked his Jedi master's personal datapad, containing the secret database in which Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano has been making entries about what he desperately wants to believe are only nightmares. In his guilt, Obi-Wan has cut himself off from his friends and fellow Jedi, desperate to come up with some way to atone for his betrayal of his master's trust.

Meanwhile, Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn has grown frustrated with his lack of progress of with Obi-Wan's training and begins to doubt his faith in his vision of a future he needs to preserve, forcing himself to confront the truth of what happened on Maerai Prime.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Somewhere between waking and sleep, Ahsoka and Torrent Company were making their way through a ravine that promised to lead them out onto the flat plains that surrounded Point Rain. As she recalled, her masters and Ki-Adi-Mundi had chosen the location for a rendezvous spot precisely because it was a large and open space which would make landing their ships and massing their troops easier.

In hindsight, it was a terrible idea that left Master Obi-Wan and the 212 exposed to take the full brunt of the Geonosian forces for hours.

The losses to Ghost Company alone were catastrophic.

But then again, the plan probably would have worked if they hadn’t told Chancellor Sith Lord about it beforehand.

“I really hate that guy,” Ahsoka muttered to herself as she and Rex waited for Echo and Fives to return from scouting. “I just… really want to punch him in the face.”

“Spoken like Skywalker’s padawan,” Rex chuckled, checking the charge on his twin blasters before spinning them around his fingers and slotting them neatly into their holsters. “You might have to wait in line, sir. I’m sure General Kenobi will want first dibs.”

Chuckling, Ahsoka shook her head. “Obi-Wan’s not like that, Rex. I’m sure he’ll insist on taking Palpatine alive or something like that. Making him stand trial before the Senate and all that.”

Rex titled his head to the side and shrugged his shoulders a little, the move blunted by his armor and kama. “That’s not what Cody says, but what do we know? We’re little more than memories, sir.”

“You know more than you think,” Ahsoka smiled, reaching out to place a warm hand on Rex’s shoulder. “And thank you, for being here and helping me through this. I couldn’t have done this without you and the men.”
“We’re always here for you when you need us,” Rex explained, covering Ahsoka’s hand with his and giving it a squeeze. “Now matter how old you get, Commander.”

“Here, here!” Tup whispered from somewhere behind Hardcase, who was busy calibrating his heavy repeating cannon but looked up just long enough to flash Ahsoka a thumbs up.

The sentiment ran down the line of the company, with soft cheers and signs of support and faith in Ahsoka and her fight. It was enough to bring tears to her eyes and she turned away from the dependable column of white and blue soldiers to scrub at her cheeks for a moment and take a few deep and calming breaths.

They’re not really here. They’re not and yet... I wish they were. I wish I could find them somewhere in the Force. If my plan works, if I can stop Palpatine before his plan is set in motion...

I’ll never see any of them again.

The idea that Ahsoka would never see Rex again, would never have to listen to another ridiculous scheme of Fives, or fight back to back with the brave men of the 501st just seemed wrong to her.

And yet, this was the future she was fighting for.

A future where the 501st never came into being.

A future without Clones and Jedi Generals.

A future where the battle for the fate of the galaxy didn’t burn away the Republic.

“They’re back,” Kix announced through the tightline as the sounds of footsteps and bodies moving through the narrow space of the ravine reached Ahsoka’s montrals. Fives and Echo hurried up to where Torrent Company was hiding, moving as quietly as they could given their armor and weapons.

“Report, trooper,” Rex ordered as the two ARC troopers hid behind another large boulder.

“General Kenobi and the 212 are under heavy fire,” Fives said drawing an ‘X’ to represent Master Obi-Wan’s location and a ring of dashes around him which were the Republic’s tanks and the rest of the Ghost Company. “The clankers are coming from the east with a full battery of droids, tanks, and vulture droid air support.”

“That’s not very encouraging, Fives,” Ahsoka replied, folding her arms over her chest. “There has to be a way to relieve Obi-Wan without anymore bloodshed. We’re just not looking at the problem from the right angle.”

“What do you suggest, Commander?” Echo asked, frowning down at Fives’ sketch of the arena of battle.

Ahsoka frowned, trying to remember what Anakin had done at this point. She had been so young then, ready and willing to do what her master said without question.

Knowing Anakin, and based on her own memories, they had just barged into battle, relying on the element of surprise and the 501st’s superior skills. Ahsoka knew that would work, and yet she hesitated.

“How long would it take to circle around? If we could create an artificial choke point, we could magnify the firepower we have,” Ahsoka said, placing two rocks to represent a barricade. “If I
remember this place, those sandstone spires are as big as buildings on Coruscant. We could just bring
them down to create our barrier.”

“It’ll take a few hours,” Fives sighed, shaking his head. “But I don’t think we have that kind of time,
Ge… Commander.”

Ahsoka frowned up at Fives for a moment, who looked just as confused as she did, before Rex drew
everyone’s attention with his conversation. “Do you copy, Cody? We need you to topple those spires
on the eastern side of the landing zone. You got the birds for that?”

They all turned to look up at the sky, waiting to see what Cody’s reply was. The battle overhead
seemed so far away, the sounds of cannons and blaster fire muted by the atmosphere and smoke.
Down in the canyons, it was easy to believe that the dogfighting in the air was already done.

But something felt wrong.

It was taking Cody too long to respond to Rex’s request.

“Something’s wrong,” Ahsoka murmured. “We don’t have time to wait. We have to get to Obi-Wan
now.”

“Skywalker style it is,” Rex grunted as he gave instructions for the companies of the 501st to prepare
to move. “All right, boys! It’s time to slag those clanking bastards!”

A loud cheer went up from the 501st as Ahsoka lead them out of the ravine and into the plain that
held Point Rain on the far side.

I’m coming, Obi-Wan. Just hold on a little longer!

Qui-Gon Jinn gazed out of the window of his apartment in the southern tower of the Jedi Temple,
enjoying a steaming cup of sapir tea as he watched the golden rays of morning sunlight move slowly
across the gleaming Coruscant skyline. There was something beautiful and tragic about the way the
light moved across the megalopolis, how it bathed certain areas in an almost heavenly golden glow
while others portions of the city were forever doomed to live in the shadows thrown off by the
glittering towers that tried to pierce the sky.

He had great sympathy for those unfortunate beings trapped in the shadows, for those who toiled in
obscurity to ensure the trams ran on time and the water was clean and the electricity never went out.
Their jobs were of vital importance to all who lived on Coruscant and yet they were never
acknowledged, never thanked for their hard work and dedication. There would be no galactic center
of government, no magnificent Jedi Temple for the Order to call home, without them.

Sipping his tea, Qui-Gon realized he felt a kinship with those nameless workers and their thankless
but vital jobs. He had taken on a similar task in volunteering to train Obi-Wan Kenobi while his
reckless master hovered between life and death in a bacta tank.

Qui-Gon had hoped for a smooth transition for Obi-Wan’s sake, and received nothing but passive-
aggressive resistance and interference for his troubles, not just from Obi-Wan and his meddling
friends but from the Council as well.
One time, Master Shaak Ti even had the nerve to inform Qui-Gon that her visit was “the will of the Living Force”.

Qui-Gon could have endured all of that if he had made any kind of progress with Obi-Wan, but he had made none.

If anything he felt like Obi-Wan was sliding backward, moving closer and closer to the anger that was the head of the path to the Dark side.

Taking another sip of his tea, Qui-Gon let out a heavy sigh.

*What is the point of this if I cannot get through to Obi-Wan? After my best attempts to bridge the gap between us, he still resists my training. He listens but does not hear, and I do not know how to reach him.*

Holding the cup of tea in his hands, Qui-Gon closed his eyes, blocking out the warm radiance of Coruscant, focusing solely on his own spirit and his place within the currents of the Living Force.

*I do not understand. Why would the Force give me such a strong and clear vision of the future if I was not to follow it?*

Sitting up tall and straight, Qui-Gon began a steady breathing pattern, trying to sink into a calming meditative trance.

*Is everything I’ve done been for nothing? Everything I’ve sacrificed been for naught?*

As Qui-Gon tried to meditate, memories overtook him like heavy clouds rolling over a mountain range.

Qui-Gon knew something was wrong the minute he landed on Maerai Prime, felt a darkness curdled in the Force that had nothing to do with the wanton abuse of the natural biome of the planet. There was duplicity in the air, thick and acrid like the distant brown haze on the horizon.

His investigations had been stymied from the start with false platitudes from the planetary administration and fear and distrust from the Oppressed. Qui-Gon had tried in vain to reach out to both sides, attempting to broker a meeting between the two that would eventually lead to lasting change.

The Oppressed insisted that the planetary government was rife with corruption and cronyism, pointing to the almost incestuous relationship between the rich industrialists who owned the mines and the factories and the politicians that made laws that frequently benefited them at the expense of the common people.

Their claims were outrageous but Qui-Gon sensed that there was a kernel of truth to the rumors. He had arrived after the Bloody March, when security forces, sent in at the request of a few well-heeled mine owners to protect their homes from the protestors, opened fire on a largely peaceful demonstration. He had interviewed several of the soldiers and to a one they all insisted that the protestors had turned violent, throwing rocks and bottles at their protective shielding.

“One of them had a blaster,” a sergeant told Qui-Gon, his gaze distant. “I swear it, Master Jedi. I saw
one of them turn it on Roune and open fire. He went down and that’s when it turned bad. They opened fire on us first.

Qui-Gon’s investigation took him from the plush and ornate halls of the rich and powerful down into the depths of the Smog Farm, where he talked with workers, community leaders and other people involved in the movement to protect their livelihoods from the profit-focused owners. He heard more than one tale of avarice and abuse but it didn’t point to a greater conspiracy, just a far too common failing of compassion.

That was before he met Naeir Avanbae.

Naeir was a part of the Oppressed but he still had connections to his family who lived in the Haven. He was a true believer in the movement and had helped set up the march that would later lead to such tragedy and violence. Qui-Gon had been talking at a cantina when one of the guests told him that he needed to seek out the young man.

“Nae was there at the march. He saw the whole thing,” an older man with stooped shoulders and watery eyes said, gesturing with his glass. “You go talk to Naeir Avanbae. He’ll tell you what really happened.”

Once Qui-Gon tracked Naeir down at a district headquarters for the Oppressed, he did.

“I was working with the organizers making sure that everyone was properly identified,” Naeir explained. “We wanted an accurate count of attendees to show the government to counter their propaganda that no one agreed with us. Each district got a different color badge. Everyone there was either wearing a badge or they were with the government.

“But those people that opened fire on the soldiers? They were dressed like us but none of them had any badges. None of them!”

Following up on Naeir’s lead, Qui-Gon had asked for footage of the shooting. The security forces assured him that they would get them to him as soon as possible. While he waited for the footage, Qui-Gon agreed to a meeting with a friendly refinery owner, agreeing to meet her in a popular park early one morning.

A bomb was detonated elsewhere in the park about twenty minutes into their conversation and Qui-Gon hurried to the scene of the explosion to help with the wounded and injured. It wasn’t until later, when he received a message from the Jedi Council that he even realized he had been the intended target.

He had brushed off Master Rancisis’s instruction to return to Coruscant and so was pleasantly surprised when the Living Force brought Obi-Wan and his master back into his life.

It had been too long since he and Obi-Wan, now a young man tried and tested from his master’s reckless travels around the Outer Rim, had had a chance to work together. Qui-Gon insisted that they stay to investigate the situation and the Council backed him up.

It was clear that they saw the wisdom in his decision.

After all, he was a Jedi Master and Ahsoka Tano was just a knight of questionable origin.

By the time Naeir told the the three Jedi about the secret meeting going down at Processing Plant #5, Qui-Gon was absolutely convinced that there was another party involved in the growing tensions on Maerai Prime. Someone was trying to play the people against their government but to what aim and for what benefit, Qui-Gon did not yet know. He had hoped to find answers at the meeting, a new
lead that would point his investigation in the right direction.

The Force had been tense that night, sharp and brittle to his senses as he, Obi-Wan, and Knight Tano moved through the plant. Naeir hadn’t been able to tell them anything other than the general location and so the three of them had to rely on the Force to guide them further.

Eventually, their search lead them to Storage Building #7, and it was clear to Qui-Gon from the moment they stepped inside that whoever had been there before was already long gone. They set about examining the building, moving past old machinery and broken down parts as they headed deeper inside.

They discovered some load lifters and Qui-Gon turned away from them, frowning at a nest of brand-new packing material that someone had left behind, the void in it indicating something had been removed and fairly recently.

Qui-Gon was walking closer to inspect the wrapping when the background hum of the Force grew frantic.

Something was going to happen. Something terrible and dangerous. But not in front of him, where the packaging was.

Behind him.

Freezing in his tracks, Qui-Gon had only a moment to decipher the Force’s message to him and another split second to act.

*Obi-Wan and Knight Tano are in danger! I must warn them!*

A question arose from the depths of Qui-Gon’s soul as he started to turn back, so cold it trapped the words in his throat as the Force screamed around him.

*Must I warn them both?*

He threw out his hand on instinct, not knowing what he would do until he heard his own shout and the surge of the Force flying to protect the young man just out of reach. “Obi-Wan!”

*Knight Tano will just have to take care of herself*, he had just enough time to think before the first explosion went off.

*If the Force truly wants her to be Obi-Wan’s master, now is its chance to prove it.*

A heartbeat later, another explosion engulfed Knight Tano.

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Qui-Gon made his way to the training salon where he was going to be working with Obi-Wan for the morning, his mood somewhat dark as he tried to predict which one of the interfering busy-bodies on the Council was going to invite themselves into his lesson this time.

He knew objectively that he could not tell Master Yoda to mind his own business, but there was a part of him that wanted to. His grandmaster had never understood Qui-Gon or his deep connection to the Living Force.
Dooku theorized that Yoda’s extremely long life had led to a detachment in the ancient master, that seeing so many of his fellow Jedi pass into the Force had inured him to death and had devalued his view of the Living Force. Qui-Gon felt that Yoda was obsessed with the Cosmic Force, with the great fundamental workings of the galaxy, and it was that myopic view that kept him from seeing the value in the Living Force and Qui-Gon’s more unorthodox methods.

Qui-Gon followed where the Force led and did his best to keep his focus on the world around him, which was why receiving a vision from the Living Force was so important to him. The Force rarely, if ever, spoke that clearly to him and he assumed that if Obi-Wan Kenobi was important enough for the Living Force to give voice to his destiny, it was of paramount importance that Qui-Gon do everything in his power to submit to its will.

Even if it meant taking actions that did not always align with the moral code handed down by the Jedi Order.

Even if it meant allowing others to come to harm.

Obi-Wan Kenobi was too important to be left to the rogue Knight Tano. Qui-Gon had done what he had to in order to bring the future back into proper focus.

Qui-Gon was only doing what was best for everyone.

Right?

*What if I was wrong?* Qui-Gon fretted as he passed through the central atrium of the Jedi Temple, bowing his head in recognition to masters and colleagues as he passed. *What if I misunderstood my vision? Knight Tano could die from my inaction in that damned building.*

*Her death would be my fault. Even if I did not raise my blade to her, I would be responsible for her death all the same.*

Jogging to catch a turbolift, Qui-Gon folded his arms over his chest and frowned, his mood growing more and more sour as the lift carried him upward.

He took out the memory of his first vision from all those years ago, the edges of it blurred with time but the important moments just as sharp as if Qui-Gon had witnessed it yesterday. He could still recall the voice of the Force at it spoke to him, deep and still, like the mountain the Jedi Temple was said to be built on.

**Obi-Wan Kenobi will be a Jedi.**

Shaking his head, Qui-Gon wondered how else he was supposed to have interpreted such a statement. If he wasn’t supposed to train Obi-Wan then why had the Force shown him their future together?

Was Qui-Gon Jinn destined to fail?

Was Obi-Wan going to remain forever out of his reach, unwilling to listen to his rightful master?

Had Qui-Gon gotten a young woman killed because of own arrogance and deluded belief that he, and only he, knew best what the Force wanted?

As the door to the turbo lift chimed open, Qui-Gon strode out into the large open training salon where Obi-Wan was waiting for him.
It had become clear after their second week together that Obi-Wan was the more punctual of the two and he was always waiting for Qui-Gon sitting on a bench against the far side of the room, working on homework for a class or meditating. There were days when Qui-Gon’s arrival seemed more like an annoyance to the boy than anything else: one more task Obi-Wan had to complete before he was set free to return to do as he willed.

But not today.

Obi-Wan stood in the middle of the training salon, hands clasped behind his back, posture straight and his face radiating with earnest determination. His long shaggy hair had been shorn back into a proper padawan cut and there was only one saber on his belt.

Qui-Gon came to a stop, stunned at this sudden turn of events.

“Good morning, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan said, his voice a bit strangled but sincere. “I… I want to apologize for my… general lack of respect and appreciation for your instructions. I have let my attachment to Master Ahsoka cloud my judgement and I apologize for that. I hope you can forgive my immaturity in this matter and will still consent to train me whilst Master Ahsoka is indisposed.”

A smile blossomed on Qui-Gon’s face and the doubts or fears that had seemed so insurmountable bare moments ago flew from his mind.

His patience had been rewarded and his faith in the Living Force restored.

*Obi-Wan is mine.*

Standing quietly, Obi-Wan waited for Qui-Gon’s reaction to the speech he had just given him. He hoped he sounded properly contrite and that Qui-Gon would magnanimously brush it off and chalk it up to Obi-Wan’s impetuous youth. He clenched his hands behind his back, trying not to infer what was going on in Qui-Gon’s mind and jump to conclusions.

Obi-Wan’s goal was simple: to be an exemplary padawan learner, so that when Ahsoka awoke from her coma, she would not look as harshly on his invasion of her privacy. There was no way he could ever apologize enough with his words, but possibly through his actions he could convey to his master that he was deeply sorry for his mistake.

And the first step to that was proving Obi-Wan had moved past his childish mistrust and dislike of Qui-Gon Jinn.

*Master Jinn is a venerable elder of the Order and an expert in Ataru. I’m sure there are things I can learn in the time left with him, Obi-Wan thought, trying not to think of what Ahsoka’s datapad had said about Qui-Gon Jinn, reminding himself none of that was real. Those are just Master’s nightmares. Coping mechanisms. That’s all. None of that could possibly be true.*

“Well, this is a pleasant surprise,” Qui-Gon said with an honest, broad smile. “And what, may I ask, has led to this change of heart?”

Obi-Wan hadn’t foreseen Qui-Gon asking him that question and did not have an answer ready. He bit his lip for a moment, trying to think of an acceptable reply that didn’t involve revealing Ahsoka’s secrets.
“I… I snapped at my friends yesterday,” Obi-Wan admitted, eyes looking away from Qui-Gon. “And I realized later, after much introspection and thought that, I was taking my fear and anger out on them and… well… you as well, Master Jinn. I care deeply for Master Ahsoka and I realize now that… I must be more mindful of how my emotions affect my actions.”

“Yes, you must, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon nodded as he began a slow circuit around Obi-Wan, who took another deep inhalation of breath. “A Jedi must always be mindful of how his actions affect others. It is those attachments that can lead us to the Dark side. Something we have discussed in the past, correct?”

A muscle twitched in Obi-Wan’s jaw and he was thankful that Qui-Gon had turned away and did not see it. “Yes, Master Jinn. I… understand now where I went astray and I vow never to let it happen again.”

_I did not touch the Dark side. I don’t care what you think you saw. I… am calm. Emotion, yet peace. This is not how a padawan learner is supposed to behave._

Closing his eyes, Obi-Wan reminded himself that he was supposed to be remorseful and recalcitrant for his earlier passive-aggressive behavior. The perfect padawan learner did as they were told, eager and willing to accept their better’s wisdom and knowledge.

“I’m glad to hear that, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon said, clapping a heavy hand on his shoulder. “I hope we can start again and this time make some real improvements in your training. You’ve done well enough on your own with that woman’s guidance but your real training will begin now.”

_‘That woman’?! How did Master Obi-Wan survive this old gundark’s tutelage? He squashed the question ruthlessly, redirecting his anger toward it and telling himself that there had never been a Master Obi-Wan._

“Yes, Master Jinn,” Obi-Wan answered, using every ounce of willpower at his disposal to bow his head respectfully. “How shall we begin?”

“From a place of honesty, I think,” Qui-Gon said, gesturing to the far wall where a window looked out over the southern side of the Temple. Next to the window was a pile of meditation cushions and Qui-Gon gestured to them. “I have something I must share with you and then I think it would do you some good to practice meditating on the will of the Living Force.”

Obi-Wan followed Qui-Gon over to the window, focusing on being present and humble as he set out the cushions, first one for Qui-Gon and then one for himself. The Jedi Master was already seated when Obi-Wan sat down cross-legged at his side, his blue eyes focused on a far-away point along the horizon.

