During the mission to protect Queen Amidala, Qui-Gon gets struck down by the Sith's lightsaber and dies. Or does he?

Notes

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Originally posted on the Master Apprentice Archive Nov 1999. Apparently a couple of lines were lost in archiving so I rewrote them as best I could.

I'd like to thank BlackRose for co-writing even though she's been extremely busy lately. I'd also like to thank Kristi for beta reading this, and returning it to me so quickly. Thank you people in #TPM on squidge for encouraging me to write this bunny instead of trying to give it away, and encouraging me to continue writing when I got stuck.

Disclaimer: Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon are owned by George Lucas lucky bastard. I'm just taking them out to play and not making a cent off of this, just having some fun. R/PD (whoever they are) own Duncan and Methos .. another set of lucky bastards.

Realizing that acting out of anger and grief had left him hanging from a nozzle in the melting pit and at the mercy of the Sith Lord, Obi-Wan turned to the Force to guide his actions.

The Sith Lord was above him, waving the half of his lightstaff he managed to keep hold of, using
it to slice at the floor plating as he gleefully watched Obi-Wan hanging there.

Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted Qui-Gon's lightsaber near the edge of the pit. Using the force as both his guide and instrument, he leapt over the head of the Sith, telekinetically calling Qui-Gon's lightsaber to his hands. He sliced the Sith into two, as the Sith Lord's eyes and mouth opened wide with shock. Ignoring the body as it began its fall to the bottom of the pit, he rushed to his Master's side.

Obi-Wan dropped to his knees and cradled his Master's body in his arms. "Master! Master!" he cried, seeing the near death pallor of Qui-Gon's face.

"It is too late... It's..." Qui-Gon gasped out, not fearing death as it crept upon him ... gathering his strength to speak with his Padawan before becoming one with the Force.

Obi-Wan attempted to begin healing Qui-Gon's wound, but it was near Qui-Gon's heart. "No!" he cried as tears began forming in his eyes. Grief, exhaustion and lingering emotions of anger and fear clouded his mind, keeping him from doing more than postponing Qui-Gon's inevitable death for a few more breaths.

Grateful to the precious moments his Padawan had given him, Qui-Gon chose his words carefully. "Obi-Wan, promise...promise me you'll train the boy..." Each word was harder to speak then the one before it, as blackness began to envelop him.

As he struggled against it, barely hearing his Padawan reply "Yes, Master" with grief pouring from every syllable, Qui-Gon continued "He is the chosen one...he will...bring balance...train him!"

As he raised his hand up to Obi-Wan's face and brushed his hand lightly across his cheek, his strength finally failed him. His next words did not have the strength to pass his lips, "I am proud of you Padawan." Instead, his hand fell limply to his side.

Pulling the body to his chest Obi-Wan knelt there weeping for what seemed like an eternity. Then the years of training that Qui-Gon had instilled upon him spurred him into reluctant action. Reaching out with the force he began searching and found the unique life signature of Queen Amidala, with waves of calmness and security surrounding her.

The wrongness that had permeated the force when they arrived on Naboo to guard the Queen was gone. The mission was over; though they had failed to learn more about the Sith, they did prevent him from harming the Queen - not a complete victory, but not a defeat either, except that his Master, Qui-Gon is dead.

Carefully, he lay the body on the ground. Securing his Master's lightsaber to his belt, he reached out with the force and carefully cradled it around the body, raising it as if the slightest wrong move would injure Qui-Gon irrevocably.

The walk through the laser hall was the longest of his life, each step dragging at him mercilessly. Reaching out, he placed his hand lightly on the still chest of the body beside him. Each step to retrace was a step he could have taken faster - one which might have saved his Master.

There a blow he could have blocked, there a misstep that could have saved precious moments; anything, anything at all that might have changed the outcome. Anything that might have propelled him faster over the walkways and through the hall to his Master's side.

It wasn't real yet. He couldn't put his mind around it. Only the chest beneath his hand lent it any reality at all. Qui-Gon, dead. His Master... dead. Which left Obi-Wan himself... lost. Unprepared
and hopelessly lost, with emptiness beside him that he could not begin to grasp.

Or even begin to fill. He could have laughed at his own words, his promise to his Master, but if he began laughing it would break into sobs. How could he fulfill that promise? How could he be anything to anyone else, when his own life was suddenly a pale shadow of what it had been?

His steps retraced themselves, until he found himself once again at the entrance to the hanger, the place where it had all begun.

Picking up Qui-Gon's robe from the ground, Obi-Wan used it to cover Qui-Gon's body. He then picked up his own robe and put it on quickly. He continued walking towards the palace medical center, avoiding the rubble, the broken droid parts and bodies of fallen guards who had been fighting to liberate their planet.