“Do you remember the day that Knight Tano claimed you as her padawan?” Qui-Gon murmured. Obi-Wan wasn’t sure if the question was rhetorical or if he was expected to answer until he continued. “The day we dueled over you?”

Confused, Obi-Wan nodded, his gaze dropping down to his hands. “Yes, Master Jinn. You and Master Ahsoka fought very valiantly. It was humbling to watch. I don’t think I shall ever be so talented as you two when it comes to my own bladework.”

“Nonsense,” Qui-Gon said, smiling down at Obi-Wan. “You are an exceptional student, Padawan. I’m positive you will make a truly great master of Ataru. But that was not the point of my question. Do you remember what I said, that led up to our duel?”
Obi-Wan frowned, trying to recall that fateful morning. “You… said something about a vision?”

“Yes,” Qui-Gon nodded, his expression pleased. “You remember. I had a vision of the future then.”

“Oh,” Obi-Wan pursed his lips, hoping that Qui-Gon was going somewhere with the conversation because all he remembered of that day was the fact that Ahsoka defeated Qui-Gon. He was starting to suspect that Qui-Gon had never gotten over that loss. “A vision of the future, Master Jinn?”

“Yes,” Qui-Gon smiled, patting Obi-Wan’s shoulder once again, making the young man wonder if he was going to have a bruise there by the time everything was said and done. Qui-Gon was very strong. “A vision of what our future together was to be. That was how I knew that while the Council may have given you to Knight Tano, it was only temporary. I was destined to be your Jedi Master and here we are. Knight Tano’s accident on Maerai Prime was tragic, of course, but we cannot defy the will of the Force any further.”

Obi-Wan’s mouth pulled into a thin line and he glanced away for a moment, trying to think of something to say other than protesting loudly that his master was not dead yet and that even if she had died, he was most definitely not going to ever agree to become Qui-Gon’s student permanently.

Why is he so bizarrely obsessed with my destiny? I just want to be a Jedi Knight. That’s all. I just want to serve the Order and help people. No special destiny. No “High General Obi-Wan Kenobi”. No master to the Chosen One, if that’s even a real prophecy, which I doubt it is.

Just normal, boring Knight Kenobi. Why is that so hard for everyone to understand?!

When Obi-Wan said nothing, Qui-Gon carried on ahead, clearly convinced of the rightness of the moment and how everything was proceeding as he intended. “Sadly, I must admit the limitations of my initial vision. I feel you must have passed most of those trials without me and now we are need of some guidance. I would like you to meditate with me, to focus on the will of the Living Force and what it intends for our future together.”

Bowing his head, Obi-Wan agreed politely to Qui-Gon’s request, even as the scholar within him grumbled that the aspect of the Force concerned with seeing the future and the myriad of possibilities before them was usually the underlying Cosmic Force.

To say nothing of the fact that Obi-Wan had no intention of staying with Jinn any longer than strictly necessary. While the day had started with platitudes about recognizing one’s own attachment and letting it go, Obi-Wan had to admit to himself that he had not been completely truthful in his words. He cared deeply for Ahsoka, but he was was starting to understand just what everyone else meant when illustrating the dangers of attachment.

It’s just a little longer. Things could be far worse. I could be back on Tatooine with only one saber.

“Breathe with me, Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon said, exhalting just loud enough for Obi-Wan to match his inhalation before silenced reigned over the training salon.

Obi-Wan was not a novice at meditation by any stretch of the imagination and, unlike when he was younger, he now found those periods of sustained silence to be a refreshing break from the chatter and cacophony of daily life.

If he found meditating in Qui-Gon’s presence to be a challenge, it was one Obi-Wan considered himself to be well-equipped to meet. Closing his eyes, Obi-Wan let his mind sink into the cool, soothing flow of the Force, watching the thoughts and fears plaguing his spirit bubble up from a fathomless darkness beneath him.
What if Qui-Gon is right? What if Master Ahsoka ends up dying anyway?

What if... what if the Council makes this permanent?

Is that what Master’s datapad said? In her nightmares? That I was supposed to be Qui-Gon’s padawan?

Could that happen? Is that what is supposed to happen?

Obi-Wan sat in the darkness, feeling the Force wash through him, carrying each worry away as he acknowledged them as Ahsoka had taught him. There was no harm in admitting one was scared. Fear was a natural part of life and it was how a Jedi faced that fear and reacted to it that dictated their path towards or away from the Dark side.

“You can run from it or you can face it,” Ahsoka had once told Obi-Wan as she handed him a package of sweets after a trip to the Tower to practice surveillance techniques. “But every sentient has to deal with it sooner or later. Even the mightiest of Jedi feels fear. I’m sure if you asked Master Windu there are things he is afraid of.”

“Like younglings?” Obi-Wan laughed, popping a tart candy in his mouth. “Or Master Nu?”

“I don’t know about you, little scholar, but I would not want to be caught misshelving one of her books,” Ahsoka grinned, elbowing Obi-Wan as they watched the sun set behind a bank of gathering clouds.

Fear was something that could be faced, that he had faced before and that he would have to face again and again. One day fear would become an old friend, a feeling he acknowledged as it passed by him.

Obi-Wan wondered when that day would come. When his fear of what might happen, of who or what he might lose, and how his fears would finally ease. He couldn’t imagine a world without the undercurrent of anxiety always pushing him onward towards perfection, toward doing everything within his power to prevent the horrible outcomes his keen mind and powerful imagination conjured up regularly.

As they were doing now.

What if Ahsoka’s nightmares weren’t really nightmares?

What if they were true?

No. They can’t be. They just can’t. Time travel is not possible! If we were able to travel through time with the power of the Force, I am absolutely positive that the Order would have discovered it by now.

It can’t be true.

It just... it can’t.

But what if it was?

As he had done many times before, Obi-Wan acknowledged and wrestled with his emotions until he felt them drain away one by one, finally leaving him as empty and serene as recent events would allow.
After what seemed like ages, Obi-Wan came out of his meditation, slowly waiting for his mind and body to find harmony again, for sensation to return to his extremities and for his awareness to sharpen into full alertness. He let out a yawn and looked over at Qui-Gon, whose brow was furrowed even as he continued to meditate and presence oddly cloudy in the Force.

Stretching out his sore muscles from sitting so long, Obi-Wan wasn’t paying any attention when Qui-Gon jerked awake. “Obi-Wan!”

Startled, Obi-Wan slapped his hands down against his legs, straightening his spine and trying not to look like he had just been caught sleeping during a class. He turned toward Qui-Gon, reminding himself to play the part of respectful padawan learner as best he could until all of this was over. “Yes, Master Jinn? Is something wrong?”

“The Force has graced me with another vision, young one,” Qui-Gon said, rubbing his temple as if to soothe away a headache. “Much of it was confusing and indistinct, but I saw one thing quite clearly.”

Another vision? Obi-Wan thought as he kept his face neutral. “What did you see, Master?”

Qui-Gon reached out with both large hands, squeezing Obi-Wan’s shoulders, a strange expression on his face. “You and I will face a terrifying enemy together. It was red, black and full of hate, like something from a youngling’s nightmare.”

“An enemy, Master Jinn?” Obi-Wan asked, feeling his heart stop as his breath caught in his lungs. Hadn’t Ahsoka’s datapad mentioned some kind of creature like that? A red and black darksider?

What was his name again?

“Yes, some kind of… Dark-side adept I think,” Qui-Gon murmured as he stroked his beard, his gaze distant as he worked through the vision. “Yes, that must be it because he had a red lightsaber with him.”

“His name is Darth Maul, though he dropped that title after Master Obi-Wan defeated him on Naboo,” Ahsoka’s entry had read. “He uses a double-bladed lightsaber, although the last time I saw him he was using an old Inquisitor’s blade.”

A numbness coming over him, Obi-Wan asked, “What kind of lightsaber was it?”

“It was double-bladed, a much longer version of the weapons wielded by the Temple Guards,” Qui-Gon said, looking down at Obi-Wan. “Did you have a similar vision, Padawan?”

“No,” he managed, voice strangled. But Master Ahsoka did.

And it wasn’t a vision.

It was real.
Qui-Gon’s revelation that he had seen Maul in a vision earlier that day sent Obi-Wan into a strange spiral, a growing sense of disconnection from the Force and the people around him. He felt as if he were wandering around in a fog, blind and deaf to the world, as he and Qui-Gon worked through some Ataru forms for the remainder of their time together.

A world that within his lifetime would be destroyed.

That’s what the vision meant, didn’t it? The red and black enemy full of hate?

That was Darth Maul, the Sith Lord Ahsoka had mentioned in her datapad. The one that her grandmaster had supposedly cut in half as a Padawan.

Did that mean that Ahsoka’s datapad was not just the frantic writing of a woman desperate to get her grief out of her head, to exorcise the demons and visions that plagued her?

Was everything in there real? Were Ahsoka’s experiences true?

The possibility was almost too horrifying to comprehend.

Once Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon had parted ways for the evening, he had returned to his rooms, numb with a creeping sense of horrible finality. He wandered from his room to Ahsoka’s and back into the central living area they shared, refusing to look at the datapad that now seemed to lay his life out before him, miserable and plagued by tragedy.

Was this all there was? Just an unending series of people he would love and lose?

Obi-Wan finally came to a stop at the table where he had left the datapad that morning. He frowned down at it, at the nightmares he was afraid were starting to become far too real.

*I don’t understand. I need you to help me make sense of this, Master. I need you!*

Picking up the datapad, Obi-Wan hurried out of his room and to the Halls of Healing.

Ahsoka’s room in the halls of healers was quiet as usual with only the soft hum of life support machines and the faint sound of running water greeting Obi-Wan when he stepped inside. He locked the door behind him after it slid shut, not wanting anyone to come barging in while he was reading through Ahsoka’s personal thoughts once again.

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka’s floating form, wondering what his master would say if he asked her any one of the dozens of questions rattling around inside his brain.

*Why did you pick me to be your padawan learner? Is it to fix my mistakes?*

*Why haven’t you told anyone?*

*Why is this Palpatine person still alive? Why not just kill him and put an end to everything?*

*Why didn’t you let Qui-Gon take me as a padawan after he claimed to have a vision of our time together?*

But Ahsoka couldn’t answer any of those questions, not while she was still floating in bacta, her injuries all but gone. Master Windu told Obi-Wan it was just a matter of time, that Ahsoka would wake up any day now, and he found himself conflicted.

There was a very large part of his spirit that wanted to shout for joy and relief at the thought of Ahsoka’s return, the return of his master, who would save him from the mess he found himself in.
Ahsoka meant hugs and affection, a quiet, safe harbor to take shelter from the chaos and havoc of growing up. His master was wise and kind, always thinking of Obi-Wan and how best to help him, to teach him and guide him through his training. She had bought him a silly bit of crockery to cheer him up and distracted him from his anxieties when he couldn’t manage it himself.

Obi-Wan wanted Master Ahsoka back so badly it brought tears to his eyes.

And yet, his master had hidden things from him if her datapad entries and holo recordings were true.

Ahsoka had kept the truth of her identity, the truth of her origins, from Obi-Wan, letting him craft an imagined backstory almost from whole cloth. Everything he thought he knew about his master was wrong. Ahsoka wasn’t a Shadow. She hadn’t been wandering around the Outer Rim, deep undercover on a mission from the Council, protecting innocents from the depravations of criminal cartels.

Ahsoka was… what exactly?

Obi-Wan frowned and looked at the datapad in his hand. In his curiosity and then in the heartbroken madness of his first discovery, Obi-Wan had flitted from entry to entry, searching for his name and then the names of his friends and other Jedi he knew. Some entries were far too long and in-depth for him to read or watch, while others were simple text entries with little more than a few terse lines.

Once he had come across the notes about the Purges, he had forgotten everything else. How could he look away from his master’s heartbroken expression as she listed the dead? How could anything else have drawn his attention?

It occurred to Obi-Wan that he didn’t really have the whole story of who Ahsoka was and what had happened to her. While his master wasn’t awake to tell him everything he wanted to know, her datapad was, written in her words and in her own voice.

Her story was there, waiting for him to find it and understand just who Ahsoka Tano was and why she had done the things she had.

Perhaps he owed it to his master to listen to her story before he held it against her.

Setting Ahsoka’s datapad down atop the heart rate monitor, next to the green and yellow honey pot from Corellia, Obi-Wan left the room to find a chair to sit on while he read.

After scrounging one up from an empty room, Obi-Wan quietly carried it back to Ahsoka’s, putting it next to his master’s bacta tank. He took a seat in front of her tank, looking up at her unconscious form for a long moment, reaching out to gently touch the transparisteel between them.

Closing his eyes he sent a thought out into the strained silence over their bond. *I hope you will understand, Master. And I hope you will forgive me for betraying your trust.*

Obi-Wan ignored the hurt and heartbroken voice in his head that snarled that Ahsoka had betrayed him first, that Ahsoka had lied about everything the entire time he had known her. He understood that it would do no good to listen to that voice, that the voice was his pain and anger talking. That voice was the little whisper of fear that dogged his every step telling him he wasn’t good enough, that he didn’t deserve any of the success and happiness he had, that it was all a lie and he would be
left alone in his despair and misery.

Fear leads to anger. Anger to hate and hate to suffering. That’s what Master Yoda always says. Obi-Wan told himself as he turned his attention to Ahsoka’s database.

Where would he start?

At the beginning. Let’s start with Padawan Learner Ahsoka Tano.

“I was brought to the Temple by Master Plo Koon,” Ahsoka said, looking down at a tea cup that Obi-Wan had purchased for her one life day after saving up some of his stipend. “He found me on Shili and asked me if I wanted to be with my kind, with others who were like me. He was so kind and gentle with me and even though I had never seen anyone like him before, I knew I could trust him. It was almost like I could see his intentions behind his words.”

Letting out a sigh, Ahsoka took a sip of tea and smiled. “I never regretted going with him, even after everything that happened. Even after the bombing and everything that happened with B… Barriss, I never regretted my time here. Master Plo brought me to my family, to the people who would become my friends, who would become my mentors and guides in the dark. There were times, on the run or trying to help refugees from the Empire’s violence, when I would think of Master Plo and his gentle words, and for a moment I would be home. I miss him so much, even though I’ve traveled through time and I know where I could find him if I needed his wisdom, but it’s still not the same.”

“He would tell me to have faith and to trust in the Force, and I have but… It’s so hard sometimes,” Ahsoka murmured, bowing her head. “It is the same man and yet not. My Master Plo is lost, murdered during Order 66, and I never got to say goodbye.”

Obi-Wan curled his feet up on the chair, wrapping one arm around his knee as he moved to the next entry. His heart hurt to see his master so distraught at the strange trauma of losing and regaining a friend, especially one like Master Plo, who had always had a kind word for Obi-Wan no matter how busy the Council kept him.

The next entry was simply titled “Naboo” and it was quite long, with several written entries interspersed with Ahsoka’s recordings about the watery planet on the Mid-Rim. It must have been truly strange for his master when they crash landed on the planet after Mama Ohnaka rescued them from Tatooine. Especially once he got to the part about Darth Maul.

“Anakin said he looked like something out of a nightmare, standing in the middle of the doorway to the hangar bay,” Ahsoka mused, staring out the window. “Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan stayed to face him while Padme went with her guards to find the Viceroy and bring an end to the blockade. Master said he hid in a ship with Artoo and that it took off on its own on autopilot, which seems a little strange to me, but knowing Anakin, he probably hit a button he wasn’t supposed to. I’m just glad he didn’t hit the self-destruct one.”

“I’m not sure how the fight with Maul went other than it was intense and Maul killed Master Qui-Gon.”

Obi-Wan frowned at that, thinking back to Master Jinn’s vision earlier that day. He was starting to think that whatever visions Qui-Gon was receiving of the future might be meant as warnings rather than a map to the future.
“Anyway, Master Obi-Wan ended up cutting Maul in half and for the longest time we thought he was dead, until apparently he wasn’t,” Ahsoka said as she fiddled with a training droid he had broken with a wildly deflected shot. “It turns out he survived by focusing all his hatred on Master Obi-Wan, ultimately taking his revenge on him by murdering the Duchess of Mandalore, Satine Kryze.”

Bowing his head over the datapad at the thought of Satine dying in such a horrible way, Obi-Wan wondered if maybe he should stop, if maybe there was such a thing as knowing too much about the future. Master Yoda always said the future was in motion but another ancient Jedi proverb said that “You often meet your fate on the path you take to avoid it”.

Shaking his head, Obi-Wan grimly carried on, reading about how much Ahsoka admired Satine’s strength and determination and how she had mourned her death once her master told her about it.

“Satine believed in her cause and believed in the people of Mandalore,” Ahsoka said, smiling at her memories. “The least I could do was try to save her planet and her people from Maul, and I would have too if not for damned Order 66. I still thank the stars every day for Rex. I wouldn’t be here today if it weren’t for him.”

Rex, Captain Rex, CT-7567, was a clone trooper who served in the Grand Army of the Republic under Master Skywalker and Ahsoka’s command and she spoke glowingly of him, of his cleverness, of his strength of character and his quiet, unyielding faith in Ahsoka and the ideals of the Republic. There was paragraph after paragraph written about Captain Rex and the brave men of the 501st, innocent men bred to fight in a war they had no stake in, for a Republic they weren’t a part of.

One after another the names leapt out at Obi-Wan, names like Fives, Echo, Kix, and Jesse. These men were her family, were her brothers and she loved them with a fierceness Obi-Wan saw matched only by Ahsoka’s love for her masters. Ahsoka wrote of Five’s bravery and his recklessness, of how dedicated he was to his brothers. She wrote of Hardcase’s sacrifice to save his fellow troopers on a droid control ship and the loss of Echo on Lola Sayu.

But almost every entry came back to Captain Rex, the first person to welcome Ahsoka into the 501st.

“Rex told me that experience trumps everything,” Ahsoka said, laughing to herself. “Which I think was a nice way of saying that he wasn’t going to be taking orders from a green padawan learner. And he was right, it just took me some time to realize it. His advice has been priceless after all this time. He taught me how to hold a blaster, how to think like a trooper and not like a Jedi. He was one my best friends and… and I won’t ever see him again because I am not letting the Clone Wars happen. I won’t let the galaxy go through that. I won’t let Anakin and Master Obi-Wan go through that again.”

Ahsoka bowed her head. “I hope that Rex is happy with Hera and the Ghost’s crew. I hope the Alliance is successful in ending the Empire and bringing back the Republic. I wish I could have said goodbye to him, to Kanan and Ezra and everyone else. But… I can’t. All I can do is try to make a better world here in their past.”

“That doesn’t make it any easier, though,” Ahsoka sniffed, rubbing at her eyes. “I miss you, Rex. I hope you know that, wherever you are.”

Unable to help his own tears, Obi-Wan scrubbed at his own cheeks and wondered if he had the strength to read about Skyguy and Master Obi-Wan. Perhaps it would be better if he simply left some things for Ahsoka to tell him when she finally awoke from her time in the bacta.

But he moved on from the holos to reading the written entries anyway, time slipping away until his
muscles ached.

Obi-Wan finally twisted in place, noting that according to the chrono on the wall, he had been reading for the better part of two hours. He paced around the room, stretching his legs and letting his eyes rest from the strain of so much reading and intense focus.

Ahsoka slept on in her tank, her face at peace as her life signs carried on in a slow and steady beat. Walking over to the monitors, Obi-Wan picked up the Corellian honey pot and smiled at it, running his fingers over the garishly painted mangos and bright green leaves.

“So that’s how you knew how I liked my tea,” Obi-Wan murmured softly. “You already had had tea with me.”

Placing the honeypot back where he found it, Obi-Wan called the datapad back to his hand and decided that he would read one more entry he had avoided so far this time.

Master Obi-Wan’s entry.

From the start, Master Obi-Wan seemed to be an ever-present shadow in the adventures of Ahsoka Tano and Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker. It seemed Master Obi-Wan would show up at just the right moment to save the day or tag along for reasons Padawan Obi-Wan couldn’t quite divine.

He shared Ahsoka’s concern for and devotion to Master Skywalker, and half of the entries about Master Obi-Wan were cross-listed with Anakin Skywalker.

They were a package deal, a team united against the Dark side, taking Ahsoka under their joint wing and teaching them everything they knew.

“I can still hear their voices, sometimes,” Ahsoka said, this time outside of the Temple, sitting in a park somewhere. “I heed their wisdom and try to do what they would do in my place, give or take causing an explosion, in Anakin’s case. I know they would love Obi-Wan as much as I do. He’s so brave and smart, always trying to do better, be better, and no matter how many times I tell him that he’s wonderful, that he’s practically perfect, it doesn’t ever seem to sink in.”

“I hope Master Obi-Wan didn’t feel like that, like his best was never good enough. He was. He was more than good enough. He was perfect. I don’t think he’d like hearing me say that but he was. Watching Master Obi-Wan and Anakin at work? Learning how to be a Jedi knight at their side? It was… It was the most amazing experience of my life.”