Obi-Wan's eyes were set forward as he concentrated on putting one foot in front of the other. He did not see an electrical charge emanate from Qui-Gon's body, where the Sith's blade had pierced through Qui-Gon's chest.

Reaching the medical center, Obi-Wan could see newly freed doctors and other medical personnel rushing about, helping the injured and putting the dead in stasis for funeral services later.

He just stood there, as if entering the room would make it all the more real. Handing over Qui-Gon - no Qui-Gon's body - would truly mean he was dead.

Seeing the young man in the door, a woman wearing blue meditech uniform walked over. "Do you need medical assistance?" She then spotted the brown robe floating in the air behind him, in the shape of a body, with boots sticking out from one end.

/This must be one of the Jedi standing before her./ "You can put him down over here, we will put him in stasis soon," she said in a consoling manner, seeing the grief-stricken look on his face.

"Don't," the word came out of Obi-Wan's mouth, barely louder then a whisper. "There are some rituals I must perform."

He levitated the body over to the indicated empty bed, then gently laid it down. Afterward the young Jedi turned around swiftly and left the room. Concerned more with the living, who needed medical help, none of the medical personnel noticed the lightning running across Qui-Gon's body every now and then.

Amidala met him in the corridor outside the throne room; the stern faced Panaka a step behind her. Her face lit up when she saw him, a smile warming her eyes. "Jedi Kenobi! Are you all right? Where's Master Jinn?"

The words made him physically grind to a halt, steps and thought alike failing him. Only habit kept his face impassive, his trembling hands tucked into his sleeves and away from sight. "You are alright, Your Majesty?"

Her smile wavered, as though she felt something of what was wrong, but her voice was as solid as ever. "Yes. The Viceroy is in custody, the droid army deactivated." She hesitated. "Jedi... where is Master Jinn?"

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Obi-Wan couldn't seem to draw enough breath in. He heard the words on his lips as though from a distance. "Dead. Master Qui-Gon... is dead. The communications... are they up yet?" Panaka shook his head and Obi-Wan sighed, tightening his arms across his chest. "When they are, I will need to contact Coruscant immediately. The Jedi Council must know."
Amidala's face had fallen, the glow of victory replaced by the expressionless mask of the royal queen. "I'm sorry," she said quietly, with composure Obi-Wan almost envied. "Your attacker?"

"Dead," The word got easier with repetition. Panaka stepped away to speak with another man. Amidala stepped closer, hand reaching out briefly to brush Obi-Wan's sleeve.

"If there is anything we can do...?"

"The communications," Obi-Wan replied numbly. "I have to speak to the Jedi Council."

"Your Majesty," Panaka turned back to them, nodding to the Jedi. "We have partial communications. A call has already been sent through to the Senate."

"Good. I wish to speak to Senator Palpatine as soon as possible." Amidala brushed his sleeve again, a gesture of sympathy at odds with her brisk tone. "But before that, see that Jedi Kenobi has access to what he needs."

"Yes, Your Majesty," replied Panaka. Obi-Wan managed a nod of thanks to the young queen, then turned to follow in Panaka's wake as the man lead the way to a quieter side room. The surface of a small dais slid back to reveal a projector and communicator controls. Obi-Wan nodded wearily, reaching for them as Panaka turned to leave.

It had never been harder to open the channel to Coruscant, and the code he added to it was one he had never hoped to use. He waited, the pressure of his arms across his chest helping to keep his posture steady, as the projector flickered on.

Master Windu appeared in softly flickering blue, his dark face somber. Seeing Obi-Wan, his expression turned to stone, a flicker in his jaw the only betrayal. "Obi-Wan Kenobi."

"Master Windu." Obi-Wan bowed his head and found he didn't have the strength to lift it again. The words of the report spilled out of him, abbreviating events to meaningless syllables. "Naboo is secured. The Viceroy of the Trade Federation is in the custody of the Naboo militia and the invasion has been ended." He forced his head back up, meeting the hologram of Windu's gaze.

"We encountered the Sith again. Master Qui-Gon is dead."

Windu's gaze dropped and he sighed. "And the Sith?"

"Dead." He could almost enjoy saying it then, for the memory of the shock on that demonic face as it dropped away.

He had killed... he couldn't really feel it, not yet. Numbness was keeping him upright. Windu's voice came back to him dimly. "...the Council will join you on Naboo. We need to discover whatever we can about the Sith that attacked you."

"Do what you can to help Queen Amidala," Windu instructed. After a brief pause he continued with a slight sound of sympathy in his voice. "We'll be there as soon as we can, Padawan."