Obi-Wan watched as his master was overcome with emotions and she looked away, taking a few watery breaths to compose herself before she continued. He swallowed himself, eyes blurring with tears.

“It seems kind of strange to say, since we were in the middle of a war and all, but my time with those two? With Rex and the 501st, with Padme and Master Plo and everyone else? I think that was the happiest time in my life.

“That’s why I can’t let them down,” Ahsoka continued, turning back to smile at the hololens. “I have to try and save them, to save Obi-Wan and Anakin and to save everyone else that I’ve lost. I’ve lost so many people… and if I have a chance, even one slim chance to save them from the future that I came from?

“How can I not take that chance?

“One day, I’ll have to tell Obi-Wan about all of this and… I hope he’ll understand. I hope he’ll
realize that I was just trying to protect him and to protect Anakin whenever we find him. I hope he’ll realize how much I love him and how much I wish I could shield him from what’s coming, but I can’t. And that’s the hardest part of this all. No matter what I do, my past? His future? It’s coming. One way or another, it’s coming and we’re running out of time to stop it.”

As the entry came to a stop, Obi-Wan put the datapad down, his heart heavy with so much longing and sorrow that he felt like his heart would burst in his chest.

Walking slowly back to the bacta tank, Obi-Wan reached out to place a hand and then his forehead on the cool transparisteel. He stood there, letting his shielding fall away, letting the Force swirl up and around his spirit as he stretched out for Ahsoka’s, just beyond his grasp.

“Master…” Obi-Wan whispered to himself, breath fogging the glass. “Please come back to me… I can’t do this by myself, Master. I need you. Anakin, he... we need you. Please, come back home, Ahsoka.”

Eyes closed, Obi-Wan rested against the bacta tank for a long while, hoping in vain for some kind of sign from the Force and when there was none, he stepped back, shaking his head. Picking up the datapad from the monitor he placed it on, Obi-Wan turned to leave, feeling incredibly alone and isolated, a growing sense of impending doom hanging directly over his head.

He was unlocking the door when a strange, new sound made him pause, one like a breathy exhale and then the bubbling of a pot of water. Obi-Wan turned around to a loud beep from the vital sign monitors and then another and another, indicating an increase in heart rate.

Ahsoka had moved in the tank, her hands on the glass even as her lekku floated beneath them.

Obi-Wan’s mouth dropped open as he locked eyes with her, tear-filled slate-grey meeting exhausted blue. The bond between them burst to life like a star being born as the Force shifted beneath Obi-Wan, returning his world to the proper orientation again.

“Master?” Obi-Wan gasped, taking a step forward, joy and anguish mixed on his face. “Master Ahsoka?!!”

Nodding a little, Ahsoka responded with a weak, hopeful wave. *Hello, Obi-Wan. I'm sorry I made you wait so long.*

Chapter End Notes

Oh Qui-Gon... *facepalm* What is wrong with you?

Oh, hey! It's Ahsoka! Welcome back, Ahsoka! Absolutely nothing happened while you were gone. I swear! :D

. . . I don't think she believes me.

I'm over at FireflyFish if you'd like to join me in rolling my eyes hardcore at Qui-Gon and having feels about Captain Rex and the Boys in Blue.

UPDATE: As some of you may or may not know, my partner is dealing with a recent diagnosis of epilepsy and we're still in the process of finding a treatment regimen that controls her seizures. My partner's health and happiness is my first priority and my
writing has to be worked in around taking care of her and the demands of daily life.

The plan is for Tano and Kenobi to update again when I have the last two chapters of Season Three completed, which means it will take me much longer to update than before. I have talked about this on my tumblr but for those of you who are not on tumblr or have made it to the end of the story you can read about it here. FireflyFish on Tumblr

I want to thank everyone who has been so patient and understanding through this whole ordeal. I know we all want a resolution and I promise those are coming as soon as I can find the time to write them.

With love and ice cream,
Auntie Fishy
Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Padawan Learner Obi-Wan Kenobi has learned the terrible secret of where and when Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano came from, although he doesn't quite believe it. Determined to win his master's forgiveness for slicing into her datapad, Obi-Wan vows to become the perfect padawan learner as he trains with Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, offering the master a new chance a new start only to discover that Qui-Gon Jinn has had a new vision. A vision of a red and black darksider who wields a double-bladed lightsaber.

A darksider who sounds just like the Darth Maul Ahsoka has written about in her datapad.

Distraught with grief, Obi-Wan seeks out his master in the halls of healing, where he begins to accept the impossible. That Ahsoka Tano has travelled through time to save the soul of Anakin Skywalker, her former master and apparently his future padawan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Somewhere between sleep and waking, Ahsoka and the 501st swept across the flat, dusty plain toward the small cluster of Republic tanks where Master Obi-Wan and Ghost Company were trying to hold off another wave of Separatist attacks.

As they charged across the plain, Ahsoka could feel Obi-Wan’s fear and anxiety, distant but there in the back of her mind. She wondered what would be waiting for her and Torrent Company when they made it to the circle of AAT’s huddled together protectively against the onslaught.

Please don’t let us be too late. I’m coming, Obi-Wan. Just hold on a little longer!

Ahsoka had almost forgotten how chaotic and disorienting a full scale battle could be. High-pitched blaster fire screamed through her montrals in a painful staccato pattern. The low, bass hum of cannons shook the air before their recoil shivered through the ground.

Shouting out commands with a confidence she could barely remember having, Ahsoka led the 501st forward, sending Fives and Echo off with Rancor and Wampa Companies to flank Point Rain, while Rex would bring up the rear with the rest of Torrent Company.

In her mind’s eye Ahsoka pictured the battle on a map, the blue wave of her master’s legion pushing back the wash of Separatist red from the small dot of Master Obi-Wan’s 212th battalion. Overhead, fashionably late, Squad Seven flew past them, taking out the distant sandstone pillars and choking off the Geonosian assault.

“Towers are down! I repeat, towers are down!” Oddball radioed, his voice triumphant over the com. “Give ‘em hell, Master Tano!”

Ahsoka, who was in the middle of protecting Kix while he tended to a fallen trooper, glanced in
Rex’s direction, a smile on her face to match the one she sensed beneath his helmet.

“Road’s clear!” Rex shouted over the roar of battle, gesturing for Hardcase and Tup to move forward along with a line of troopers carrying heavy repeating cannons. “We’ve got visual on General Kenobi and Ghost Company. One more push and we’re there!”

“Is he alright?” Ahsoka asked as she helped Kix haul the fallen trooper to his feet. “What’s his status?”

“Still standing,” Rex answered as he and Ahsoka hurried to catch up with the vanguard of the 501st, dodging droid blaster fire as they ran. “Trapper said it was about damn time we got here. Their defenses were about to give out.”

Ahsoka felt her guts twist as she listened to Rex, occasionally pausing to deflect blaster fire or to cut through a B1 battle droid that had somehow gotten trapped between the oncoming storm of the 501st and Ghost Company’s position.

I’m almost there, Obi-Wan! Hold out just a little bit longer! Ahsoka thought as she and Rex rejoined Hardcase, Tup and Jesse at the front line. The circle of the 212’s tanks was only a few meters away and, as they cleared the final distance, Ahsoka started to make out the individual troopers, their names and designations coming to mind far more easily than she was expecting.

“Waxer! Where’s Kenobi?” Rex shouted as the scout trooper popped up from behind a barricade of crates. Torrent Company was streaming into the circle, reinforcing Ghost Company’s position, taking over for exhausted troopers covered in the rust-colored dirt that could only have come from the red sandstone of Geonosis.

“Forward position!” Waxer answered, running over to them as they took cover under a tank from a cannon shell exploding overhead. “What took you so long? We were starting to think you weren’t coming!”

“Well you know the 501st,” Ahsoka said, with a rueful shrug. “We’re known for our dramatic entrances. Can you point out General Kenobi?”

Nodding, Waxer pointed towards the side of the circle closest to the Separatist onslaught, where the blaster fire was the heaviest. He was hard to make out until Ahsoka saw the brilliant blue-white flash of his lightsaber. She heard a faint hoarse shout that Ahsoka hadn’t heard since beads hung from her montrals and just the memory of it, of everything that went along with it. Safety, guidance and, most importantly, the promise of hope, almost enough to make her heart stop.

Master Obi-Wan… and hopefully he can lead me back to my padawan.

“Let’s go,” Ahsoka said, looking at Rex. “You flank his position on the right, and I’ll come up on his left.”

Rex held up his blaster pistols. “Ready when you are.”

Turning back toward their target, Waxer stepped back, letting Jesse and Tup guide him to a sheltered position where Kix could check him for injuries. Ahsoka took up point, just slightly to the left of the center, as Rex called for Dogma and Hardcase to follow after them. Boil and Trapper slipped in with the group and they all waited for the signal from Ahsoka before darting through the screaming hail of incoming fire and the constant pounding salvo of the Republic’s defense efforts.

Even though it had been years since Ahsoka was on a battlefield, she found, to her great relief, that the forms she had taught her padawan were more than up to the task of defending the clutch of
troopers that ran alongside her.

As they rounded the last tank, moving as one, Ahsoka could finally make out Master Obi-Wan, leaning heavily against an empty crate of ammunition as a trooper Ahsoka didn’t recognize laid down cover fire. It looked like her grandmaster had taken one too many hits and he was struggling to find the strength to re-enter the fray.

*Just like I remember, stubborn to the very end.*

“Master Obi-Wan!” Ahsoka shouted, running toward him, Rex on her heels as the others covered her advance. “It’s all right. You can stop fighting. We’ll take it from here.”

Obi-Wan turned to look at her and Ahsoka watched as the tall, older man with a ginger beard smiled weakly at her and slumped back against the empty crate. “Oh… Hello, Master. I knew you’d get here eventually.”

“Master?” Ahsoka came up short at that, as Rex hurried over to Master Obi-Wan’s side, guiding him to the ground. A 212 medic she barely remembered, maybe Cottle, scampered over to the wounded Jedi master’s side, injecting him with a hypo. “What are you talking about?”

Closing his eyes and letting out a soft sigh as the hypo worked through his nervous system, Master Obi-Wan shook his head. “It’s nothing. It can wait. I’m just glad you finally made it. I have been terribly worried, you know.”

“I’m sorry I’m late,” Ahsoka said, coming to kneel next to Obi-Wan’s side, taking his hand in hers. “But I’m here now, Master. You’re safe.”

Rolling his head to the side to look up at Ahsoka, Master Obi-Wan opened his eyes and nodded, the motion little more than a faint bob of his head. “Yes, I am and you are as well. Thank the Force. Rex? Can I trust you to take it from here?”

Puzzled, Ahsoka looked over at Rex who had caught Master Obi-Wan’s hand in his.

“Yes, General, I’d be happy to,” Rex said, squeezing Master Obi-Wan’s hand. “May the Force be with you, sir.”

“Until we meet again by the fire, Captain,” Obi-Wan replied and, with a soft exhale, everything faded away, leaving Ahsoka and Rex alone in a luminous darkness.

After a long thoughtful moment, Ahsoka shook her head, a rueful smile on her face as Rex took off his helmet, holding it under his arm as he looked at his commander.

“Let me guess,” Ahsoka said with a faint chuckle. “You’re going to tell me it’s time to wake up now.”

“Would that be such a bad thing?” Rex asked rhetorically. “Nobody’s shooting at you and there’s not a single battle droid for light years. You could do a lot worse, to be honest.”

“There shouldn’t be any battle droids,” Ahsoka said, folding her arms over her chest, almost defensive. “So are you going to tell me what was going on back there?”

“Your subconscious chose to process your extended recovery time through memories of your past,” Rex replied with a smile, his eyes warm and his bearing proud. “I’m just happy I got to go along for the ride.”
“That’s not what I meant and you know it.”

“Do I, sir?”

“Yes, you do,” Ahsoka frowned, her hands on her hips as she leaned forward, staring at Rex with narrowed eyes. “He called me ‘Master’ Master Obi-Wan, my grandmaster, called me ‘Master’. What was that supposed to mean? And why did he trust you to take it from here? What is going on?”

“I think he was referring to all the times he left you and General Skywalker in my care, sir,” Rex answered, as if patiently explaining where rain came from to an initiate.

Ahsoka was going to argue with Rex, that there was definitely more going on than just the camaraderie born of watching after Snips and Skyguy, but a sharp, mechanical tone rang through the silence around them.

Rex looked up and nodded, turning his gaze back to Ahsoka, his expression solemn. “It’s time to go, Ahsoka. Your padawan is waiting for you.”

Countless emotions bubbled up from the depths of Ahsoka’s spirit as she looked at Rex, her oldest and dearest friend, for what would be the last time. It didn’t matter to her that the man in front of her was a creation of her subconscious and that he wasn’t really there. All that mattered was the love she felt for him, for the man behind the memory, still fighting for the ideals of the Republic somewhere in a future she could never return to. Her Rex had grown older, with a snowy white beard and wrinkles around his eyes, but his spirit was the same. Unbowed by the Empire’s tyranny, Rex was a proud warrior from an age of heroes long past.

Surging forward, Ahsoka wrapped her arms around Rex and hugged him tightly, trying to burn this moment into her memory. “Thank you, Rex. For being here, for guiding me through all of this. Thank you for everything. You’ve saved my life more times than I can count. I can’t… I don’t know… I…”

Rex returned Ahsoka’s hug with one of his own, strong and comforting in a way that almost reminded her of Anakin. “I wouldn’t have it any other way, Ahsoka. You made me a better captain and a better friend.”

He paused before adding, “I’ll see you around, General Tano.”


“It’s time to go, Snips,” Anakin’s voice whispered from behind Ahsoka, as she felt arms wrapping around her waist and pulling her into the darkness of unconsciousness and finally the cool, blue light of the bacta tank.

“‘We’ll need to keep you under observation for another week but after that, I will happily release you into your padawan learner’s care,” Master Shode said with a smile, reaching out to pat Ahsoka’s hand as he turned to his own padawan at his side. “Vokara, please arrange to have Knight Tano transferred to a recovery room and update the Council on her status.”

“Yes, Master,” Vokara murmured, bowing her head as she keyed in her master’s instructions before departing from the room.
“Thank you, Master Shode,” Ahsoka said, wishing there was a better way to express her gratitude to the man who had, no doubt, played a large part in saving her life. “I’m honored that the Master of Healers took on my case. You must be very busy.”

“I am never too busy to help a sister Jedi,” Master Shode replied, conviction in his voice. “While I admit I spend far more of my day than I would like dealing with paperwork and administrative responsibilities, I am always there if my patients need me. Which reminds me…”

Master Shode picked up a small datastick and handed it to Obi-Wan, who was perched nervously on the edge of a chair, watching the head healer. He stood up as Master Shode faced him, clearly feeling anxious and awkward.

Placing the stick into Obi-Wan’s outstretched hands, Master Shode gave instructions on how to care for Ahsoka. “Your master is healed from her injuries but she is not fit to return to action. As her padawan learner, I place you in charge of overseeing Knight Tano’s compliance with the recovery regimen I have included on this datastick. Nurse Solva has advocated strongly on your behalf and until Master Plo returns from his mission, I cannot imagine a better person to watch over my patient.”

Obi-Wan nodded, swallowing hard as Master Shode made his goodbyes to Ahsoka and drifted out of the room with a promise to return later with “reinforcements” if Ahsoka insisted upon fleeing the Halls of Healing before given clearance to do so.

There was a long moment of silence between master and padawan as they both adjusted to their new reality, or at least it was for Obi-Wan. He struggled to keep the knowledge of his master’s past to himself, to keep it hidden for another time. A time when they would both be more relaxed, when his emotions weren’t swirling around like a sudden squall.

I’ve spent all this time desperately wanting her back but now that’s she’s back I feel… nervous?

“Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka spoke first, her voice soft as she glanced down at her hands fussing with the blanket over her lap. “I… I’m so sorry I put you through all this. I’m sorry I made you wait. I’m sure this has been very ha-”

Ahsoka let out a gasp as Obi-Wan darted across the space between them, pulling her into the strongest hug he dared as he pressed his face into her shoulder, trying not to cry even as tears ran down his cheeks. “I missed you so much. I was so worried that you would never wake up and I would never see you again!”

Sighing, Ahsoka wrapped her arms around Obi-Wan and held him close, her arms thin and weak after nearly three months in bacta. He tried to pull away but she wouldn’t let him, turning her head to rest her cheek against his hair as she spoke quietly. “I know. When I lost my master, I thought I would go mad with grief. But I’m here now. I’m in one piece, thanks to you, no doubt.”

Obi-Wan shrugged, content for the moment to stay next to Ahsoka, to pretend that he knew nothing about what really happened to Master Skywalker. He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself as Ahsoka ruffled a hand through his hair.

“What happened to this?” Ahsoka smiled, bending her head a little to meet Obi-Wan’s sheepish gaze. “I thought you had decided to go with the Outer Rim scoundrel look.”

Sniffing as he tried to regain his composure, Obi-Wan said, “I got tired of Master Jinn making comments about it.”

“Master Jinn?” Ahsoka echoed, confused. “Why is Qui-Gon making comments about your hair?”
“Kark me. I shouldn’t have said that.”

Obi-Wan looked away as he mumbled, almost embarrassed. “Master Jinn petitioned the Council to take over my training and… ehm… it’s not been going well.”

“To put it mildly.”

“What?!” Ahsoka gasped, her eyes widening in shock. “Where is Master Plo? Why didn’t he take over your training? Or Master Ti or someone else on the Council who doesn’t have a padawan?”

Shrugging, Obi-Wan chewed on his lower lip. “Master Jinn argued that Master Plo’s time would be better spent serving the Order on the Council.”

Ahsoka’s affront only grew, making one of the monitors beep insistently as her heart-rate went up. “He said that? And the Council went along with it?”

“Master, you mustn’t over-exert yourself,” Obi-Wan said, sitting back as he realized his miscalculation. “Master Shode said you needed to rest and monitor your stress levels as your body gets used to operating outside of the bacta tank again.”

“T’m fine,” Ahsoka insisted, her hands curled into fists in her lap, her brows furrowed. “T’m not the one who was forced to train with the galaxy’s most stubborn, nerf-headed gundark! Oh my poor Padawan!”

Obi-Wan found himself drawn back into another hug from Ahsoka, this one a little stronger than the one before and as much as he knew he needed to pull back, to ensure his master wasn’t taxing her strength, he couldn’t find it within himself to do that.

They stayed that way for a long moment, each taking comfort in the other’s presence. In the firm, conclusive proof of the other’s continued existence, of the realization that they were not alone in the galaxy anymore. Obi-Wan allowed himself to shelter in the safe haven of his master’s arms from the cruel realities of the future and Ahsoka allowed herself to truly feel just how much she loved her padawan and how dearly she had missed his presence in her world.

Eventually, reluctantly, they pulled apart but Obi-Wan caught Ahsoka’s hands in his, unwilling to let his master go now that he had her back no matter how torn he felt.

“How long was I out?” Ahsoka asked Obi-Wan, her voice gentle as she clasped his hands, wordlessly reaffirming to him that she was still there, that their connection was still there.

Obi-Wan frowned, his eyes distant. “Almost three months. Give or take. I’m sure Master Plo will be most relieved. He’s currently on Maerai Prime, investigating the explosion…”

The next words died in Obi-Wan’s throat as a memory carried him back to the burning wreck of the building where Ahsoka had almost died. Where Qui-Gon claimed to have seen a him touch the Dark Side.

Where Ahsoka called Obi-Wan “Skyguy”.

“Right,” Ahsoka said, nodding as if to herself. “I suppose that makes sense. It’s not like you and Master Gundark had time to look into it. Master Plo’s a good choice.”
“Yes, he is,” Obi-Wan agreed turning his hands up so that they were palm to palm. “I told Master Windu about our theory, about the possible connection to the Trade Federation. He promised to tell Master Plo and that he would look into it here in the Temple.”

“Oh! That’s good! And if anybody can get to the bottom of that mess, it will be Master Plo,” Ahsoka said, but she couldn’t quite ignore the feeling that there was something wrong.

The Force around them felt stranger and tighter the longer the conversation went on. Obi-Wan wasn’t really meeting her gaze and his spirit felt painfully remote, as if he were speaking to her from the far side of a chasm and the only way to reach him was to pass over a decaying bridge that threatened to give out at a moment’s notice.

Head bowed, Obi-Wan was hunched and curled in on himself like he was trying to make himself smaller, like he was hiding from something. Ahsoka hadn’t seen her padawan so cowed by anything since Qui-Gon’s brutal rejection in the main dining hall all those years ago.

*I don’t understand. What happened while I was unconscious?*

Ahsoka took a deep breath, surprised to find that harder than she would have liked. “Obi-Wan? Is everything all right? I know Master Shode told you to make sure I monitor my stress levels but if something happened while I was asleep, you can tell me.”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka, his blue eyes round and almost forlorn but he shook his head. “I’m fine, Master. Nothing happened. I mean, nothing beside Qui-Gon making me go through remedial training in Shii-cho because, and I quote, I have ‘neglected the basics of practice in the name of style’.”

There was a momentary flare of anger at Qui-Gon, at the arrogance of the man to say that to Obi-Wan, to her padawan who had spent the last five years of his life training to master fighting with two blades. The idea that he could say that to her padawan, to completely dismiss the path Obi-Wan chose to walk as just style and no substance was galling.

Ahsoka was about to unleash a rant that would have done her master proud when she realized that while Obi-Wan had seemingly answered her question, the atmosphere around them, and her padawan’s distance in the Force, was unchanged. Actually, it felt worse, like the first whistles of a tea kettle on a hot plate.

*This isn’t about Qui-Gon. He’s trying to distract me. I saw Master Obi-Wan do this whenever Anakin was poking at things Master Obi-Wan was sensitive about.*

Summoning her strength, because she had very little despite of her three-month long nap, Ahsoka squeezed Obi-Wan’s hands and reached out with her spirit, trying to bridge the chasm between the two of them. “That sounds very rude and terribly arrogant. I’m sorry Qui-Gon said that to you.”

Obi-Wan nodded, trying to summon a smile to his face that Ahsoka could tell he didn’t feel, with nary a dimple in sight. “It’s all right, Master. You’re back now and things will… they’ll go back to normal now, won’t they?”

Ahsoka watched as her padawan looked up at her, his eyes searching her face for something, even as he tried to sit up, to pull himself back and hide behind his impeccable shielding.

“I don’t see why they wouldn’t,” Ahsoka replied, searching for the right words to use, the easiest and kindest way to give Obi-Wan an opening. “Unless you want them to change. Which, we could do. If that’s… what you want.”
“This is a partnership, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka continued, squeezing his hands again and refusing to let him pull any further away from her. “What you want to learn matters just as much as what I want to teach you.”

Taking a deep breath and swallowing hard, Obi-Wan looked away from Ahsoka, chewing on his lower lip. Whatever it was that was bothering him, whatever issue he felt he couldn’t tell her about, was testing his willpower. It hadn’t quite broken free but Ahsoka could tell it was close.

“Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka murmured, almost dreading what she was going to hear. “What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing. It can wait,” Obi-Wan insisted, trying to shove gratitude and happiness into the Force around them. “I’m just glad to finally have you back. Three months is a very long time to have to meditate on the Living Force and catalogue edible lichen, to say nothing of the trouble with Ana… kin.”

For a moment, Ahsoka almost believed Obi-Wan, until she realized that Master Obi-Wan had said the same thing in her vision. He had been keeping something from her then and now her padawan was keeping something from her now.

Something that from the sound of things, had to do with Anakin.

“Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka said, her voice as strong as her exhaustion would let her. “Whatever it is you’re trying to hide from me, stop. Just tell me the truth. I promise I won’t be mad. Even if… Even if you want to train with Qui-Gon in Ataru or you want to leave the Jedi Order. Whatever has happened, whatever you’ve done, I will always be your master and I will always be here for you.”

Head bowed for a moment, Obi-Wan looked at his hands, covered by Ahsoka’s. Gently and carefully, he pulled his hands back and sat up, looking for all the world like a much younger version of the man he was going to grow up into. His posture was tall and strong, even as his eyes were wide and almost pleading in their intensity.

“Master, who is Darth Vader?”

Ahsoka let out a sharp gasp: all the air fled her lungs: of all the things she had feared Obi-Wan was going to say or do, that was nowhere on her radar.

The sudden mention of that name, and memories of the person it conjured up, were almost too much for her to handle.

“What?” She struggled to breathe, to make her mind comprehend the words coming out of her padawan’s mouth.

Her padawan who should have no idea who Darth Vader was, who shouldn’t even know about the Sith beyond stories younglings and initiates told to scare each other on field trips into the brush.

Obi-Wan repeated his question, firmer this time. “Who is Darth Vader? Who is he really?”

Ahsoka’s mind reeled as she tried to come up with an explanation, tried to think of a way to explain away her past and his future, tried to grasp at any straw she could think of to keep Obi-Wan safe from the truth just a little bit longer.

He’s not even a knight. It’s too soon to tell him about Vader! He can’t handle this right now!

And yet as much as Ahsoka’s spirit balked at the idea of laying out the painful reality of where she came from and the truth behind the lie she had lived ever since arriving back in the past, there was
another part of her that felt relief. She had kept her knowledge of the future to herself for five long years.

*Obi-Wan deserves to know about Vader, about the Empire. This is his fight too and he should get to decide if he wants to be a part of it. That’s how you’ve always worked together. You are a team and you cannot coerce Obi-Wan into being a part of your one-woman war against the Dark.*

“Master?” Obi-Wan murmured, his brows furrowed. “If you’re too exhausted, it can wait. I don’t want to cause you more pain.”

Closing her eyes, Ahsoka shook her head, a feeling of leaden finality settling over her. “No, it can’t. It’s waited long enough. You need to know. You… you deserve to hear the truth from me, no matter how horrible it is.”

*No matter if it means I lose you, lose your trust and your faith in me. I cannot ask you to fight a war you know nothing about.*

*I cannot conscript you into this like the Republic did with the clones.*

*You deserve a choice, Obi-Wan.*

*Even if that choice is “No”.*

Obi-Wan leaned forward, his gaze focused on Ahsoka, listening with laser-sharp intensity as she spoke.

“Darth Vader is my former master,” Ahsoka said, her voice watery as she tried not to choke up, to force out the words she had hidden away in her heart for so long. “Darth Vader is Anakin Skywalker.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Obi-Wan asked, a geyser of irrational anger breaking free from the stranglehold he was trying to keep on his emotions. As much as he didn’t want to have this conversation with Ahsoka, as much as he desperately wanted to put off the talk about just where and when she came from, he also needed it badly. He needed to know the truth about Ahsoka’s past, about his future and the future of the little boy they had saved from a slave’s life on Tatooine.

Ahsoka bowed her head for a moment, lips pulled into a thin line before she met his gaze again. “You were a child when we met and even if I had told you exactly who I was, you never would have believed me. No one would have believed me!”

“You didn’t even give me the chance to believe you. You lied to me!” Obi-Wan shot back, the pain and anguish of his master’s betrayal bleeding into the Force around him. “The entire time I’ve known you, you’ve been lying to me! You told me you were a Shadow, that your cover had been blown and that’s why you weren’t in the Archives! Only that’s not true, is it?”

Ahsoka looked away from Obi-Wan, wrapping her arms around her waist. “No. It’s not. I never-”

“You didn’t even give the chance to believe you. You lied to me!” Obi-Wan said, tossing his hands up in the air. “You’ve known who I was this whole time, known who Satine and Anakin were too! And not once did it ever occur to you that maybe you should tell your
padawan learner. That maybe I should know that Pre Viszla is a traitor and that Anakin karking Skywalker is going to grow up to be a Sith Lord?! That maybe, just maybe, I should have known what we were getting into on Mandalore instead of vague comments about being ‘prepared’."

“You were barely thirteen when I met you and I kept all of this from you to protect you!” Ahsoka shot back, a thin veneer of anger failing to mask the pain she felt at Obi-Wan’s brutal deconstruction of their past together. “I didn’t want to burden you with all of this! I still don’t want to! But I don’t have a choice! You’ve seen Anakin. You know how powerful he is and he isn’t even three yet. Just imagine what he’ll be like when he’s your age, when he’s older and Darth Sidious tempts him to the Dark Side. I cannot let Sidious do that to Anakin again!”

“This was always about him, wasn’t it?” Obi-Wan said, a scowl marring his face as he folded his arms across his chest to protect himself from the truth of Ahsoka’s past. “You didn’t pick me because the Force told you to. You picked me because you wanted to fix my mistakes, to save your precious master from Obi-Wan Kenobi and his unending line of failures.”

“Obi-Wan!” Ahsoka gasped, almost recoiling from her padawan’s vitriol. “How can you say that? That’s not true. You know it’s not true! I chose you because I wanted to be your master, to teach you everything you would need to face the future, to change it, if that’s what you wanted to do. I chose you because I cared about you, because I wanted to help you grow up into the amazing man I already knew you were going to be!”

Tears pooled in the corner of Ahsoka’s eyes as she came face to face with the harsh reality of what her secrecy had done to her relationship with Obi-Wan. He was so angry at her, bristling with pain and hurt at being lied to, about not being trusted, and she didn’t know how to fix it. There was nothing in her life that had ever prepared her for something like this: no gentle moral lesson from Padme, no words of wisdom from Master Plo could repair the damage she, and she alone, had done.

“I am so sorry, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka gasped, wiping at her tears. “I didn’t mean to hurt you. I didn’t mean for you to find out this way. I was going to tell you, I swear it, once we came back from Ilum. But then the Council called and… I don’t. I don’t know how you found out but I am so, so sorry. I’m sorry I lied to you. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you about Satine or Anakin. I just wanted to protect you, for just a little while longer. To keep you safe from my past for as long as I could.”

The monitor at the side of Ahsoka’s bed let out an angry beep as her rate climbed too high and Obi-Wan glanced over at it, a horrible guilt suffusing him at the physical proof of Ahsoka’s grief.

He had done this to her, had put his master through this torment and pain, all because he was angry at being lied to, at Ahsoka withholding information that even he had to admit, he wouldn’t have believed when he was younger. Ahsoka had been through so much, had lived through such horrors and nightmares and here Obi-Wan was, berating her for not handling the truth of her past the way he thought she should.

As if he really knew any better that his master.

Bowing his head, Obi-Wan felt his anger leave him, felt the furious red tide of hurt retreat back into the cool blue depths of sorrow. Staring at his hands, all Obi-Wan could manage was a weak, “Why didn’t you trust me? Why didn’t you tell me as soon as we met Anakin? Or if not then, why not when we came back to the Temple? Why didn’t you tell me then?”

Letting out a watery sigh, Ahsoka reached out to Obi-Wan to take his hands in hers, stretching out with her spirit in a desperate hope she could still reach her padawan. “Because I didn’t want to lose you! I knew that no matter how I chose to tell you, no matter what I did or said, it was going to change our relationship. Forever. And I… I love you. You’re my padawan and I couldn’t bear the
thought of losing you.”

Obi-Wan met Ahsoka’s gaze and found a twin to the anguish and heartbreak he was feeling and somehow that just made everything worse. It was clear his master felt just as horrible as he did, just as distraught and defeated. Even now he desperately wished he could go back in time and take back every horrible, honest word he said and yet, Obi-Wan knew that the only way forward for either of them was through the horrible gauntlet of truth they found themselves in.

It was a testament to their bond, to the deep and strong love between master and padawan, that such a painful conversation had not already sundered their pairing completely. Even now, they struggled desperately to find a way back to each other, to try to look past betrayal and falsehoods and find some kind of balance that was familiar.

“I don’t want to lose you either,” Obi-Wan said, in a lame attempt at trying to walk back the pain of his words. “But… I can’t pretend I don’t know what’s going to happen. I can’t pretend I don’t know who Senator Palpatine really is or that you’re from a horrible future where everyone I know and love will die at the hands of my padawan. I can’t! I don’t know how to handle this, Master. Nothing you taught me, that anyone has taught me, could prepare me for this.”

Ahsoka nodded, pulling her spirit back behind her shields when she could not reach her padawan. She took a shallow breath, trying to calm down, to remember that as much as Obi-Wan’s words had hurt her, she was still the adult in the relationship. She had done grievous wrong to Obi-Wan and he had every right to be angry at her, to lash out in retaliation for the fundamental nature of her lies.

She was the master now and she had to do what was best for her padawan, even if that meant letting him go.

“I understand,” Ahsoka said, trying to keep her fear, her heartbreak from her voice, to keep the exhaustion hidden from Obi-Wan. “I lied to you, Obi-Wan. I lied to you and I can never take that back. I betrayed your trust in me and you have every right to be furious with me. I kept my past a secret when I should have trusted your wisdom and intelligence. I let my selfish fears and attachment keep me from seeing that it was time to tell you the truth.”

Obi-Wan caught his lower lip beneath his teeth, the faintest nod of his head showing that he was listening to Ahsoka’s words. He looked down at her hands, at how small and delicate they looked in his. Obi-Wan remembered once thinking how deceptively strong his master was, and now all he could think of was how thin her fingers were and how small her wrists were after so long in the bacta.

I just want this to stop. I don’t want this. I just want my master back. Can’t we just pretend this never happened?

But even as the words popped into his mind, Obi-Wan knew that there was no way to avoid this moment, no way to hide from the schism between them.

“What is the truth, Master?” Obi-Wan asked, looked up at Ahsoka, his blue eyes wide with pain.

Ahsoka reached out to brush away the tears from her padawan’s cheeks and swallowed hard. “The truth is Master Plo brought me to the Temple as a youngling and when I turned fourteen, I was chosen to become the padawan learner of Anakin Skywalker, who was, in turn, the padawan learner of Master Obi-Wan Kenobi. Together we fought in the Clone Wars and just as we thought we were winning, just as the Republic was about to be saved at last, my master fell and took the galaxy with him into Darkness.”
Ahsoka struggled to breathe, to remind herself she needed to be calm, that these were old wounds that had healed over long ago. Anakin and Master Obi-Wan had been lost to her for years and no amount of tears would bring them back. She had to be strong for her padawan and for Shmi’s little boy who would never know anything about the horrible life he could still be heir to.

No. I won’t let that happen. Even if… even if Obi-Wan won’t help me, even if I have to do it alone, I won’t let it happen again. I swear it!

As Ahsoka fought to regain control over her emotions, Obi-Wan shifted forward, sliding his arms around her shoulder, hugging her gently with his eyes closed. “I am so sorry, Master. I can’t even imagine how you managed to live through that.”

“It… It wasn’t easy,” Ahsoka whispered, pulling Obi-Wan closer as if she could keep the future at bay based solely on the strength of her love for him. “My friend, a clone captain called Rex, he saved my life and then… and then we went our separate ways because it wasn’t safe for a former Jedi and a clone to be seen together.”

Obi-Wan nodded into their shared hug, deciding he had one last question for his master. “And Anakin? How did you know what happened to him?”

Ahsoka let out a puff of bitter laughter. “We met again, on Malachor. He was trying to kill my friends and I couldn’t let him do that. During our duel I broke open the mask he was wearing and that’s when I knew. That’s when I knew who Darth Vader really was.”

Ahsoka pulled away just enough to look Obi-Wan in the eye, touching his cheek gently. “And before you even start, I want you to know that none of this is your fault, Obi-Wan. You are not responsible for the choices my master made in my past. None of this, not Darth Vader, not the Clone Wars are your fault, Padawan. I don’t know how you figured all of this out but however you did, I don’t blame you for it. This was a long time coming.”

“I sliced your datapad,” Obi-Wan admitted, flushing red and feeling horrible. “Your master’s code didn’t work and I couldn’t stop messing with it and when I heard Anakin call you ‘Snips’ and you call him ‘Skyguy’ during his last fit I… ehm… got in and read, well, just about everything. I’m sorry, Master.”

“Huh,” Ahsoka said with a weak quirk of her lips. “Well now that you know, what do you want to do?”

Obi-Wan looked at Ahsoka, confusion on his face. “Do? What do you mean?”

Ahsoka picked her words very carefully, trying her hardest to find the best way forward for both of them. “Do you want to stay with me? To continue as my padawan learner? With the full knowledge that there’s a Sith Lord out there trying to destroy the Jedi Order the Republic and that it would be our mission to stop him and save Anakin Skywalker from falling to the Dark?”

“Or do you want to end our partnership and find a new master?” she added hesitantly. “I will understand, if you do. I’m sure Master Plo would love to take you on, or maybe Master Yoda, or perhaps Shaak Ti?”

Ahsoka looked up at Obi-Wan, at the inscrutable expression on his face, and tried not to hope, tried not to think beyond the moment before them.

What would her padawan decide?

“I don’t know,” Obi-Wan murmured, pulling away from Ahsoka and standing up, as if each action
pained him greatly. “I want to stay with you. Truly, Master. But you are asking so much of me and I
don’t know if I can do it. I have to sort this out on my own. I’m sorry.”

Without another word or backward glance, Obi-Wan walked out of the room, leaving Ahsoka alone
with her memories of those now lost to her.

The sun streamed through the high stained-glass windows of the training salon as Qui-Gon Jinn
moved through a complicated Ataru form, enjoying the feeling of being lost in the moment, of
focusing the totality of his spirit into the movement of his saber and his body. While he preferred the
depth of a sitting meditation, there was a purity to moving meditations that appealed to him,
especially when he was trying to control his excitement at the future unspooling before him.

Training with Obi-Wan the day before had been a true pleasure, with the boy finally, finally
accepting Qui-Gon’s wisdom and his role as teacher. After their joint meditation, they had worked
throughout the afternoon on Ataru, testing the limits of Obi-Wan’s knowledge so that Qui-Gon
would know where to begin working with the boy in earnest. Teaching the boy had been such a joy
and Qui-Gon was looking forward to their next session with eager anticipation.

I knew he was meant to be mine. I knew my vision was not in vain, that my interpretation of the
Force’s will was the correct one.

That woman’s defiance of the Living Force brought about her own unfortunate fate. I ache for Obi-
Wan’s pain at the coming loss of her, but in time his grief will ease and we can face this new,
mysterious darksider together.

The Temple pulsed with life around Qui-Gon as he moved powerfully through each form, grounding
himself in the moment as the Force worked through him and around him. He could sense a passing
class of senior initiates in the hallway and further away, a trio of padawans who were training with a
blade master. Above them all Qui-Gon could sense the Council, their light and solemn serenity
shining down upon the Temple and the Jedi below like life-giving sunlight.

Qui-Gon had no doubt the Council would be most pleased to discover their faith in him had been
rewarded. He would submit the official transfer papers to the Council once Tano passed into the
Force, or maybe perhaps a few days later.

It would not do to seem overly eager, especially given Master Plo Koon’s attachment to Obi-Wan.

Soon. Everything will be as it should be. As it was always meant to be.

There is still time. The future can and will be saved.

“My, my, what a surprise. I did not expect to see you up this early, Qui-Gon,” someone intoned from
behind him.

Qui-Gon who did not need to see who his visitor was to recognize the distinctive timbre of his
master’s voice. He would recognize that voice until the end of his days, as well as the instinctive
stiffening of his spine that he had to control. It was petty to hold onto the hurts of his time as a padawan against Dooku now, especially after his master had used his influence with the Council to bring Qui-Gon’s long germinating plan to fruition.

Turning around to face Master Dooku, Qui-Gon bowed his head, summoning a pleasant smile to his face. “Good morning, Master Dooku. Obi-Wan, my padawan, is an early riser which necessitates I become one as well.”

“That boy holds considerable sway over you, Qui-Gon,” Dooku said as he stepped into the training room, his hands clasped behind his back, his posture straight and his shoulders back. “I must commend him as I was never able to convince you of the merits of rising at a respectable hour of the morning.”

Nodding, Qui-Gon had to admit the truth of his master’s statement. “Yes, well, it is as Master Yoda says. The student teaches the master just as much if not more during an apprenticeship. A sentiment I’m sure you can agree with, Master Dooku.”

“Yes, my master is overly fond of that maxim,” Dooku replied, looking away from Qui-Gon as he began a very slow, almost ponderous stroll about the dueling square.

Puzzled, Qui-Gon hooked his lightsaber onto his belt and folded his arms over his chest. “Is there something wrong, Master? If you have an insight into Obi-Wan’s training I will gladly listen. I want only the best for the boy.”

Dooku paused at this, his brows furrowing for a moment before he met Qui-Gon’s gaze, his dark eyes unreadable. “Indeed. You have invested a great deal of time and effort into young Kenobi.”

“Well… yes, I have,” Qui-Gon replied, his earlier confusion turning to a kind of wary annoyance. “Because you sensed the potential within Obi-Wan, because you agreed someone of Obi-Wan’s talent should not be left to a half-trained, jar’kai-wielding slip of a girl.”

“Knight Tano has acquitted herself admirably these past five years,” Dooku sniffed, turning his gaze away from Qui-Gon. “You disrespect her and yourself by resorting to such a specious comment.”

Inhaling sharply, Qui-Gon tried not to grit his teeth or allow any outward display of anger before his master. Clearly Master Dooku’s visit was to be more educational than conversational, and the less of an argument he put up, the faster Dooku would get to the point and then leave in a sanctimonious swirl of brown robes.

When Qui-Gon did not immediately apologize or respond to Dooku’s comment he turned to face his former padawan squarely. “Knight Tano is awake.”