Obi-Wan nodded wearily. "Yes, Master Windu." His hands found the controls and he switched the communication off. The glow of the holo disappeared, leaving the room dim and quiet. He let himself lean against the controls for a moment, then forced himself upright, straightening. There were things to be done that couldn't be avoided.

He slowly rose from the chair, scraping it back against the floor. Funeral preparations, he must begin the preparations. Qui-Gon's body, it was only a body now, no longer would words of wisdom leave those lips. No longer would those hands touch his shoulder in comfort, or help him
up after a long sparring session had ended with him defeated on the ground.

Before he knew it he had retraced his steps back to the medical center. There were fewer people in there now, the seriously injured had been sent to hospitals. Some with less extensive injuries were resting on medical beds. Looking around the room for where he had left the body, he found the bed empty.

Walking over to the same person he spoke to before he asked, "Where is Mas..." he stopped, realizing she would not recognize the name. "Where is the body of the Jedi I brought in?" he finally stammered out.

"We needed the bed earlier," she answered, "We didn't put him in stasis, he was put in one of the rooms nearby. Its just two doors to the left once you leave this room."

Obi-Wan bowed his head slightly, "Thank you." He turned and headed for the room she spoke of.

As he entered the room he saw Qui-Gon carefully laid out on the bed, cloak neatly folded at his feet, arms folded against his chest. To all intents he appeared as though he was just sleeping except for the black scorch mark on his clothing where the Sith's lightstaff had pierced through his chest.

After locking the door behind him, he moved the chair so he could sit right by the bed. Instead of beginning the funeral preparations, he placed his left hand over Qui-Gon's heart, lay his head on Qui-Gon's chest and finally allowed himself to cry.

His master was dead, and he had made a promise that he probably couldn't keep. How was he, a Padawan, supposed to train a boy whom the Jedi Council wouldn't allow to be trained? Master Yoda had said it himself, he was not ready for the trials. He had made an impossible promise, failing his master in his last wish. He kept sobbing as, in the back of his mind he wondered why he was moving so much.

He wasn't moving, Qui-Gon's body was. He shot up to his feet, nearly sending the chair flying across the room. Wiping the tears from his eyes, he saw Qui-Gon's chest rise and fall ever so slightly. /I'm seeing things./ He put his hand under Qui-Gon's tunic looking for the hole he'd find on his master's chest, to prove to himself that Qui-Gon was dead. Instead his hand found nothing but the form of an unmarred chest beneath it.

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It was like coming up out of a dark pool, half choked. His entire body hurt, an ache centered on his chest and pooled in his limbs. He coughed, feeling the twinge shoot through his lungs. Opening his eyes took effort but he had to... there was something he had to do, something urgent, something happening that nagged at him...

His Padawan's face greeted him, swimming in and out of focus. A terribly pale face, as the blood rushed away from it. Obi-Wan made a soft sound and then the face disappeared from Qui-Gon's view. Qui-Gon forced his protesting body up onto his elbows, watching blearily as his apprentice stumbled back and down onto his knees, eyes wide and mouth gaping.

Bed... he was on a bed. That wasn't right. Qui-Gon tried to piece the scattered fragments of his thoughts together, even as he pushed himself up. He shouldn't be there. He shouldn't...

Memory flared back with searing vividness. Gasping, Qui-Gon's hands went to his chest, finding the burnt edges of the jagged hole in his tunic. And nothing beneath but flesh, whole, unpierced,
Obi-Wan's eyes were black dots in seas of bloodshot white. His mouth moved, the word coming forth reluctantly. "Ma... m... master?"

Shaking, Qui-Gon caught himself against the edge of the bed. His body still ached but the ache was fading, pain sloughing away like a lingering nightmare. "Padawan," he whispered. Peeling back the layers of his tunic, he stared, dry mouthed, at the undamaged skin of his chest. "What happened?"

Obi-Wan slowly pushed himself back, hands scrambling on the tiled floor. "Master... Force... you were dead. I saw the Sith kill you. You died!"

Qui-Gon slowly swung himself down from the bed, dropping down to the floor beside his Padawan. "I died," he repeated back slowly. "We were at a melting pit... the Sith... I did die. I felt it. How... what did you do?"

"Watched you die," Obi-Wan blurted breathlessly. "Master... you died in my arms. You were DEAD. And now... Now..." He gestured helplessly to Qui-Gon, words failing him.

They were not serving Qui-Gon much better. "Now... I do not know Padawan. I am not dead."

Hesitantly, Obi-Wan reached out. He jerked back slightly, then visibly steeled himself, placing a trembling hand against his Master's chest, feeling the beating heart and the chest moving with each breath. "No," he agreed numbly. "You're not dead."