The room was silent as Qui-Gon tried to comprehend what his master said. “What?”

“Knight Tano is awake,” Dooku repeated, his voice as neutral as it was sonorous and final. “Your time with Kenobi is at an end.”

Qui-Gon’s mind raced as he tried to make sense of Dooku’s words. Tano was alive? She had
recovered? How could that be? The Living Force had revealed to him his and Obi-Wan’s destiny, to face the darksider with the red lightsaber. Everything was coming together so perfectly!

How could this have happened?

“Has she… fully recovered?” Qui-Gon asked, a strange feeling twisting in his gut as he tried to find the correct response his old master wanted to hear. “Will she be able to return to the field?”

Is there still a chance to keep Obi-Wan safe from her dangerous influence?

“Eventually,” Dooku said, his dark brows furrowed. “You are not relieved to learn of a fellow Jedi’s recovery?”

Qui-Gon looked away, his jaw clenched as he searched for the right words to placate his master and bring their conversation to an end. He had to get to Obi-Wan, to find the young boy and… and…

And what? What do I do now?

“Of course not,” Qui-Gon finally said, giving a thin smile as he turned back to his master. “The loss of any Jedi dims the light of the Order as a whole. And I am sure Master Plo Koon will be relieved to hear of Tano’s recovery. He did adopt her into his lineage, after all.”

“And Kenobi,” Dooku intoned, his stance as still and as silent as stone, the only sign of life the way his eyes narrowed on his former padawan, darting about as if they searched for a weakness or a flaw in Qui-Gon’s facade. “The boy is Plo Koon’s grand-padawan, as you’ll recall I told you before you started down this path.”

A muscle in Qui-Gon’s jaw twitched and he walked over to the benches, picking up a towel to wipe the sweat from his brow. “Yes, I do, and yet you helped me. You saw the wisdom in my vision and in my plan to rescue Obi-Wan from the dark side shadow that haunts him.”

Dooku said nothing in response, his expression blank and cold as he stood in the middle of the dueling floor.

“Why did you give me aid? Why did you ‘peddle your influence’, as you put it, Master, if not to help me rescue the boy?” Qui-Gon asked, walking back to Dooku, unsure of what exactly he was going to do but feeling a simmering anger flare to life in his gut. “Obi-Wan cannot be left in Knight Tano’s care! I have had another vision and the Living Force has shown me that Obi-Wan and I—”

“You and Kenobi are nothing,” Dooku intoned, his voice loud and sharp, like a piercing strike in Makashi. He took a step toward Qui-Gon, seeming to grow even taller in the younger man’s mind. “This obsession with him must end now, Qui-Gon. You have wasted five years of your life pining for this boy. Enough!”

“Obsession?!” Qui-Gon echoed, stunned at Dooku’s words as if his old master had struck a physical blow. “I do not have an obsession with Obi-Wan! The Force has ordained that our destinies be joined and yet, time and time again, Ahsoka Tano steals him away from me. I am trying to save the boy from the Dark, Master Dooku. I thought you understood that my intentions were focused solely on what was best for Obi-Wan. Why else would you help me?”

“To teach you a lesson about your unhealthy attachment to Kenobi,” Dooku said, a deepening frown on his face at the harsh turn of the conversation. “You have never truly gotten over your defeat at Knight Tano’s hands, have you? And the shame of losing to such a young knight has curdled into a poisonous delusion that you and Kenobi have a shared destiny between you.”

Qui-Gon inhaled sharply and withdrew his spirit back behind his strongest shields, his mind filling
with a kind of stony numbness as Dooku continued.

“Master Yoda and I have long been concerned about your continued interest in the boy,” Dooku said, gesturing with one imperious hand. “Other candidates, far more worthy of your time than Kenobi, have been presented to you for apprenticeship and yet you dismissed them without consideration. All in favor of this foolish belief that the Living Force would somehow bring you back into Kenobi’s life.”

“I will not deny the truth of my vision!” Qui-Gon snapped, glaring at his former master with barely restrained anger.

“Your so-called vision has unbalanced you,” Dooku scoffed, gesturing with disgust. “Look at you! Desperately clinging to the illusion of a future that does not exist for a boy who does not want to train with you. This behavior is unbecoming of a Jedi of Master Yoda’s lineage.”

When Qui-Gon said nothing, Dooku carried on, taking a step forward with each command he uttered. “You will cease this futile pursuit of Obi-Wan Kenobi and accept an assignment that will give you time and space to let your attachment to the boy dissipate. It is past time for this madness to end.”

“It is not madness,” Qui-Gon managed to grit out, his hands curled into fists at his side. “I will speak to the Council, explain to them the nature of my vision. I have seen a new enemy and they must heed my warnings.”

“Enough!” Dooku thundered, in a voice Qui-Gon had not heard since he was very young and had ruined one of his master’s ancient tomes by accidentally spilling tea on it. “You have embarrassed yourself and our lineage in front of the Council and the entire Order. You will go to Master Yoda and accept whatever mission he sees fit to give you. And when you return, you are to stay away from Knight Tano and Padawan Kenobi. Do you understand, Padawan?”

Qui-Gon seethed with fury. “You have no right to order me about, my former master. You no have authority over a fellow master.”

Snorting dismissively, Dooku waved a hand as he drifted to the exit on the far side of the room. “Still disrespectful after everything I have done. You are right. As your former master I clearly hold no sway over you, but Master Yoda does.”

“Master Yoda?” Qui-Gon blinked, a sudden stab of shock piercing the fog of his rage. “Master Yoda sent you?”

“He has made his concerns about you clear to me,” Dooku said as he paused in the doorway, gazing down his nose at Qui-Gon. “You must let Kenobi go, Qui-Gon. Whatever you thought you saw all those years ago… it is meaningless now. I cannot believe this is the path the Living Force intended you to walk. Let go of your attachment to what might have been, Qui-Gon. It is what is best for both you and Kenobi.”

Qui-Gon watched his master stride out of the room, all the heat and fire from his anger burning away into ice at Master Dooku’s parting words.

“Oh whatever you thought you saw all those years ago, it is meaningless now.”

Qui-Gon stood in the middle of the training salon, cold and alone, adrift in the still pool of the Force.

Am I unbalanced?
Ahsoka picked through the dinner Nurse Solva had brought her nearly forty-five minutes ago, a bland assortment of rice porridge infused with nutrients and a light, savory fermented broth that was traditionally eaten straight from the bowl. She had finished off the soup but found her stomach rebelling at the porridge. Ahsoka knew she had to eat, that it was the only way to get back to full health, and yet she found that she lacked the will to force the food down her throat.

You’re just going to let this go to waste? There were months during the Clone Wars where you would have begged for something other than reheated rations and protein wafers!

Nodding to herself listlessly, Ahsoka had to agree with the sharp voice in her head. She was letting her food go to waste but there wasn’t a damn thing anyone could do about it. Three months in a bacta tank had shrunk her appetite down to almost nothing and even if she had been hungry, her talk with Obi-Wan earlier in the day weighed far too heavy on her heart and mind to permit anything more than some soup and a cup of tea, which had gone cold twenty minutes ago.

Ahsoka let out a heavy sigh, looking around her bed to see if she could find the datapad which would let her call Nurse Solva back. The cheerful and gently authoritative nurse had informed Ahsoka that she was on call until 1900 hours and that if she needed anything, Solva would be at her beck and call.

“Where is it?” Ahsoka muttered to herself, more to hear something other than the quiet hum of monitors than to help locate the datapad, which she quickly saw atop a cabinet that was just a little too far out of reach.

Most of Ahsoka’s first day out of the bacta tank, after her contentious argument with Obi-Wan, had been spent sleeping or attempting to eat something more substantial than broth and soft, milled bread. Master Shode came back before noon with a group of senior healer padawans and asked Ahsoka more questions about her recovery than she had the strength to answer.

Eventually the well-intentioned group went away but it was clear by the location of the datapad that someone else had come into check on her while she was asleep and had greatly overestimated Ahsoka’s wing span.

If Obi-Wan were here, he could get it for you, a dark and traitorous thought slipped through the exhausted fog in Ahsoka’s mind, but she did her best to ignore it. “He needs time. That’s all. Obi-Wan will come around. I know my padawan better than anyone. He’ll come back.”

The spiteful voice in Ahsoka’s head had nothing to say to that and she decided that the best way to get a new cup of hot tea was to try to call the datapad to her hand with the Force.

Taking a deep breath, Ahsoka reached out, trying to dip her spirit into the cool, soothing flow of the Force. She stretched, gritting her teeth at the effort, and found that the datapad didn’t so much as rattle atop the cabinets. The Force was there, Ahsoka was certain of it, but it slipped through her grasp, like water running through a sieve.

She was still struggling to take ahold of the pad when the door opened, Mace Windu and Yoda on the other side. Moving with a speed and silent grace that surprised Ahsoka, Mace picked up the datapad and handed it over as they came in, the corners of his mouth pulled into what could only be called a smile. “Allow me, Knight Tano. It is good to see you again.”
“Worried about you, we were,” Yoda admitted as he accepted Mace’s help up onto the end of Ahsoka’s bed. “Relieved, I am, to hear of your recovery. It brings warm feelings to my heart.”

Ahsoka blinked up at Mace, confused, before putting the datapad to the side of her bed, almost overwhelmed by the concern and joyful relief she felt from the masters before her. While she knew logically that Mace and Yoda had to have feelings, as every sentient did, it was quite another thing to be able to sense them so plainly in the Force, to realize just how worried they must have been for her. Just how close to death she must have come.

“Masters, it’s good to see you too,” Ahsoka admitted. “I’m sorry for making you worry. If I had been more careful on Maerai I…”

“If you had been more careful?” Mace echoed, an eyebrow raised. “You saved the lives of Qui-Gon Jinn and your padawan. And your observations on the mission have been incredibly helpful to Plo Koon’s investigation. You have nothing to apologize for, Ahsoka. We’re just glad to have you back with us.”

Yoda nodded, reaching out with one hand to pat Ahsoka’s leg. “Done well, you have, Knight Tano. Too hard on yourself, you are. Rubbed off on you, Obi-Wan has, I see.”

“Well, I am his master,” Ahsoka laughed, a pale, imitation of her usual good cheer. “It was only a matter of time, I suppose.”

*I’m his master for now anyway.*

“Where is Padawan Kenobi?” Mace asked, looking around the room, a frown wrinkling his brow. “Isn’t he done with his classes for the day?”

Ahsoka opened her mouth but Yoda cut her off. “Much to deal with, Obi-Wan has. Be back later he will. Busy the life of a padawan is.”

Mace met Yoda’s gaze, his lips pursed, but he let it pass without further comment. “I suppose he’s already told you about Qui-Gon?”

“Yes,” Ahsoka said, looking at her hands in her lap, trying to focus on the moment in front of her and not her worries about where Obi-Wan was at that moment. “He said the Council agreed to let Qui-Gon train him instead of Master Plo Koon. And that it wasn’t going very well.”

Shaking his head, Yoda looked away as Mace made a sound that might have been a dismissive snort. Ahsoka wasn’t in the mental place to comprehend his countenance other than it seemed he agreed with Obi-Wan’s evaluation of the situation. “That’s an understatement. Depa tells me your padawan’s friends have taken to hiding him from Jinn, to say nothing of all the trips he keeps taking to visit the Duchess of Mandalore. He ran out in the middle of lesson just a few days ago.”

“What?” Ahsoka asked, confused by this new piece of information. “How… how do you know all this?”

“He’s using your master’s ID code to check out speeder bikes,” Mace explained. “And Yoda was at the lesson when he abruptly fled for Mandalorian soil, so to speak.”

“Talk about that later, we shall,” Yoda said. “Wanted to see you, I did. Glad tidings this will be for Master Plo Koon upon his return.”

The mention of Plo Koon, of his return to the Temple, cheered Ahsoka’s spirits far more than she
thought they would. A blossom of hope unfurled in her chest, soothing a bit of the roiling fear Obi-Wan’s abrupt departure had created. “Where is Master Plo?”

“On Maerai Prime, investigating the attempt on your life,” Mace explained, as the door behind the two Jedi Master slid open with a soft hiss. “Master Ti is sending him the good news and I promise the Council will keep you up-to-date on whatever he discovers there.”

“Ah ha! I knew I’d find you two here,” Nurse Solva said marching into the room as if she were preparing to go to war. “What did Master Shode tell you about bothering my patient?”

“They weren’t a bother, Solva,” Ahsoka said, holding up her hands and trying to avoid a loud and exhausting tussle over who had control over her room. “Really, I’m fine. There’s no need to fuss over me.”

“Nonsense,” Yoda chuckled, lightly hopping off the bed and heading to the door. “Plenty of reasons, there are. In Nurse Solva’s excellent care, we leave you, Ahsoka. Speak tomorrow, we shall.”

“With your permission, of course,” Mace said to Solva, who looked a bit surprised but pleased to have her authority recognized by the two leaders of the Order. “Pleasant dreams, Ahsoka. If you’ll excuse us, Nurse Solva?”

With a bow, and a raspy chuckle from Yoda, they left the room.

“Well, now, if that doesn’t beat all I don’t know what will,” Solva said with a bright smile. “How are you feeling, dear? Finished your dinner?”

“I tried,” Ahsoka admitted, holding her hands up. “I’m just not that hungry.”

“Not to worry,” Solva said, picking up the tray of cold rice porridge and tea. “Master Shode doesn’t want you eating anything too challenging for your stomach. And you ate all your soup so that’s good. I think he’ll be quite pleased when he does his rounds tomorrow morning. Is there anything else I can get you before I go off shift?”

Ahsoka shook her head, trying to summon a smile to her face for Solva, who was watching her with concerned eyes. “No, no. I’m fine, thank you. If I need anything I’ll call.”

Solva walked over to Ahsoka and put her hand on her shoulder. “Did something happen? Where’s that charming padawan of yours? Do you want me to send a summons for him?”

Closing her eyes, Ahsoka exhaled in a slow measured breath. “Obi-Wan is… busy right now. But he’ll be back. Later tonight, maybe.”

Solva’s narrowed eyes and the way she moved her hands to her hips told Ahsoka that the nurse didn’t believe her lie for a second. “Is that so? Well does he know when visiting hours are over? Because Neraja won’t let him in if he shows up after visiting hours now that you’re out of the tank.”

Feeling another heavy wave of exhaustion wash over her, Ahsoka looked up at Solva, almost begging for a respite from everyone. “I don’t think it will matter. I won’t be up much longer. I feel… so tired. I’m just so very tired.”

Deciding that any further badgering would do more harm than good, Solva took a step back. “Well, I can’t blame you. You’ve been through a lot today and I think getting to bed early will do you some good. I’ll see you tomorrow morning then. Sweet dreams, Ahsoka.”

“Good night, Nurse Solva,” Ahsoka replied, her voice little more than an exhausted whisper.
True to her prediction, Ahsoka quickly fell asleep, pulled down by her worries and just the sheer exhaustion of being awake. It took only a few minutes to find a comfortable pillow arrangement for her too-heavy head.

Laying there in the dark, with the faintest hum of the machines around her, Ahsoka had one last coherent thought before she drifted off. *I hope Obi-Wan is alright.*

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Ahsoka came to in the middle of a grassy plain, a faint wind stirring over her montrals. Slowly awareness came to her and she pushed herself upright, looking around in confusion.

*Where was she? Had she traveled through time again?*

There was something about the grasslands she found herself in that was strangely familiar, although she didn’t know why. The wind was cool on her skin, with a hint of something Ahsoka couldn’t identify but she liked all the same.

What was most surprising to Ahsoka was that it felt like all her strength had returned to her and she stood up, surveying the area. The grass, which just barely came up to her hips, danced in the wind, creating the feeling that Ahsoka was in the middle of an emerald sea. She watched the waves of pale green ripple across her vision as a feeling of peace settled over her.

Wherever she was, it was beautiful and Ahsoka felt an urge to stay there for a long time.

*You can, you know. This is your dream.* The Presence spoke from seemingly nowhere and everywhere all at once. *This is a lovely place.*

“So this is a dream?” Ahsoka asked, letting her hands drift over the soft tufts beneath her. “I haven’t time traveled to Lothal or Dantooine?”

*Is that place special to you, Ahsoka? Lothal?* The Presence said, its voice gentle and almost curious.

Glancing around, Ahsoka gave the grassy landscape another look. She closed her eyes and focused on hearing with her montrals, trying to understand the space around her. “No, this isn’t Lothal. I can sense the ocean and it’s far too close for Lothal.”

Walking toward the horizon, Ahsoka got the sense that the Presence followed her, just a few steps behind, patient and steady. She didn’t speak to it, wading through the thigh-high grass. The closer she got to the ocean, the softer the ground and the more sparse the grass grew until Ahsoka realized she was walking up the rise of a sand dune.

Cresting the top of the small hill, Ahsoka looked down upon a beautiful ocean, marked by a few jagged rocks here and there, the water racing out to meet an equally vibrant blue sky, dotted with white clouds that looked like they came from Obi-Wan’s favorite meringue dessert.

“Yup, definitely not Lothal,” Ahsoka said as she picked her way down the sand to the beach. “But this place does seem familiar. Have I been here before?”

*Yes. A long time ago.*

Ahsoka raised her brows and nodded. “And let me guess. You’re not going to tell me when that
was?"

I am not inclined to, no.

“I figured,” Ahsoka said, flopping down onto the sand and pulling her boots off. She felt a strong desire to wade in the cool, inviting water and since she was in yet another cryptic dream, Ahsoka saw no reason not to. “Why am I here? What lesson do you have to teach me? I’m assuming that is why I’m here, right?”

The Presence was silent for a long time, long enough for Ahsoka to finish taking off her boots and socks, roll her pants legs up and wade into the clear ocean water.

She had almost thought the Presence had gone when it seemed to be at her side again, like a lazy afternoon sunbeam across her bed.

The better question is, why are you here, Ahsoka? What troubles you?

“What? You mean besides Obi-Wan knowing the truth about where I came from?” Ahsoka replied, a bitter laugh escaping her. “Or the fact that I almost died without even seeing Obi-Wan make it to knighthood? Palpatine is still out there, gathering power and influence and I am still dealing with Qui-Gon Jinn’s wounded pride! To say nothing of Pre Vizsla skulking around Satine and Mandalore.”

Ahsoka continued on, feeling a wave of helpless and panic rise up from her gut as the enormity of what had almost happened crashed through her. “I could have died and all of this, all of my time and effort with Obi-Wan would have been for nothing! Obi-Wan would still be alone and he would still have to teach Anakin how to be… I don’t know! A Mandalorian Force user all by himself. Or Obi-Wan could end up stuck with Qui-Gon Jinn! All of this would have been meaningless.”

Do you really believe that? That your time with Obi-Wan and Anakin has been so ephemeral that nothing will be changed?

“I don’t know? Yes? Maybe?” Ahsoka shook her head, looking down at her hands and feeling far older than her thirty-six years in the galaxy. She started to walk through the water parallel to the distant grass-covered dunes.

Did your own brief time with your master leave so little an impression upon you?

Ahsoka felt the ghost of a smile. “No. No, my time with Skyguy was… He was like a flare, ripping through the night sky and lighting up everything around him, and then he was gone.”

She studied the ocean for a long moment. “Sometimes it feels like he took all the light in the galaxy with him when he fell.”

There was a stillness in the Force around her that felt strangely familiar but since it was Ahsoka’s dream, she wasn’t all that surprised by it.

What was more surprising was the Presence’s response to her words, a soft, almost mournful reply. I am so sorry, Ahsoka. This cannot be easy for you.

“No, it’s not,” Ahsoka replied, folding her arms over her chest as she stared down at the water gently lapping around her ankles. “But it would be easier if you would give me a straight answer for once. Whatever you are.”

There was an impression of sunlight filtered through trees and the faintest memory of a laugh. Would
you prefer to seek wisdom from Master Yoda?

“Force, no,” Ahsoka groaned, holding her hands up in defeat. “Fine, fine. I get it. You’re just here to lead me on my path to whatever it is the Force wants me to do, right?”

The Presence was silent for a long while and Ahsoka got the distinct impression it was arguing with itself, maybe struggling to come to an answer. She looked out at the ocean, watching the way it ran out towards the horizon, an almost perfect mirror of the sky overhead, give or take a few waves. The wind ghosted across the face of the water, making the grasslands at her back dance with each gust.

“How far does it go?” Ahsoka asked the Presence, peering at the horizon.

As far as it needs to. The Presence replied, surging back into her awareness. How far do you wish to go along this path? You have given Obi-Wan a choice and yet, you have never given yourself a choice. You expect so much of yourself. More than anyone could or should ever ask of you.

Smiling a little, Ahsoka looked up at the sky, noting that the sun was setting now and the first few stars were winking into existence. “I’ll go as far as I need to, until I reach my destination or I run out of a path to walk on.”

And then?