Qui-Gon laughed slightly, a breathless burst. Sitting back, he ran a hand across his hair. "I was... and now I'm not. Obi-Wan... I've never heard of anything like this before. Padawan, you're certain you didn't..."

"I brought you - your body - to the medical center," Obi-Wan interrupted. He shook his head, rubbing a hand across his brow. "I went to speak to the Queen and call the Council. When I returned, I was told your body was moved here. You were dead when I came in," his voice cracked as he spoke those last words, "and then suddenly you weren't."

Qui-Gon's head came up, his eyes focusing on his apprentice again. "The Queen," he began, already scrambling to his feet. "The battle...? Anakin? Where..."

Obi-Wan was on his feet faster than his Master, grabbing for Qui-Gon's arm. "Where do you think you're going? You just died!"

Qui-Gon paused, giving Obi-Wan the opportunity to push him back towards the bed. "Padawan," he said quietly, brows pulling down, "how many people know that I have... died?"

Startled, Obi-Wan stared at his Master for a moment, then groaned, dropping his head as he leaned against the side of the bed. "Oh Force... Amidala. Panaka. Some of the medical personnel. And the Council... Master, I called the Council."

Taking a deep breath, Qui-Gon sat one hip against the edge of the bed, letting the news roll over him. "Obi-Wan," he said slowly, "maybe you should tell me everything that's happened while I was... dead."

The telling took a little time, a trail of thought that skipped and backtracked as Obi-Wan shakily tried to outline what had happened to his Master. When it was done, Qui-Gon shook his head slightly, trying to take it all in even as he planned for what was to come.
"Anakin," he said at last. "Did you tell the boy? Have you seen the boy?"

"Not since the hangar, Master," Obi-Wan replied wearily. "He wasn't in there when I walked through it with... with your body. I'll go find him..."

"Do that," Qui-Gon confirmed. "Don't tell him about this. It's enough that I'm all right. We don't need to frighten him."

"And the Queen?" Obi-Wan asked. "The Council?"

Qui-Gon hesitated. "Bring the Queen here," he said finally. "She can keep secrets. As to the Council... I will speak with them when they arrive."

Obi-Wan nodded tensely. "I'll bring the Queen here as soon as I find the boy," he said, walking towards the door.

When the door shut behind his Padawan Qui-Gon got to his feet, going to lock the door. Leaning his back against it, he tried to gather his thoughts.

What could he tell people when he himself didn't know what had occurred? His last memories were of his own death, of feeling the Force open to gather him in, his body failing. And now... in truth, he had not felt so good in some time.

His hand went again to his chest, probing. There was nothing, not even a tender spot to tell him where the Sith's saber had burned through him. Somehow... somehow it had happened. And he had no idea at all of how or what.

Sighing, he made his way back to the bed, seating himself on it. Perhaps the Council, when they arrived, would know something. Be able to find some obscure piece of Jedi lore that spoke of something similar, something that might reassure him. Until then... he had to find something to say to Amidala. Something believable, for he himself wasn't sure he believed the truth.

Obi-Wan's presence brushed his mind softly, alerting him that his Padawan had returned. The door opened a moment later. Not only did Obi-Wan enter, but a short, tow headed bullet sped through the entrance making directly for Qui-Gon.

"Master Qui-Gon!" The Jedi Master slid back to the floor, hefting the boy up onto the bed. Anakin clung to his tunic, blue eyes wide. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, Ani," Qui-Gon said calmly. "And you? Were you alright?"

"Yes sir," Anakin piped. "I did just what you said, Master Qui-Gon. I stayed right in that cockpit. Artoo and I are fine."

The blue eyes were the picture of innocence but Obi-Wan shook his head. "There's a bit more to it than that," he interjected. His Padawan, Qui-Gon noticed, was beginning to look far more like the one who had just risen from the dead then Qui-Gon himself did.

"Wellllll..." Anakin ducked his head. "We were alright. Nothing happened."

Qui-Gon would have questioned that, but footsteps in the hallway alerted them to another presence. Amidala swept through the door, then stopped, rocking back on her heels as she stared at the Jedi Master.

Obi-Wan slapped the door shut behind her. Amidala didn't look around, her gaze glued to Qui-Gon, dark eyes widening slightly. Qui-Gon tugged his sleeve from Anakin's grasp, facing her and
bowing slightly. "Your Majesty... I'm pleased to see you well."

After a moment the ghost of a smile touched her lips. "I think I should be the one saying that, Master Jinn." She hesitated, glancing at Anakin. "Obi-Wan told me you were feeling... better."

Qui-Gon managed a smile, helping Anakin back down to the floor. "Anakin, you can tell me what happened later. I need to speak to Amidala right now, alright?" The boy nodded, glancing at all of the adults in turn, then started to go towards the door.

"Later?" he asked, plaintively.

"In just a little bit," Qui-Gon confirmed. "Can you wait for us out in the corridor?"

"Yes, sir," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan stepped aside to let him out, closing the door after him. All three relaxed slightly.

"I didn't want to speak in front of the boy..." Qui-Gon began, but Amidala shook her head.

"No, I understand." She stepped hesitantly closer, eyes examining the blackened edges of the tear in his tunic. "An... explanation... Master Jinn?"

Qui-Gon glanced at his Padawan, meeting eyes that were just as confused as Amidala's. Swallowing, he nodded slowly. "Yes... I am sorry, Your Majesty. There is... a healing trance that a Jedi can use. It does not always work, and in progress it looks very much like death. My Padawan had never seen it before. He reported only what he believed to be the truth."

Obi-Wan tensed slightly, eyes darting to Qui-Gon, but after a moment some of the tension drained from Amidala. "I understand," she said quietly. The smile touched her again for a moment. "Or rather, I don't. But I think I understand what you mean to tell me." Glancing back, she met Obi-Wan's eyes. "It's... a pleasant surprise, Jedi Kenobi."

Obi-Wan's eyes were burning into him with nearly the force of the Sith's saber. "Very," he replied shortly. "Very much a surprise."

Your Majesty," Qui-Gon said hastily, "I would rather not have report of either my apparent death, or life, broadcast if at all possible. The thing which attacked us was very dangerous - I would rather not tempt fate until the Jedi Council arrives. This is a matter they need to look into."

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Obi-Wan was standing in the courtyard full of people with Anakin at his side. Queen Amidala, still wearing her battlegarb, was speaking with the Neimoidians, surrounded by Captain Panaka, her handmaidens and about 20 or so of her troops. In front of them a large republic cruiser was landing.

"Now, Viceroy, you are going to have to go back to the Senate and explain all this," stated the queen.

Leading the two Neimoidians towards the main ramp of the cruiser to turn over the prisoners, Captain Panaka said smugly "I think you can kiss your trade franchise goodbye."

Senator Palpintine exited the ship, surrounded by several republic guards. Following behind him were the Jedi Council wearing unreadable expressions on their faces.

"Congratulations on your election, Chancellor. It is so good to see you again," said the young Queen.
With a broad smile on his face the Chancellor replies "It's good to be home. Your boldness has saved our people, Your Majesty. It is you who should be congratulated. Together we shall bring peace and prosperity to the Republic."

As their conversation continued Obi-Wan and Anakin bowed their greeting to the Council. They led the Council members into the palace and to the rooms that had been set aside for their visit.

"Anakin, will you please stay here and show the Council the room that has been set aside for the Council chamber, when they are ready to go there?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Yes sir" the boy quickly replied, hoping that this small action would help him when they reconsidered allowing him to become a Jedi.

"Master Yoda, Master Windu" Obi-Wan continued, "The Queen would like to speak with you as soon as possible." The young Jedi was shielding himself as much as possible, hoping the Council would believe it was out of grief, and wouldn't probe to see what he was hiding.

The two Jedi Masters quickly put their belongings in the rooms they had been assigned. Then they followed Obi-Wan as he led them to a room on the other side of the palace. Neither Master Windu nor Master Yoda tried to question Obi-Wan about Qui-Gon's death, knowing he would have to tell the story when he gave his official report.

Finally the slow walk was over. Obi-Wan opened the door and politely motioned for the Jedi Masters to enter before him, then closed the door quietly behind him. A large chair was facing the window as they entered the room, the back of it so high that the Queen could not be seen over it.

When the door shut, the chair turned around so the Queen was facing the Jedi Masters. Except the Queen wasn't sitting in the chair, Qui-Gon was.

"Qui-Gon" whispered Mace, shocked to his friend alive and well when Obi-Wan had reported his death.

Yoda remained silent for a few moments then finally said, "Too stubborn to die, you are."

"I did die." Qui-Gon replied, amused at his Master's response. "For some reason I just did not remain so."

"Master Yoda, do you know how this," Obi-Wan paused, as he pondered what words to use, "how this exactly happened?"

"Suspicions I have. Talk to someone first, I must."

"Right now we have to meet with the Council," stated Mace, still watching Qui-Gon with amazement.

"How will we explain Master Qui-Gon being alive though?" questioned Obi-Wan. Master Yoda was the only one who knew of any reason why Qui-Gon was alive and he hadn't even shared it with them.