“And then I’ll make my own way,” Ahsoka shrugged, turning back to the shore. “You said I never gave myself a choice but I did. I chose Obi-Wan. I chose to change the future. And I will. I will not let Palpatine destroy Anakin. I will not let him warp my master into Darth Vader again.”

As Ahsoka waded back to the beach, the blue sky drifting into a deepening indigo. More and more stars appeared over the horizon and the silvery river of the arms of the galaxy came into focus. The clouds were gone now, leaving Ahsoka alone under the light of a trillion stars.

That’s why you’re upset. You’re afraid of dying without knowing if you prevented your past from happening again.

Closing her eyes, Ahsoka nodded in agreement. “Yes. I am. I’m terrified of that.”

Why?

Ahsoka let out a heavy and watery breath, tears threatening at the corners of her eyes. “Because… what if Obi-Wan doesn’t believe me? What if he thinks I’m just crazy and he doesn’t listen to any of my warnings? What if I go through all of this and get taken out by some random pirate on the Outer Rim and everything happens again?”

“What if I’m already too late?” Ahsoka asked, collapsing to the beach. She pulled her knees up to her chest and bowed her head, resting it there. “What if the Dark Side is just too powerful?”

Do you truly believe that? That the Dark Side is more powerful than the Light?

“Sometimes,” Ahsoka whispered, her heart aching at the admission. “There are times when I feel like I can almost sense it, can almost sense him. Sidious. I tell myself I’m imagining things or being paranoid but… I can’t shake the feeling that he knows.”

The Presence apparently had nothing to say to that and so it changed course. Why don’t you think Obi-Wan believes you? Do you really think he cares so little for you?

Ahsoka shrugged, sitting up a little as a distant moon started to climb into the sky. “Because I sound
crazy. Because I’m asking him to go to war for a boy he doesn’t know against an enemy we may not be able to defeat. Because… I don’t know if I would believe me either if I was in his shoes.”

_Do you really think he loves you so little?_

Closing her eyes, Ahsoka shook her head.

_If you believe he cares for you, then why are you afraid?_

“Because I don’t want to lose my padawan,” Ahsoka confessed. “I loved my masters, with all my heart. But my Obi-Wan? He’s not the same person as Master Obi-Wan. And… If he says yes, if he agrees to join me, he’ll move heaven and earth to turn himself into Master Obi-Wan. And I’ll lose my padawan. I’ll lose my wonderful, funny, and brilliant little shadow.”

_You have a great many preconceived notions about what Obi-Wan will or will not do. Too many, perhaps. The Presence was closer now, so close Ahsoka felt like she could almost reach out and touch it, to feel the warmth of an arm around her. There were emotions there but they were impossible for Ahsoka to focus on, distant and hazy, like trying to make out ships in a fog. Maybe you should give Obi-Wan a chance to decide who and what he will become. Have faith, Ahsoka. If you have trained him well, he will come back to you._

Sighing, Ahsoka looked up at the sky, “What if he doesn’t? What do I do then?”

_Have faith, little one. Like your masters had in you._

“What did you call me?” Ahsoka asked in surprise, reaching out into the Force. But the Presence was gone and, before she knew what was happening, Ahsoka fell into the blissful reprieve of sleep.

**Chapter End Notes**

_HIIIIII!

I know I promised that I would update the last two chapters at the same time but as I mentioned here on my tumblr the Elder Sith Parents are visiting for the holidays and I'm finding that my editing time has been greatly curtailed.

_I promise Chapter 40: The Burning Man Who Does Not Die will go up tomorrow, December 24th._

I don’t know when but it will go up and then Season Three of Tano and Kenobi will be over! Yaaaaaay!

In the meantime, please enjoy Grumpy Grandpa’s thunderous Qui-Gon dragging and CLONES! ALL THE CLONES! SO MANY CLONES! And what does Rex know that we don’t? Hmm? Rex! Rex! I need you to come give me some spoilers STAT, Captain!

Happy Holidays everyone!

BYEEEEEE!
Chapter Summary

Previously on Tano and Kenobi...

Jedi Knight Ahsoka Tano has finally admitted her secret origin to her Padawan Learner, Obi-Wan Kenobi. Distraught at his master's betrayal of his trust, Padawan Kenobi flees the Halls of Healing in the hope of finding some peace of mind, leaving behind his heartbroken master and the tattered remains of their partnership.

There is a terrible choice placed Obi-Wan Kenobi and the fate of the galaxy may hang on his decision.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I have to sort this out on my own. I’m sorry.”

Obi-Wan distantly heard the words fall out of his mouth as he moved backward and away from Ahsoka, his master, and out the door into the hallway, away, back into the wider Halls of Healing. It was still early in the day so there weren’t a lot of people around. A friendly looking Ithorian bowed her head in greeting to Obi-Wan: because everyone in the Halls of Healing knew who Obi-Wan Kenobi was now and knew about his master, Ahsoka Tano.

“Good Morning, Obi-Wan!” An orderly called out as he pushed an injured Jedi off to surgery. “That’s Knight Tano’s padawan. She just woke up after three months in bacta.”

The Jedi waved weakly, his leg wrapped up in a cast, and Obi-Wan bowed his head in thanks, mumbling something as he hurried down the hallway in the hopes that no one else would see him, no one else would want to make idle, brainless small talk. He hurried past a clutch of nurses discussing their shift duties for the day, his shoulders hunched defensively.

Where are you going?

As he passed the nurses, he thought he sensed someone familiar, perhaps Healer Yagyu, so Obi-Wan pulled his hood up and moved faster, stretching out his legs to cover as much ground as he could without running.

I have to get out of here. I have to get away from all of this.

Obi-Wan wasn’t sure if “this” meant the Halls of Healing or the fact that his master had somehow managed to travel back through time with the intention of preventing a galactic civil war and the mutation of the Republic into a fascist Empire. Either way, his first instinct was to flee and he gave into it, hurrying past Jedi and staff that were walking across the large sky bridge that led into the healing wing of the Jedi Temple.

Paying no heed to who he bumped into, or nearly ran over, Obi-Wan broke into a run once he was inside the Temple proper, letting his feet carry him wherever they wanted. He ran down one hall after another, focused only on the sound of his pulse pounding in his ears and the feeling of his lungs
working for every last bit of air they could get. He rushed past masters and knights, past his fellow padawans and Temple employees, blocking out the sounds of their calls or harsh commands to stop running.

But Obi-Wan couldn’t stop, couldn’t risk the possibility of the horrifying future catching up to him. He could not bear to let his mind truly comprehend the horror of what awaited him in little more than twenty years.

*Darth Vader is my former master. Darth Vader is Anakin Skywalker.*

“No!” Obi-Wan grunted, pushing himself as hard as he could, sprinting at a dead heat toward an unknown destination. “No! It’s not true. That’s impossible.”

Obi-Wan didn’t realize he was heading towards the Room of a Thousand Fountains until he heard the hard sounds of his boots on stone give way to the crunch of gravel and sand. Still running, although he had started to slow down, Obi-Wan hurried into one of the far corners of the room, a quiet place swaddled in the white noise of the large waterfall nearby that dominated the area. There was a clutch of quaking maples that dropped brilliant copper and gold leaves in the fall and it had long been a place he enjoyed visiting.

In desperate need of a haven, Obi-Wan took a shortcut through the large indoor park, hurrying past rocks, streams and other vegetation as his lungs and limbs begged him to stop. He finally came to a stop when he found himself just around the bend from the brilliantly colored copse of trees. Staggering off the path, Obi-Wan collapsed in the dappled shade struggling to take in air, trying to keep the contents of his stomach down.

*What have I done?*

Looking up at the boughs of the trees overhead, Obi-Wan gazed unseeing at the warm, golden sunlight shining down from high transparisteel windows which sat above vibrant mosaics that told the story of the Jedi Order. The images told the story of the Order’s triumphs over those who tried to destroy the Republic, those who would threaten the peace and freedom of the galaxy, and, most importantly, over their most ancient of enemies, the Sith.

The Sith who they thought they had obliterated nearly a millennia ago.

The Sith who would destroy everyone he had ever loved and cared for, who would murder Satine, who would sack his home, who would steal away Anakin and plunge the whole galaxy into darkness.

Shaking his head, as if he could knock the images out through sheer force, Obi-Wan tried not to think of anything, to picture his mind as an empty blank slate.

And yet, despite his best attempt, Obi-Wan found this simple task impossible.

*I can’t do this. I cannot do what Master is asking of me!* Obi-Wan thought frantically as he tried to focus on his breathing, and to bring calm to the desperate pace of his heart. *She asks the impossible of me. I cannot face a Sith Lord in combat! I can barely face Qui-Gon Jinn! How could I be of any help in this suicidal crusade of hers?*

Obi-Wan counted his breaths, inhaling and exhaling in equal measure, his eyes locked on a harmless flowering bush on a distant rise beyond the waterfall. His hands found their way to his knees as he took a meditative pose on instinct.

*Clearly, I cannot be Anakin’s Jedi Master. I don’t care what Master says. If I were half as good as*
she claimed, her Master Obi-Wan, then my padawan shouldn’t have fallen to the Dark. Hell! If I were a quarter as good!

“There is no emotion. There is peace.”

No. No, there’s no way I want to be a part of this. This is insanity. That’s what this is. Master has gone insane. The time travel must have done it. Or maybe… maybe I’m insane. Maybe this is just some kind of dream I’m having in a bacta tank. Maybe I was the one in the accident and when I wake up this will all just fade away.

“Yeah right,” Obi-Wan muttered to himself, not believing for a minute his mind had conjured up the idea. “And Master Yoda will grow wings next.”

Why is this happening to me? Why me and not someone else? Why not Depa? She’s Master Windu’s padawan and the only padawan in history to study Vaapad. Or Quinlan or Luminara? Why me? Why does it have to be me?

The frantic edge to his thoughts began to soften and some semblance of rationality returned.

How could I have done that to my master? How could I have just abandoned Ahsoka? She’s only just come out of the bacta tank. Why am I calling her “Ahsoka” like I’m not her padawan? It’s Master Ahsoka and I am Padawan Kenobi. I will not become this Master Obi-Wan she holds in such ridiculous esteem.

Softly, Obi-Wan chanted the Jedi Code, using the simple rhythm to guide his meditation.

“There is no emotion, there is peace.”

I cannot do this. I cannot be what she wants me to be.

“There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.”

I’ve already failed once and look at what happened.

“There is no passion, there is serenity.”

Maybe Anakin should just stay with Shmi and Satine.

“There is no chaos, there is harmony.”

Surely he would be safer there, hidden away on Mandalore, away from Palpatine.

“There is no death, there is the Force.”

And if he never becomes my padawan, if I never train him, then he could never fall to the Dark.

Obi-Wan liked the sound of that, of sending Anakin far away from him, the Jedi Order and the Senate, to the safety of Mandalore and the protection of House Kryze. Satine already doted on the boy and he had no doubt that Shmi would politely gut any Sith Lord who tried to harm a hair on her son’s head.

But most importantly, it would keep Anakin away from Obi-Wan and safe from his failures. Maybe when he was older, much, much older, he would seek out that Ezra Bridger his master had mentioned in her journal entries since he would not dare steal Kanan Jarrus from Deepa.

Yes, this is a good idea. I’ll… I’ll find some way to tell Master that…
What? What was he going to tell her?

Standing up, Obi-Wan looked out over the soothing, green landscape of the Room of a Thousand Fountains, trying to find the right words necessary to explain to his master that while he understood her mission, he could not be a part of it. He knew himself better than she did and Obi-Wan was certain that he was absolutely incapable of handling the destiny Ahsoka had laid at his feet.

“I’m sorry, Master. I can’t help in your crazy quest to save the future but would you mind still teaching me how to be a Jedi Knight?” Obi-Wan groaned aloud, smacking his face with his palm. “I’m sure that will go over just fine. Master won’t object at all.”

Deciding that a bit of a walk around the Temple would clear his head, Obi-Wan headed down the path that would lead him to the exit and back to the central area of the Temple.

Moving down the hallway, at now sedate pace, Obi-Wan was struck for a moment at how many beings lived and worked in the Jedi Temple. He passed a group of younglings eagerly chatting about their first lightsaber lesson, and then stepped around a clutch of knights discussing a fraught political situation out on the Mid Rim.

As he turned a corner, Obi-Wan could hear the raucous laughter of a group of mechanics and techs who were on their way home from a shift in the hangar bays. They bowed to a master who was headed off on his own mission, a Twi’lek padawan learner at her heels.

He passed the hallway that led to the Archives and could hear Master Nu lecturing someone on improper care of archive ephemera.

*The Temple is so full of life. There are so many different sentients here, all living together and striving so hard to protect the galaxy.*

Obi-Wan couldn’t fathom how anyone raised in the caring embrace of the Order would want to bring about its destruction, would want to snuff out the Light they strove to serve and protect.

*What could have driven Master Skywalker to such a heinous act? This was his home and the Jedi his family. I… I know Master is telling me the truth but it seems so utterly wrong.*

In the distance, Obi-Wan could hear the cheerful hum of the central atrium of the Temple, the large airy chamber around which the whole Order functioned. The atrium led off to the main entrance that faced south towards the Senate building, to the northern wing where most of the Jedi lived and studied, to the hangar bays and landing pads in the west, and to the Archive and the gardens in the east. Decorated by massive bronzium statues of ancient masters and circled by open walkways and balconies, the atrium was built under the central spire that the Jedi Council met in. The ceiling was held up by gracefully arched buttresses and everything seemed lit up by the Force itself as Coruscant’s weak sunlight was refracted through the jeweled stained glass windows that cast their most ancient Code and tenets onto the plushly carpeted floor below.

The central atrium was one of the things Obi-Wan thought of when he had pictured the Jedi Temple during his year-long excursion with Satine. It was full of light and color, of the spirits of his brother and sister Jedi, young and old, and it was home to Obi-Wan Kenobi. He could not imagine the galaxy without it. He could not understand how anyone raised in the Temple could ever truly want to destroy their holy place.
How can the Sith hate us that much?

As he turned the corner onto the airy walkways that crisscrossed the Atrium, Obi-Wan came face to face with a humanoid in white armor, painted with blue geometric designs. The man held a blaster rifle up to his face.

“Freeze, Jedi!” The soldier ordered, his voice harsh and mechanical through his helmet. “Hands where I can see them!”

Obi-Wan backed away, his hands darting to his lightsabers. Why was this strange man was in the Temple? How had he gotten past the visitor’s gate with a blaster?

“Drop the saber!” The man said, repeating his order. “Drop it now or I shoot!”

“Who are you?” Obi-Wan took a step back, his eyes never leaving the intruder. The more space between him and the enemy, the more precious time Obi-Wan would have to defend himself from an enemy attack. “How did you get in here? What’s going on?”

“I said drop it!” the mysterious figure shouted, bracing his forward foot and the butt of his gun against his shoulder. “Jedi scum!”

Obi-Wan’s eyes widened in horror: time ground to a halt and his muscles froze. He watched the soldier move his finger to the trigger, as Obi-Wan slowly, far too slowly, activated his blade.

The soldier fired, an explosion of light and heat headed straight for Obi-Wan’s heart.

It’s too fast! There’s no way I can block it in time!

The blaster bolt, and the three that immediately followed after it, screamed through Obi-Wan. He recoiled back and staggered away, raising a hand to his chest and struggling for air.

He shot me! I… No… What’s happening?

The soldier stood up a little, taking his blaster from his shoulder, and moved forward and right through Obi-Wan.

Like Obi-Wan wasn’t even there.

“What the hell?” Obi-Wan whispered, stunned to find that there wasn’t a single mark on his tunics, no sign of the shots he thought had just ended his life.

Over his shoulder, Obi-Wan saw his attacker standing in front of the body of another Jedi collapsed onto the floor, four smoking holes in his back and a dropped lightsaber at his side. Horrified, Obi-Wan watched as the soldier brought his blaster back up and fired a shot into the dead Jedi’s head.

“Stop! What are you doing?!” Obi-Wan shouted, his voice cracking as he ran over to his fallen brother Jedi.

But the soldier didn’t hear him, raising a hand to his helmet where his ear would be, listening before he answered. “Yes, sir! Moving to your position now.”

The man took off running and Obi-Wan chased after him. “Stop! Someone stop him! He just murdered a Jedi!”

The soldier ran down of the skyways. Obi-Wan followed after him, seeing more and more white-armored soldiers running out of the smaller hallways that fed into the atrium. They formed into two
lines, moving in unison until they came to an intersection. One half peeled off to run down the stairs, as the other half moved on ahead, ordering the Jedi they encountered to surrender, only to execute them no matter what the Jedi did.

No matter how he tried, Obi-Wan couldn’t make anyone hear him as he shadowed the group that was rushing down the central stairs, all of them firing on a pair of Jedi standing back to back, deflecting the attacks coming from all sides. Unwilling to watch more Jedi die, Obi-Wan charged the attackers, the blue-white line of his sabers cutting through his target’s rifle.

The blaster rifle remained unharmed. The soldiers kept on firing at the Jedi, another squad running up from behind to overpower them. With cries of pain they crumpled to the floor, back-to-back, their robes smoking and riddled with the scorches of blaster fire. One of the attackers kicked the dead Jedi’s lightsabers away, almost as if they worried they would rise from the dead.

“Clear and secure this floor,” one of the soldiers closest to Obi-Wan said. “Converge on the ground floor with General Skywalker.”

Did he just say General Skywalker?

Reaching out to grab the shoulder of the man giving orders, Obi-Wan watched as his hand passed through him, not even disturbing the faint line of smoke drifting sinuously upward from the barrel of his blaster. At a silent command the small squad of men in front of Obi-Wan turned in unison and ran off, scattering into small groups as they began to search the area for Jedi.

Where, where am I? When am I? Is this a vision of the future? Is this the sack of the Temple?

Obi-Wan stared around the central atrium, trying to wake up from the nightmare he was in the middle of. Everywhere he looked, the white soldiers were killing Jedi, brutally stamping out the Light one broken sentient at a time. There was no mercy as the soldiers mowed down young and old alike.

The Force screamed, a writhing howl of agony, as its children were executed in their own home. Obi-Wan stumbled down to a lower landing, his movements clumsy. In the distance he saw another squad of—What did Master Ahsoka call them? Clone troopers?—chasing a clutch of padawans out of a room, firing on them indiscriminately. One by one they dropped to the floor, padawans only a few years younger than Obi-Wan, their lives stolen before they ever had a chance to live them.

Driven on by a compulsion he didn’t understand, Obi-Wan moved toward the central spire that lead to the Council Room. He covered his ears to block out the piercing shriek of each death, to protect himself from the cries of children begging for their lives and the even worse the sound of silence that followed.

Stop! Stop! Make it stop, please!

The cacophony of war echoed fundamentally wrong in the place Obi-Wan had always associated with the peace and comfort of home. As emergency sirens and claxons screamed overhead, he felt in his spirit the pounding staccato of boots and the high-pitched whine of blaster fire. The growl of lightsabers slowly died out as the clone troopers worked with ruthless efficiency through the remaining Jedi in the Temple, no matter how old or young or wounded.

Betrayed by the men who were supposed to fight by their side and help them as they fought for the Republic and for civilization.

In the heart of the Temple Obi-Wan watched a Jedi Master dart out from a shadowed hallway, his
blade flashing around him, a brilliant emerald light, cutting troopers down effortlessly as he moved.

Obi-Wan quickly realized that the man was Master Cin Drallig and, for a brief instant, he had hope that the nightmare would change, that the Battlemaster would somehow turn the tide or at least escape the chaos.

Hope died in his chest at the appearance of a tall, dark figure, the hood over his head unable to hide the glow of poisonous sulfur eyes within. He stood there, proud and arrogant as he stared down Master Drallig, who shifted his stance carefully.

“This ends now,” Master Drallig said, locking eyes with his opponent.

The enemy canted his head to the side and ignited his blade, a brilliant and inexplicable blue. He pulled his hood back, shook out his dark, wavy hair and gave Master Drallig a cruel, heartless smile. “You’re so right.”

The younger man attacked with a skill and ferocity. Moving with the fluid grace of an apex predator, he fought with a power and fury unlike any Obi-Wan had ever experienced. Every blow he landed on the Battlemaster’s saber shook the Force around them like cannon fire.

Again and again they clashed, the younger man pushing Master Drallig back until he exposed a small flaw, a momentary weakness in the master’s defenses. The younger man struck, jamming his saber through Master Drallig’s chest and yanking it free as the Jedi collapsed dead before he hit the ground.

Revulsion rose up from Obi-Wan’s stomach as he watched the dark figure gaze down at the lifeless form of Master Drallig. The man reached out with the toe of his boot to roll the body over onto its back. Horrified, Obi-Wan saw the vacant eyes of the Battlemaster, his face forever trapped in a mask of pain and betrayal, a smoking hole where his heart had once been.