"The force will guide us, Padawan" Qui-Gon replied, placing his hand on Obi-Wan's shoulder reassuringly.

Many hours had passed before Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan's report was over. Anakin had been brought in and questioned about his involvement in stopping the Trade Federation and the Council had finally decided to train the boy. He would be attending the Academy alongside the rest of the Jedi students then would be trained under the supervision of the council.
Yoda sat in his room and activated the communications console before him. Eventually the hologram of a young man with short dark hair appeared and grumpily said "What do you want?"

"Speak to MacLeod, I wish," replied the Jedi Master.

"MacLeod, it's for you" yelled the young man before his hologram disappeared.

A few minutes passed before the face of a dark haired man with a ponytail appeared. A look of shock appeared on his face. "Yoda, what has it been old friend, 25-30 years since we last spoke."

"Long, it has been. A favor of you, I must ask. A Jedi, died, he has, and lives again. Test him, I ask. If like you he is, teach him I ask."

"If you think he's an immortal I will test him, Yoda. Have him meet me at the Jedi Temple on Duregna in 3 days. If he's one of us I'll find him." MacLeod said. "One more thing, if he has any unexplainable headaches tell him to stay in a public place till the feeling goes away."

"Many thanks, my friend," said Yoda, then the hologram disappeared.

The next morning Yoda herded Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan towards ship the Queen had assigned to transport the Jedi to Duregna.

All the two had been told was they were to go to the Temple there and wait, and not to leave the Temple grounds. If no one approached them by the end of the week they were to return to Coruscant for further instructions from Master Yoda himself.

If a man approached them they were to confirm his identity as being Duncan MacLeod, and to follow his instructions. Then Master Yoda gave strange instructions to Qui-Gon: if at any time while they were heading to the temple, he got a headache, he was to remain in a busy public place until the headache dissipated, and he was not to get into any fights even if provoked. That and an emphasis he was not to leave the temple grounds until the week was up.

After saying goodbye to Anakin, and promising to see him at the temple on Coruscant as soon as possible, they boarded the transport and set off on the most mysterious journey they could recall. Never had they been sent off with such little information as they had.

To be sent off at all, so quickly after all that had happened, made Qui-Gon nervous. To do so without much briefing made him tense. Once the transport was underway there was precious little to be done... and at that point the tension and nervousness added themselves to a morass of emotion that it seemed all the quiet time of the galaxy could not sort out.

Obi-Wan could not seem to sit still, fidgeting endlessly with controls that had already been set and displays that he had already checked countless times - anything, except looking at his Master. Qui-Gon sighed, leaning back in his seat. "Obi-Wan?"

"Yes, Master?" Still the younger man didn't look at him, body wound tight and tense, eyes darting away.

"Obi-Wan," Qui-Gon sighed again, then stopped, beginning again. "Padawan, I'd like to have a word with you."

Obi-Wan's shoulders jerked back slightly, stiffening. "Of course, Master," he said, rising at once. Qui-Gon nodded politely to the pilot, a gesture that his Padawan stiffly copied, then escorted the younger man from the room.
Once behind a closed door, Obi-Wan was no better. The younger Jedi couldn't seem to find a place in a chair, pacing haphazardly around the room. Qui-Gon seated himself, wrapping his robe around him with a soft sigh. "Obi-Wan, we need to talk."

Obi-Wan paused, finally turning reluctantly to face him. "Yes Master," he agreed, swallowing. "Yes, we probably do."

It was the perfect opening... and Qui-Gon had no idea where to start. They stared at each other, Master to Padawan, for a long time. Finally, Obi-Wan ran a hand through his hair, looking away. "This is all... so much."

Qui-Gon could not help but agree with his Padawan... too much, and nothing that had been spoken yet. He crossed his arms against his chest, only all too aware of the beat of his own heart. He still didn’t know what he himself felt of that, much less what Obi-Wan must feel.

The younger man turned away, hugging himself tightly, tension radiating from his stiff shoulders and back. "What are we doing?" he asked, voice breaking slightly. "Why would the Council send us out like this? After everything that's happened... Everything on Naboo... the boy, the Sith... You, Master... Why?"

"Padawan." Qui-Gon's measured tone brought Obi-Wan back around to meet his Master's gaze. The younger man's eyes were rimmed with white, over bright and harried looking. Qui-Gon sighed, trying to choose his words.

Qui-Gon flinched slightly from the ragged edge to Obi-Wan's voice, careful not to show the motion externally. "I know what I felt," he said, a little harder then he should. "It wasn't something I chose, Obi-Wan."

"No." Obi-Wan was wound tightly enough to break, hands trembling where he clenched them against his sides, face tense and hard. "No, but you chose to make your last command - your last words! - bind me to that boy! What made you think I could do that? What made you think the Council would let me? Without you..." his voice broke, shaking. "Without you..."

Now Qui-Gon did flinch, dropping his gaze. "I was dying," he said harshly. "There was no time. I thought... I thought you would understand how important it was."

They were both silent for some time. Obi-Wan was almost visibly biting his tongue to silence the words that threatened to spill forth. "And now?" he ground out at last. "What now? When you died I thought... I didn't know what to think. I felt as though I would break. But then, somehow, you live again. So what now? Will it happen again? Should I stop worrying if I see you hurt? Or is this borrowed time and I'll turn to find you suddenly gone?"

"I don't know," Qui-Gon snapped, tightening his arms against his chest. He tried to release the scratch of fear, thrusting it away from himself, but the feel of the Sith's lightsaber burning through him haunted him, making him shiver. "I don't know how it happened, Obi-Wan. I don't know what it means!"

"Then what do you know?" Obi-Wan snapped back, voice raising as his frayed nerves gave way. "What should I do, Master? Should I believe that this," he flung his arms out, indicating everything around them, "is real? Or should I just start grieving now?"

"I never was good enough, was I?" he stated lowly. His voice began rising as he spoke, "You only took me in because you felt sorry for me. Then you saw him... that boy, your chosen one and you wanted to throw me aside. Never mind that I didn't think I was ready. Never mind that the Council didn't think so either. The GREAT Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, finest swordsman the
Order has had in the past couple of centuries ... found THE chosen one, so I am READY for my trials." His hands clenched together tightly as he finally let his anger and grief out.

His voice dropped down to a barely audible whisper "Why, why wasn't I good enough?" He turned away so he couldn't see Qui-Gon's face, not to see the disappointment in his eyes.

"Padawan" came the anguished reply.

"Why did you leave me?" came out in that same almost inaudible whisper. His hands clenched together so tightly they were white.

The words cut into him like knives, carving out pieces of him. Qui-Gon dropped his head, unable to bear watching the man in front of him. "I didn't..." the words were hollow ashes in his mouth and he bit them off, swallowing them bitterly as the lies that they were.

"I didn't mean..." Yes, that was more truthful, though the words still burned him as he spoke them. "I didn't mean to leave you, Padawan. I truly thought you would be ready. I thought..." And there was the lie again, for it was painfully obvious, laid out in the tense lines of Obi-Wan's clench body, that he had not thought nearly enough. Not thought of the one thing that should have been most important of all, his Padawan's welfare.

It was a harsh thing to have to acknowledge, leaving him feeling flayed. Qui-Gon sighed, raising a hand to cover his eyes and rub his temples. "I'm sorry," he ground out past the closure of his throat. "Padawan... I am sorry. I was not thinking. There are... quite a few things I should have done, or done differently."

Qui-Gon forced his own head up forced his shoulders back, his muscles tightening unconsciously as though to withstand a blow. "Obi-Wan... I believed - I still believe - that Anakin is important. But you are my Padawan. My duty should have been to you. I failed in that, and I can only beg forgiveness."

"I ... I for ... I need to go meditate on all of this." Obi-Wan raised his shields at tightly as he could and fled out of the room, ashamed of his behavior and not being able to forgive his master right then.

Qui-Gon watched him go, letting out a painful breath He collapsed back into the chair, arms wrapped against his chest, eyes closed. It was a reprieve, and it shamed him how much he needed it. He simply did not know what, or how, to make things right with Obi-Wan.

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"Methos, the quicker we do this the sooner you can have a couple of beers at that cantina by the hotel." stated Duncan MacLeod in an amused manner.

Arms crossed over chest, shoulder planted firmly against the wall, the oldest immortal's wirey body gave no sign of being willing to move. "Of course," he drawled. "Unless..." he held up a finger, cutting off Duncan's abortively drawn breath. "Unless, of course, this Jedi just happens to be one of us... what then, MacLeod? No, I'll tell you what then. Then there's not going to be any resolution to this, is there? No, not for the boyscout."

"What's this old man? Want me to plan for every eventuality? An old friend asked me to check this guy out. I owe it to him" replied Duncan.

"No." Methos held up his hand, shaking his head. "No, you don't. That's the problem. I can see the plan in your eyes, MacLeod. You're going to end up taking whoever this is under your wing - again - which disrupts OUR plans indefinitely. Can't you just..." he grimaced, gesturing vaguely,
"Tell the man what he needs to know and send him back to them? They'll take care of him. Besides," Methos added, slumping with real determination back against the wall, "he's a Jedi. He'll know how to fight. And that damn Temple of theirs is just that - holy ground. Tell him the rules and send him on his way. I'll be waiting right here."