Stepping over the corpse of Master Drallig, the young man started to move away. Obi-Wan hurried after him, shouting, “Stop! Why are you doing this? Who are you?”

The figure paid Obi-Wan no heed as he strode past the dead bodies that littered the ground, moving silently through the charnel house that had once been the Jedi Temple into.

That had once been this man’s home.

“How could you do this?” Obi-Wan demanded, trailing after the man as if he were a planet being pulled by the star it circled. “Answer me, Anakin!”

At this, the young man suddenly looked up at the ceiling, as if he had heard Obi-Wan or, perhaps even worse, sensed a Jedi who had escaped his merciless slaughter.

He turned toward the central spire of the Temple, moving with resolute purpose toward the turbo lift. He paid no attention to the troopers moving around him, shouting orders as they locked down the Temple one by one with the deaths of all who were inside.

Obi-Wan followed the cloaked figure, Anakin-- *No, Darth Vader.*-- into the turbolift trying not to look at the bodies he stepped over. He looked away from a dark Kiffar who may or may not have had a golden stripe on his face, or the Mirilan woman with a master’s headdress.

The turbolift carried both Obi-Wan and Darth Vader upward, away from the sounds of chaos and carnage below. It was only then that Obi-Wan remembered where the lift was going to take them.
“What’s in the Council Room?” Obi-Wan asked Vader, unsurprised when the other figure did not respond. He hadn’t really expected him to.

With a soft chime, the turbolift announced their arrival on the uppermost floor, sliding open to reveal the empty circular antechamber and the doors to the Council Room beyond that. Vader stepped out of the lift, his blade extinguished but still clutched tightly in his hand. He looked from side to side, watching for a surprise attack.

Obi-Wan trailed after him, hoping for an ambush, that one of the masters from the Council had waited for Darth Vader. But no one was there and Vader passed through the darkened antechamber, lit only by wall sconces and the background glow of Coruscant.

Vader moved onward to the double doors of the Council Room, seemingly drawn there by the Force. Obi-Wan sensed a presence, on the other side, young and frightened, perhaps more than one given the emotion in the Force.

Obi-Wan hurried after Vader, as the Dark rose around him, a cold, ugly tide of bitter, unfeeling rage. “Stop! Please don’t do this.”

Vader did not hear or answer him.

As the doors slid open with a whisper to reveal the darkened room and the cityscape of Coruscant through the windows. Vader stepped through the doorway and Obi-Wan found himself frozen in place, unable to move or to speak.

Helpless, he watched as the shadow of Vader came to a stop a few feet inside the room. He stood there, his saber in hand as a small human boy walked into view, dread and panic rolling off of him in choppy waves through the Force.

“Please stop,” the little boy whispered to Vader and it was then that Obi-Wan could see the true horror unfolding in front of him.

Anakin Skywalker, the boy Obi-Wan had helped rescue on Tatooine, stood before Darth Vader, small and alone, with no one to protect him from the hideous future that awaited him.

“I don’t want this,” Anakin said, tears spilling down his cheeks.

Vader inhaled, the sleeve of his robe falling free as he ignited his blade, swinging it up and across his body. “This is all there is, young one.”

Vader let the blade fall as Anakin stared up at it, the blue-white light of the weapon reflected in the young boy’s eyes.

Obi-Wan screamed.

“ANAKIN!”

Jerking out of his vision, Obi-Wan found himself standing in a quiet nondescript hallway, gasping for air. He collapsed against the pale stone wall and, sliding to the ground, tried to gather his spirit back within himself. He felt like someone had taken pieces of his soul and scattered them through the
Force, leaving Obi-Wan struggling to bring all the shards of himself back together.

The hallway was quiet, sound muffled by the rug beneath Obi-Wan where he sat. He stared blankly at the brown and gold decorations, his eyes taking in the patterns but not truly seeing them. He could still hear the screams of the dying Jedi, could feel the piercing agonies of their death in his soul. Obi-Wan tried to block out the images, telling himself that it was just a glimpse of the past and not the future pre-ordained by the Force.

There was still time.

Master Ahsoka’s past was not yet his or the Jedi Order’s future.

Clarity returned to him and he wondered why the hallway felt so familiar. In the distance he could hear the din of a busier section of the Temple, the faint laughter of excited younglings, the boisterous pride of new Jedi Knights, and the faint roar of ships leaving for destinations unknown.

Gazing up at the wall opposite from him, Obi-Wan admired the elegant sconces in a daze, the way they were designed to look like a natural outgrowth. He let his head fall back against the wall and tried to place himself in his mental map of the Temple.

*If I’m close enough to hear the hangar bay, then these must be storage rooms. I used to cut through here when I was… late to class.*

Obi-Wan let out a shaky sigh. “That’s why this place is so familiar.”

Carefully pushing himself upright, Obi-Wan thought back to that fateful day, his memories overlapping the present moment. He had crashed head first into Master Ahsoka, knocking them both over.

*I liked her right away,* Obi-Wan thought was he walked toward the end of the hallway, and the central areas of the Temple. *And not just because she was a shadow. I knew there was a connection between us. I could feel it even then. Maybe that’s why we’ve been so successful. Because we had known each other before.*

*Because we’re both connected to… Anakin!*

A sudden fear overwhelmed Obi-Wan as the last image of his vision took center stage in his mind.

Obi-Wan had stood helpless behind the dark, merciless shadow of Darth Vader with his to cut down the tiny boy that was the Anakin Skywalker that Obi-Wan knew.

Darth Vader was going to kill Shmi’s small son, her Little Dragon and the toddler who slept curled up in Obi-Wan’s robe, who called him Obi-friend. Darth Vader wanted to kill the child who Satine already adored and who Master Ahsoka had sold her lightsabers to rescue from horrors of slavery.

The little boy Obi-Wan Kenobi already knew he loved more than he had any logical reason to.

*Anakin. I have to find Anakin. I have to make sure he’s safe. I have to find him right now.*

When several comms to Satine, her home, and the Mandalorian embassy went unanswered, Obi-Wan decided to reach out with the Force, trusting that it would guide him toward the tiny supernova
that was Anakin Skywalker.

Obi-Wan closed his eyes and imagined the Force washing over him, imagined himself sinking into the cool, clear depths of the binding energy of the galaxy.

Shutting his mind to the familiar life and light in the Temple, Obi-Wan turned his gaze outward, letting the Force unspool from his presence like a spring river, near to flooding from a winter thaw. _Find Anakin_, the Force seemed to whisper, or perhaps it was Obi-Wan. It was hard to tell.

The torrent of energy and will rushed outwards, practically flying over Coruscant. Obi-Wan could feel the teeming lives of the city-planet, all the distant points of light as he stretched ever farther, desperate to find one bright bonfire in the midst of a sea of flickering candles.

_Anakin... where are you? Why can’t I find you? Anakin!_

Worry started to fray Obi-Wan’s concentration, to darken the edge of the golden wave of energy that was his search for Anakin. Obi-Wan told himself to ignore the fear, but the longer his mental search went on, the stronger it grew until it was thrown back in a piercing flash of light, almost like a saber igniting in the darkness.

“Anakin!” Obi-Wan said, relief through him. His little friend was somewhere in the Senate complex, with his mother and Satine.

Opening his eyes and taking a calming breath, Obi-Wan ran for the nearby hangar bay and a citybike to take him to the Senate Complex.

To call the complex that housed the Galactic Senate a single building would be a gross oversimplification. There was of course the Senate Rotunda, where the representatives of systems and districts met to do the difficult work of democracy, but there were also countless smaller buildings and satellite complexes situated around the Rotunda. The complex as a whole had its own system of mass transit that could take senators, citizens and workers from one side of the district to the other without ever leaving the domain of the Senate.

Airspace over the Senate Rotunda was carefully regulated and Obi-Wan lowered his citybike into a long row of automatic parking cages.

He hurried out into the mess of civilization that was all streaming toward the Senate Rotunda. Beings from every corner of the Republic could be seen making their way to the nearest tram station, others calling for hired speeders and some trying to fight their way through on foot. There were street vendors selling all types of hot, portable breakfast options and all the forms of legal liquid stimulants the denizens of the galaxy could create.

Obi-Wan fell in line behind a pair of middle aged Twi’lek women, who were chatting amicably about a holodrama show they were both a fan of. As the line to board the tram moved them forwards, one turned around and let out a startled gasp as she took in the sight of a lone Jedi Padawan Learner behind her.

“Oh! Master Jedi!” the purple Twi’lek woman said, her hand going to her heart. “Please forgive me. I didn’t see you were there. Please, you can cut ahead of us. I’m sure you have important matters to attend to.”
Obi-Wan was going to refuse, to wait politely in line but the purple and green Twi’lek women made such a fuss over him that they drew the attention of the security agent at the turnstile. A large, burly Besalisk, the agent waved Obi-Wan over, pulling open a gate for him. “Good Morning, Master Jedi. On your way to a meeting at the Senate?”

Nodding a little, Obi-Wan looked at the agent suspiciously, worried that he had somehow fallen into another vision or perhaps a dream of his master’s past. “Yes, I am following up on a mission I completed.”

The Besalisk did not find that strange and world didn’t catch fire, so Obi-Wan decided he had to be awake. The agent was just doing a favor for a Jedi, who were still rare and exotic even on diverse and cosmopolitan Coruscant.

“Where was your mission to?” the agent asked as he scanned Obi-Wan’s identification card. “To the edge of the galaxy I bet.”

The rote small talk was painful as a voice in Obi-Wan’s head kept repeating Anakin’s name over and over again, insisting they did not have time to talk to the portly being. They had to go find Anakin now and making nice with some random stranger was a waste of time.

Obi-Wan told himself that he was never too busy to be polite to another sentient. “My mission was originally to Mandalore but we somehow ended up on Tatooine.”

“Tatooine, huh?” the Besalisk smiled in a terrifying display of mirth. “I have a cousin who spent some time on Tatooine. He’s retired but he didn’t have much to say about the sand. Loved the pod races though.”

“They can be very exciting,” Obi-Wan agreed, thanking the Force for the intercom announcement that the next tram was pulling into the station. “If you’ll excuse me, I have to be going.”

With the faintest gesture of a salute, Obi-Wan jogged off to the shortest tram line, trying to sense Anakin’s location as he moved through the sea of beings around him.

While Anakin was much closer than he had been at the Temple, Obi-Wan was still frustrated by a lack of clarity. He couldn’t quite pin down where exactly Anakin was, nor could he articulate how to best get to the boy. All Obi-Wan could do was rely on the Force and the Force told him he needed to get on the crowded tram and let it carry him to the Rotunda.

Obi-Wan quietly boarded, his hood pulled up and was neatly squashed between a Pantoran gentleman and a very loud group of students. They paid little attention to Obi-Wan but there was an Iridonian woman across the way who kept looking at him, her eyes darted from his hood to his waist and back again, like she was looking for his sabers.

Inhaling, Obi-Wan closed his eyes and tried to focus on the unique halo of light and energy that was Anakin, feeling a wave of relief as the tram carried him closer. The longer it took Obi-Wan to find Anakin, the worse his fear grew, even as he tried to tell himself that the boy was fine. There was no way Darth Vader could have traveled back in time, like Master Ahsoka had, to kill Anakin Skywalker.

*I’m being hysterical. This isn’t going to help anyone at all.*

*Calm. I need to be calm.*

Obi-Wan recited the Code to himself, knowing that if he could regain control of his riotous emotions, it would be easier to find Anakin.
The tram passed through a tunnel and as they came out the other side, Obi-Wan saw they were only a stop away from the entrance to Grand Republic Plaza, a wide pedestrian walkway that was a popular starting point for tours of the Senate Rotunda.

*He’s nearby. I can almost hear him.*

There was a faint hum in the Force, like the distant growl of a speeder engine that was far off on the horizon. Obi-Wan politely but firmly made his way to the door, leaning against the window to see if he could make out any familiar landmarks.

The tram slowed to a stop and the doors whisked open. Obi-Wan bolted out of the car, hurrying toward the stairs and rushing down them as quickly as the midday crowd would allow. There were a lot of polite “Excuse me!”s and “Pardon me, coming through!”s as he made it to the ground level.

Running towards the exit gate, Obi-Wan decided that he didn’t have time to waste standing in line for the exit gate. He spotted an empty gate and changed course toward it, slapping both hands on the chromium covered top of the barriers as he effortlessly vaulted over them.

“Sorry!” Obi-Wan yelled back at an attendant who protested his reckless gate crashing. “Jedi business!”

Obi-Wan loped up the stairs which would lead up onto the wide circular promenade that was bisected by the Grand Republic Plaza, which lead to the heart of the Senate Complex and the main entrance of the Senate Rotunda. It was lined with statues of famous heroes of the Republic and during the day a wide variety of beings could be seen strolling along the plaza.

Obi-Wan hurried down the wide sidewalk, making his way past small groups of tourists and staffers. One of the other smaller roads that led to the Rotunda was host to a small gathering of beings listening to a guide. Beyond that was a transport speeder unloading a group of school children and he heard the familiar siren wail of police droids. For a moment, Obi-Wan worried that the droids were coming after him for jumping a turnstile but then the Force gave out a cry and Obi-Wan forgot all about them.

Turning in the direction the Force bid, Obi-Wan found himself running parallel to the Rotunda, dodging and weaving around a slow-moving group of senatorial aides and junior representatives and other staffers, who jumped out of the young Jedi’s way. They whispered to themselves as he passed, wondering just what it was that could make a Jedi bolt through a crowd like that.

*Anakin! Where are you, Little Dragon?* He sent ahead as the sirens faded, chasing someone else.

*I have to find him. I have to make sure he’s safe.*

Obi-Wan came to a stop at another intersection of a smaller plaza and the promenade. The Force was now silent, leaving only the hum of Anakin’s presence but nothing else to help Obi-Wan locate him. No amount of focusing or stretching out into the Force seemed to help him, and his fear and anxiety grew worse.

“Where are you?” Obi-Wan muttered to himself, hurrying over to a small bench on the sidewalk and hopping up to get a better view. “I know you’re here but why can’t I find you?”

Stepping off the bench, Obi-Wan was about to take off running again when he felt a cool, sweet breeze dance past him. He pulled his hood down and let the air take some of the heat from his neck: it reminded Obi-Wan of the ocean and he took a moment to calm his jangled nerves as a voice in his head whispered words of comfort to him.
Relax. Take a deep breath. You will find him.

You always do.

Obi-Wan decided to heed the wisdom of the voice without thinking too deeply on where it came from. After his vision in the Temple and his rush to the Senate complex, Obi-Wan was just about done with the Force taking an active interest in his daily life. But Obi-Wan knew sage advice when he heard it and tried to slow his breathing, releasing his fear and anxiety into the Force.

Trust in the Force and all will be well, Obi-Wan told himself as he scanned the crowds, unsure of what exactly he was looking for.

“OBI-WAN!”

Spinning around, Obi-Wan saw Anakin stumbling through the crowd, darting around legs and smaller droids as he ran, wrapped up in a brown Jedi robe with the ends gathered up in his hands. His blue eyes were round with worry, his cheeks flushed with exertion as he stopped to take a better hold of the robe he was in.

Obi-Wan sprinted over and caught him up into his arms. “Anakin! Oh thank the Force you’re safe! I was so worried about you.”

Anakin clung tightly to Obi-Wan, hiding his face against his shoulder. “I missed you. It’s too loud and I need Obi-friend!”

“I’m here now,” Obi-Wan murmured, smoothing Anakin’s hair as he carried him over to a bench that was just off the busy street. Settling Anakin on his lap, Obi-Wan wrapped his mental shields around Anakin, making sure to build them high enough to keep all the unwanted noise of Coruscant out. “How did you get here? Where are your mother and Satine?”

Anakin let out a sniff, his lower lip quivering. “Mama and ‘Tine are too slow. I heard you. An’... An’... I saw the bad man.”

A sudden chill seized Obi-Wan’s heart.

Vader.

“The bad man?” Obi-Wan echoed, tucking a curly lock of hair away from Anakin’s face. “What did he look like?”

Anakin fretted with the folds of brown linen in his hands. “Big and dark and... scary. He wore black and he was tall and he was...”

Words failed Anakin but he sent an image of a roaring bonfire that was devouring a shadowy figure. The Burning Man who did not die.

Anakin’s recollection sharpened. The Burning Man took on the more solid form of Darth Vader, hooded and stinking of death as he strode into the Council Room. Darth Vader raised his saber and growled something that came out in a mechanical bass that sounded more like a machine than the young man speaking.

“This is all there is.”

The blade in Darth Vader’s hand began to fall and Anakin’s memory ended, leaving both him and Obi-Wan shaken.
Anakin curled closer, trying to hide from the vision they had shared. His spirit felt hot and prickly in the Force, like a sandstorm swirling to life out on the dunes of Tatooine, throwing out red heat lighting in an instinctual attempt to protect his young psyche from what he had seen. Sniffling, tears pooling in the corners of his eyes, Anakin took a hold of Obi-Wan’s robe and looked up at him, his face a mask of misery. “Why is he bad, Obi-Wan?”

Sighing, Obi-Wan brushed Anakin’s tears away. “He hurt people, Anakin. He… He hurt many people and enjoyed it. The Burning Man… he…”

Obi-Wan considered for a moment telling Anakin that Darth Vader had hurt Ahsoka, but decided that the boy wouldn’t be able to handle that kind of truth. Not now and possibly not ever. Obi-Wan could barely handle what he learned from Ahsoka’s datapad and he was eighteen.

“The Burning Man decided that what he wanted was more important than anyone else in the galaxy,” Obi-Wan said, deciding that was a simple enough explanation of a Sith Lord. “And he… he thought he needed to hurt people to get what he wanted.”

Nodding, Anakin rubbed at his nose and patiently let Obi-Wan wipe the drying tears from his cheeks. “But he didn’t. He… he was sad. I could feel it.”

Obi-Wan frowned and canted his head to the side, curious to hear Anakin’s interpretation of the vision. “You think he was sad?”

“Oh huh,” Anakin said, clutching at Obi-Wan’s collars and wrinkling their pristine lines in his worry. “I heard him. He said… he said…”

Stymied by strength of his emotions, Anakin pushed the last bits of their shared vision to the forefront of Obi-Wan’s mind. Vader’s blade came to a halt only a few inches from Anakin’s neck.

Anakin, terrified and helpless, looked up at Darth Vader, his sulfurous yellow eyes focused on his younger self. As the light started to white out the edges of the vision, Obi-Wan heard Vader whisper softly to Anakin.

“I don’t want to do this. Please… please help me.”

Dumbstruck, Obi-Wan pulled away from his memory and Anakin’s to look down at him, confused. “That’s what he said to you?”

Anakin nodded, his blue eyes big and round, like he had been forced to admit to a terrible secret. “Uh huh. An’ he’s sad. Really sad. And scared too.”

Obi-Wan listened, pulling Anakin back against his shoulder, hugging the boy tight as he tried to make sense of the terrifying figure of Darth Vader begging a toddler for help. It didn’t make logical sense. Perhaps there was more to it than just a simple request for help?

“You’re overthinking things again, Obi-Wan.”

A cool, sweet breeze danced through the promenade, ruffling elaborate hairstyles, billowing skirts and taking the edge off Anakin’s feverish spirit as he sat safe in Obi-Wan’s arms. He let out a sigh of relief and curled against Obi-Wan.

“Are you gonna help him?” Anakin asked softly after Obi-Wan remained silent for a long moment.

Obi-Wan frowned, stroking Anakin’s back as he stared out at nothing. “I… I don’t know if I know how to. I’m just a padawan and he is a Sith Lord.”
Anakin started to squirm in Obi-Wan’s arms. “But he’s alone. You have to help! You have to!”

“I didn’t say I wasn’t going to try,” Obi-Wan explained as he turned his gaze back to Anakin. “I said I don’t know how. The Burning Man is…”

You. He’s you, Anakin. And I cannot imagine what horrible events in his life led to the tragedy of Darth Vader and the fall of the Jedi Order.

“Complicated,” Obi-Wan said, now looking at a distant point far away. “The Burning Man is complicated. I…I want to help. I do. I just…I don’t know how.”

How can I protect you from yourself? How do I stop you from Falling when I don’t even know why you Fell in the first place?

What if I do this all wrong and it just makes everything worse?

Anakin waited patiently as Obi-Wan worked through his thoughts and fears, letting the edges of his spirit mingle with Obi-Wan’s. His utter faith and belief in Obi-Wan was a soothing balm to one so caught in the unrelenting worries about the future.

As another gust of wind blew through the promenade, smelling faintly of the ocean, Obi-Wan heard the strange voice again.

What if you don’t?

The image of Darth Vader slaughtering Cin Drallig flashed through his mind, as did the fallen bodies of his friends and mentors, Vader stepping over them and his burning shadow sweeping into the darkness.

Obi-Wan knew what would happen if he didn’t try to stop the Burning Man.

The Burning Man would destroy the Anakin Skywalker Obi-Wan loved. Darth Vader would take away his Little Dragon and destroy him just as he had the other Jedi in Obi-Wan’s vision. It wouldn’t matter that Anakin’s body would technically be alive.

Anakin Skywalker would be dead and Darth Vader would rise, casting the Order, the Republic and the Galaxy into darkness once more.

I won’t let that happen. Not this time. I swear it.

“Obi-Wan?” Anakin murmured, yawning a little as his warm presence spread out in the Force, calling Obi-Wan back to the present moment. “Please help?”

Leaning back to look down at Anakin, Obi-Wan nodded with a weak smile. “I will help him. I…I don’t know how yet. Perhaps Master Ahsoka will know but I will help him any way I can.”

“You promise?” Anakin asked, a bit suspicious, because it had taken Obi-Wan so long to make up his mind.

“I promise,” Obi-Wan said, patting Anakin’s back. “And I promise I won’t let the Burning Man hurt you anymore. I’ll keep you safe from him, I swear it.”

Anakin nodded solemnly at Obi-Wan’s words before whispering, “I’m scared, Obi-Wan.”

“I know,” Obi-Wan murmured, hugging his small friend. “I am too. But it’s okay to be afraid, Little Dragon. You can be afraid and still help people. I do it all the time.”
“You do?” Anakin asked, his voice heavy with fear. “All the time?”

Nodding, Obi-Wan closed his eyes. “I was scared when I went on my first mission with my Master. I was scared on Tatooine when I tried to protect you and Satine. I was scared on Maerai Prime. And... I am scared right now.”

“Oh,” Anakin mumbled, still as he listened to his older and wiser friend. “You are?”

“Yes, I am,” Obi-Wan said, tilting Anakin’s chin up so he could look him in the eye. “But I have you and I have Master Ahsoka and my friends. So I will try my very best to protect you and help the Burning Man. Will you try your very best as well?”

Anakin looked at Obi-Wan and for a moment, the older boy got the feeling that Anakin was somehow both looking at him and looking through him. It was a strange sensation to get from such a young child, but Obi-Wan was starting to get used to all the weird things that happened around Anakin Skywalker.

“Yes, I will,” Anakin decided with a firm head nod. “I will help too.”

“Good,” Obi-Wan grinned, leaning over to give Anakin a kiss on his forehead. “Now, that that’s settled, let’s go find your mother and Satine. They have to be out of their minds with worry and--”

“I found him!” a voice hissed him. “Don’t move, you freak! Put the boy down or I’ll shoot!”

Anakin hid his face in the elder’s brown robes. “Sorry, Obi-friend.”

Holding up his free hand, Obi-Wan cautiously replied. “Don’t shoot, please. I mean no harm to you or to Anakin. I swear it. I’m going to turn around now. Anakin is perfectly safe with me. I am--”

By the time he had finished turning around, Obi-Wan saw that he was staring at a surprised Bo-Katan Kryze pointing a wrist blaster at him and looking like she had been a few seconds away from shooting him in the back. “Oh! Hello there, Bo-Katan.”

A pudgy little hand emerged from the brown bundle of robes and dark honey curls in Obi-Wan’s arms, which was quickly followed by a pair of sky blue eyes and a penitent expression. “Su’cuy, Big Dragon.”

Bo-Katan let out a breath, relaxing as she punched up the com embedded in her wrist blaster. “I found them. Northern intersection of Representative way and the Grand Promenade. And he’s found a friend.”

“A friend?! Satine Kryze’s anxious voice crackled through the com. “How can he have found a friend? He’s not even three.”

“Trust me, he’s fine,” Bo-Katan smirked, cutting off the com. She turned to look back at Anakin and Obi-Wan, her arms crossed over her chest. “Oh you two are in SO much trouble. You’ll need new ears by the time Satine and Shmi get done with you.”

“It’s nice to see you too, Bo-Katan,” Obi-Wan replied, bowing a little as Anakin continued to try to hide in his robes. “I do apologize for scaring you and your family. I... I had a Force vision and felt compelled to…”

Holding up a hand, Bo-Katan shook her head, her green eyes twinkling. “Nope. I don’t need to hear it. You can explain your strange jetüb kebise to my sister and Shmi when they get her, which should be right about now.”
“ANAKIN?!”

“OBI-WAN KENOBI, IS THAT YOU?”

Obi-Wan and Anakin exchanged glances and there was a moment of perfect clarity between them as they shared an image of Obi-Wan tossing Anakin over one shoulder, the two of them running away from Shmi and Satine’s very understandable anger at Anakin’s apparent disappearance.

“Oh Anakin!” Shmi gasped as she hurried past Bo-Katan, who was only too pleased to step out of the way. “Ani, how could you do that to me? I was so scared. I thought I had lost you forever!”

Obi-Wan let Shmi reclaim her son with a bowed head and murmured apology, watching as Shmi covered Anakin’s face with kisses, holding him close against her chest and hugging him tightly. “I am sorry if he frightened you. The Force has been… unusually active these past few days.”

Shmi was going to say that it was more than alright that Anakin had found his way to Obi-Wan when Satine in her voluminous formal robes finally made her way to their side, a small entourage of guards and aides at her heels including Didia. “Obi-Wan Kenobi! What is the meaning of this? Are you often in the habit of scaring me and Shmi out of minds? We thought someone had kidnapped Anakin, or worse! A true Jedi Knight would at least have the decency to com us when he was in the area!”

Obi-Wan bowed sheepishly. “I humbly apologize if my presence led Anakin astray. I… today… Master Ahsoka is awake and I think I had a Force vision and… Nevermind. Bo-Kat is right. This is weird jetiib kebise . What brings you to the Senate?”

“We’re were here for an interview to grant Shmi and Anakin permanent residency in the Republic,” Satine explained, deciding that she was done being cross with Obi-Wan given everything he had just said. “It went well but enough of that. Tell us about Master Ahsoka. How is she?”

Obi-Wan found himself explaining how his master had woken in the bacta tank. He was about to share the instructions Master Shode had given him when his stomach let out a low growl of hunger and Anakin popped out of his nest of robes to tell Obi-Wan’s stomach that it was too loud. The group shared a laugh, breaking the worst of the tension in Obi-Wan’s soul.

“Perhaps, we might find somewhere nearby to eat?” Shmi suggested with a smile. “I’m sure Anakin will be hungry soon.”

“I wouldn’t want to burden you,” Obi-Wan tried to protest but Satine cut him off.

“It will be no trouble at all,” Satine insisted. “And besides, you owe us some entertainment after you scared us all half to death.”

Realizing there was no polite way out of lunch, Obi-Wan resigned himself to an afternoon of motherly concern and friendly scolding as he began to detail what his master’s recovery would look like.

Before they left, Obi-Wan sent a message to Ahsoka, unsure of what to say but feeling the first glint of hope since the morning began. I’m with Anakin and family and will be back late. Mandalore sends its love.

Anakin wriggled an arm free from his mother’s hold and reached out for Obi-Wan, who took his hand, squeezing it.

I’m here, Little Dragon. I will always be here.
It was late when Obi-Wan reluctantly managed to tear himself away from House Kryze. They spent the afternoon in a restaurant Didia had picked out, alternately talking about Ahsoka’s recovery and the strange Force vision Obi-Wan and Anakin had shared.

A very loose version that both Obi-Wan and Anakin had somehow wordlessly agreed to. They did not share words like Obi-Wan did with his master but there was a bond there, strong and pure, like sunlight sparkling on water.

After lunch, Satine insisted that Obi-Wan return with them to her home in the Garden District because she was worried that Obi-Wan was going to have another “episode” and didn’t want Anakin trying to “hail a hired speeder to play jetti tag with you.”

“I am fairly certain Anakin is not yet capable of calling a speeder, Satine,” Obi-Wan had observed dryly as they sat in her home. “Surely someone would stop him.”

“Yesterday he managed to lock himself in the linen closet,” Shmi laughed softly, stroking Anakin’s head as he lay asleep against her on the sofa. “Thankfully Didia was close by and helped him out. Azul’ir blessed us with her.”

Didia turned bright red and tried not to smile as she worked on some correspondence for Satine. “My parents had twins so I’m used to little ones being underfoot.”

“Well that’s good, because Anakin has as much energy as twins,” Bo-Katan said, her mouth quirked in a smile. “Wouldn’t you agree, Cousin?”

Bo-Katan looked over her shoulder, inviting Pre into the conversation. He was sitting in a corner frowning at a datapad in one hand, a glass of liquor in the other largely ignoring them. It was clear to Obi-Wan that Bo-Katan looked up to Pre, no doubt from his heroics when they were attacked on Kalevala.

Knowing what he now knew, there was a part of Obi-Wan that chafed at the idea there was little he could do at the moment to stop Pre. Obi-Wan had no evidence of Pre interacting with Culling Blade and he knew that if he brought it up, it would only cause strife between him and the Kryze family. It would have to wait, as so many things would.

Pre did not see Obi-Wan off when he took his leave of the Kryze and Skywalker family long after the weak sun of Coruscant had set. Shmi hugged him, thanking again for finding Anakin. Bo-Katan gave him a smart salute and told that if he wasn’t careful, she would have to shoot him next time.

“Understood, my fierce Mandalorian foe,” Obi-Wan bowed gallantly. “You must protect your House and Clan, of course.”

Bo-Katan smilled in agreement. “See you around, jetii !”

As her sister loped back up into the house, Satine shook her head, a bemused happiness on her face. “You two are incorrigible. You will both single-handedly revive the ancient feud between our people at this rate.”

Shmi snorted at that, raising an eyebrow. “And you two will end it just as fast.”
Satine let out a gasp, turning bright red as Obi-Wan cleared his throat and pointedly looked away. “Shmi Skywalker! Really! And in front of Anakin too?”

Anakin giggled, hiding his face against his mother’s neck, making it clear that while he did not quite understand what Satine was upset about, he was not going to take a side in this matter.

“He will understand one day,” Shmi replied, her eyes twinkling in the streetlights. “But we should let Obi-Wan go. He has to go check on Master Ahsoka. Say good night to him, Ani.”

Obi-Wan waved as Anakin peeked out from his mother’s embrace and smiled shyly. “Good night, Little Dragon. Sweet dreams to you and your family.”


Left alone, Obi-Wan wondered if there was going to be an awkward moment between them when Satine grabbed his hands, giving him a level stare.

“I do not know what happened today and I know I cannot help but I want you to promise me something,” Satine said, her voice firm. “Promise me you and Master Ahsoka will always be there to help Anakin when he needs it. Promise me, Obi-Wan.”

Obi-Wan nodded, a bit surprised to hear such a sentiment coming from Satine. “Y-yes, of course. I promise. We promise.”

Appeased for the moment, Satine let his hands go and took a step back. “Good. I’m glad to hear that. Now hurry back to your Temple and inform Master Ahsoka that we wish her a fast recovery and all the best. Make sure you send me updates on her health. She is a friend of Mandalore and I insist on you keeping us well informed.”

Obi-Wan found a smile at her tone, bowing. “Yes, Your Grace. I am only too happy to be of service in this matter.”

“Thank you, Master Jedi,” Satine replied, looking as if her nerves had suddenly gotten the better of her. “Well… Good night, Obi-Wan.”

“Good night, Satine,” Obi-Wan said as he walked down to his citybike and swung a leg over the seat. “I’ll com you when Master is up for a status report.”

“Excellent,” Satine said, as the engine of his bike roared to life. “Good night! Drive safely!”

Saluting, Obi-Wan kicked away from the curb and headed back to the Temple.

The Temple lighting had shifted to the colors preferred by nocturnal Jedi, who were fewer in number but just as and friendly when Obi-Wan passed them in the hallway on the way to the healers wing. He stopped at the front desk, where he was told that visiting hours were over and Nurse Solva had left specific instructions that Obi-Wan was to return to his room to get some sleep. Also that she expected him back in time for breakfast the next day.

Happy to acquiesce once he felt Ahsoka was asleep through their bond, Obi-Wan made his way to
his rooms, collapsing into an exhausted sprawl on the top of his bed. All Obi-Wan had the energy for was to call his chrono to his hand and set his alarm for the next day.

Ahsoka woke slowly, her awareness fuzzy from sleep and exhaustion. She could hear the steady hum of the equipment around her, could sense the distant background glow of the Temple beyond her room, but there was something else. Something bright, yet soft, like the banked embers of a fire and a familiar smell like tea and honey.

Groaning as she rolled onto her back, Ahsoka struggled to open her eyes and make out the vaguely human-shaped figure at her bedside. For a moment, she thought it might have been her master and that she had woken up in another dream, but the scent of tea was too strong for Anakin Skywalker and besides, the face that was swimming into focus looked nothing like her master.

“Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka whispered, her voice sounding more shocked than she had intended it to be. “What… what are you doing here?”

“At this present moment?” Obi-Wan asked. “My long overdue astro-navigation homework. You will not be surprised to find out that I am suddenly very interested in the Rishi Maze and successfully navigating my way through the dwarf galaxy.”

Confused, Ahsoka managed to croak out, “I don’t understand. What’s in the Rishi Maze?”

“It’s not what’s in the Maze, but what’s nearby,” Obi-Wan explained, putting a datapad to the side and moving to sit by her. He wrapped his arms around Ahsoka’s shoulders and helped her sit up, holding her as he piled up enough pillows behind her to support a Hutt. “I should like to point out that Kamino is still in the Archives at the moment.”

“Kamino?” Ahsoka repeated, wondering if she was hearing him right. “You’re navigating through the Rishi Maze to Kamino? Why Kamin… oh.”

Ahsoka looked over at Obi-Wan, who turned away and back with a mug of tea for her. She took it in both hands, staring down at the amber liquid as she struggled to find the right words. “You looked up Kamino in the Archives?”

“Yes, I did,” Obi-Wan said into his own mug of tea, looking down for a moment. “Not at all what I imagined a planet full of cloners to look like. But I have it on good authority that’s what they do out there.”

Ahsoka watched as Obi-Wan’s gaze shifted to meet her own, his slate blue eyes serious. Still exhausted and fuzzy-headed, Ahsoka studied her padawan’s face, trying to understand what he meant beyond the simple conversation they were having.

“I’m sorry, Obi-Wan,” Ahsoka finally confessed. “I don’t… I don’t understand what you’re trying to say.”

Pursing his lips, Obi-Wan set his tea aside and turned to Ahsoka, placing her tea next to his before taking her hands. She watched him frown at her fingers, covering her hands with his. Ahsoka wondered when her padawan’s hands had gotten bigger, when the boy who had followed at her heels had turned into the young man she saw before her now.
And why hadn’t she noticed the change happening?

“I had a vision yesterday,” Obi-Wan began, his tone carefully measured as he spoke. “I believe it was a vision of your past, of the sack of the Temple. I even saw Darth Vader.”

Ahsoka sucked in a cold, weak gasp of air. “You saw him? Here? In the Temple?”

“In my vision, yes,” Obi-Wan said, squeezing her hands. “I saw the clones and I saw Vader. He wasn’t much older than I am now and when I followed him to the Council Room, Anakin was there. Our Anakin, the little boy we saved on Tatooine.”

“What happened?” Ahsoka asked, shock pushing aside her fatigue and worry. “Are you all right? Did Vader say anything to you?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. He didn’t. But he did say something to Anakin and then he tried to kill him.”

Ahsoka grimaced. “That’s horrible. What happened?”

“I woke up and ran off to find Anakin. He helped me understand what I saw, what we both saw.”

“Anakin shared your vision?” Ahsoka gaped, stunned and yet not that Obi-Wan and Anakin already had developed such a strong connection in the Force. “What did Anakin say?”

“He told me he wants to help the Burning Man,” Obi-Wan explained, a gentle, hesitant smile on his face as he looked down at their overlapping hands. “And he told me he was scared.”

Ahsoka nodded, her worry for Anakin as strong as Obi-Wan’s. “I can imagine he would be. And what about you?”

“I told him I was scared too,” Obi-Wan murmured, not looking up at Ahsoka, his brows furrowed. “But that I will help the Burning Man and that I will keep Anakin safe from him as well.”

Deep in Ahsoka’s heart, the tight vise of fear and worry started to ease, just a little, at Obi-Wan’s words. “You will?”

Obi-Wan looked up at Ahsoka and smiled, nodding as he spoke. “Yes. I will.”

Hope bloomed in Ahsoka’s spirit and she found tears welling up. “Obi-Wan, I… I don’t know what to say.”

Obi-Wan’s gaze fell away from Ahsoka’s face as he thought about what to say next. She wanted so desperately to hug him, to reassure herself that this was real, that her Obi-Wan was here and this wasn’t another vision. Ahsoka had wondered what this moment would be like for so long that it was almost impossible to fathom that it was actually happening. She had never pictured them having this discussion while she was in bed recovering from a near-death experience, but the Force, and her destiny, worked in mysterious ways.

*I don’t care how it happens. All that matters is Obi-Wan and what he wants.*

*All I can do is try to be the best master I can be and hope one day I’ll earn his trust back.*

“Obi-Wan?” Ahsoka asked softly when it was clear her padawan was still crafting the best combination of words to explain whatever was going on behind his grey-blue eyes and impeccable shields. “Are you sure this is what you want to do? It’s not going to be easy. And there’s no
guarantee we’ll succeed.”

He looked up, his brows knitted together in a serious frown that was so utterly and completely Obi-Wan, both her padawan and her grandmaster.

“Of course this is what I want to do,” Obi-Wan said. “I will not let that happen to Anakin, to my Anakin.”

Ahsoka had no words: all she could do was wait as Obi-Wan worked through the decision before him.

“I will not let this Darth Sidious destroy the Jedi Order,” Obi-Wan continued, his voice growing stronger. “I don’t care how difficult it will be. I will not let the Dark Side steal away our Little Dragon and turn him into that monster I saw in my vision.”

“I’m so sorry I didn’t tell you sooner,” Ahsoka said. “I know I should never have lied to you about my past but I… couldn’t put that on your shoulders. You were so young and I just wanted to protect you from all of this, for as long as I could. I hope one day you can forgive me.”

Ahsoka bowed her head, knowing that only Obi-Wan would know when that day would be.

“I will, Master,” Obi-Wan murmured.

The perfectly smooth walls of ice that kept her padawan’s spirit hidden from her in the Force started to melt away. “I’m still… hurt that you didn’t tell me sooner but I understand why you didn’t. And in your defense, I’m not sure I would have believed you even if you had told me.”

“So… you’ll forgive me?” Ahsoka asked, hopeful and nervous at the same time, marveling at how mature Obi-Wan was being, how steady and firm he felt in the Force. “Not today, obviously but… eventually?”

“I’ll need some time but of course I’ll forgive you,” Obi-Wan replied, looking a little offended. “You are my master. I do not want to walk this path without you. You promised me we would be partners, remember? Don’t partners forgive each other when they make mistakes?”

Nodding, Ahsoka brushed away the beginning of tears. “The good ones do.”

“I would hate to think we are a bad partnership,” Obi-Wan frowned, turning his head even as he looked at Ahsoka out of the corner of his eye. “Personally, I think we are one of the best in the Order.”

“I can’t argue with you there, Padawan,” Ahsoka smiled as she reached out to touch the warmth of Obi-Wan’s spirit with hers, overjoyed to feel her relief and longing to make things right mirrored in his spirit. The golden thread that tied them together would reforge itself, linking Master with Padawan Learner once more, and all would be right in their world. No matter how long that took. Deciding that she had no more strength for any further seriousness, Ahsoka held her arms up. “Could I get a hug? I would hug you but I’m kind of stuck in this bed.”

“Of course, Master,” Obi-Wan smiled, gently moving to her side so he could give his master the hug they both dearly needed. “I missed you so much.”

“I missed you too, Padawan,” Ahsoka sighed, her eyes closed as she tried to burn this moment into her memory, to remember what it felt like before the trials and tribulations of fighting a shadow war with the Sith could weigh them down.
The two pulled apart, fragile but hopeful smiles on their faces as they quietly reaffirmed to themselves and the Force that this was the path they would walk together, side-by-side. It would difficult and the challenges would be many but they were determined to face them as one, master and padawan, partners in the coming war against the Dark for the soul of their Little Dragon, Anakin Skywalker.

As the early morning sun rose over Coruscant, Obi-Wan asked Ahsoka the question he had woken up with that morning. “So, Master, how do we start?”

“We’ll have to figure that out together, won’t we?”

Obi-Wan nodded as he collected their mugs. “I suppose we will.”

Chapter End Notes

SEASON THREE OF TANO AND KENOBI IS FINISHED!

I WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND BRIGHT AND SHINY HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Fishy out!

Works inspired by this one

Podfic of] Tano and Kenobi Season One by isweedan, Red Sky at Morning by darth_vaporwave

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