"You're the one who wanted to come along in the first place. If you don't come along there's no way I can buy you that beer I owe you can I?"

"And if I stay here," Methos replied, "then you'll have to come back. Sometime in the next decade."

"If you stay I just might decide to study Jedi philosophy for a couple of years," MacLeod said in a teasing manner.

"And the difference between that and a boyscout it?" Methos asked archly, but a fluid motion peeled his body away from the wall. "I suppose if I let you go by yourself then you'll get in even more trouble."

MacLeod slapped Methos on the back and playfully pushed him ahead. "Then you'll just have to keep me out of trouble, old man," he smiled.

Qui-Gon sat on a bench in the middle of the temple gardens. The expression on his face hid what he was feeling as well as his shields did. He sat there waiting. He had already memorized the patterns of flowers in the area, so he focused his gaze on his Padawan. Well, more exactly, his Padawan's back.

Obi-Wan had deliberately sat down with his back to his Master. He was continuing to work on the construction of a new lightsaber, to replace the one he had lost during the fight with the Sith on Naboo. He'd begun the project on the ship, it had kept him busy and gave him a reasonable excuse to avoid Qui-Gon. They hadn't spoken a word since he fled from Qui-Gon on the ship.

One of them was going to have to end this silence soon, but he didn't want to force the issue, not yet. He stood up to stretch his legs, when his head started to ache.

It was a buzzing pain that began at the base of his neck and shot both up and down, crawling across spine and skull. Qui-Gon winced, raising a hand to his head. Sensing that something was wrong, Obi-Wan turned his head and frowned. "Master?" he asked, reluctantly.

Qui-Gon shook his head, trying to drive the feeling away. "It's nothing," he began, but the sensation would not leave. Obi-Wan climbed to his feet, his frown darkening.

Footsteps made them both turn. Two men approached them across the grounds of the garden. The first was dressed in rich toned civilian clothes. He had dark hair, pulled neatly back, and walked with a gracefulness to his movements that made Qui-Gon step back slightly, judging. A fighter, his mind decided quickly, someone to be watched carefully.

Slightly behind him another man followed, slender of build and also dressed in civilian clothes. He walked with a sullen pace, feet almost dragging, and the lean lines of his face set in a sulk.

The first man stopped some feet from the Jedi, dark eyes studying them. His voice, when he spoke, held a lilting accent that gave a musical quality to his words. "My name is Duncan MacLeod, of the Clan MacLeod."

Neither Jedi relaxed; if anything, Qui-Gon tensed slightly at the name. This, was as much as they
had known to expect - now it would rely upon the man before them. "Duncan MacLeod," he acknowledged, nodding to the man. "I am Qui-Gon Jinn. This is my Padawan, Obi-Wan Kenobi."

Duncan glanced, briefly, back at his companion. The man's lean face twisted slightly, a rueful expression, his slender shoulders shrugging. MacLeod sighed. "This is Methos," he said firmly, ignoring the flash in the other man's eyes. "Master Yoda asked us to come."

Methos grimaced and whispered, "Why not paint a target on my back or put a tracking device on me MacLeod." Duncan heard the low whisper quite clearly, so did a certain Jedi Master who was carefully observing the two men.

Narrowing his eyes, Qui-Gon studied the men. He could feel Obi-Wan draw closer to him, the silence between them forgotten for the needs of the moment. MacLeod returned the Jedi Master's gaze with a calm assurance, while behind him Methos continued to glare at his back.

"The Jedi Council directed us to meet you here," Qui-Gon said at last. "I presume you have more information on our mission?"

MacLeod smiled, an easy expression that warmed his face. "You might say that. Quite a bit of information for you." Glancing back at his companion, he shrugged slightly. "Shall we go somewhere else to discuss it? The gardens are a little open."

"You promised me a drink MacLeod. I'd like it now. You can talk with the children when we are home." Methos barely glanced at either of them, the challenge of his gaze resting on MacLeod. It wasn't anger so much as a rivalry that arced between them, the feel of something familiar that they engaged in by habit.

Qui-Gon stepped forward. "There's a place not far from the Temple. It provides a fairly large selection. Would that suit you?" He did not glance at Methos at all, deliberately addressing MacLeod.

Both of the men paused, MacLeod regarding him with some surprise. "Yes," he said at last. "That would do fine. Please." Duncan gestured for Qui-Gon to lead the way.

There was a grudging look of wry respect in Methos' gaze as Qui-Gon stepped past him. The Jedi Master met it fairly, giving no ground. He heard the man's soft chuckle as he led the way from the garden, MacLeod and Methos behind him, Obi-Wan following last where he could continue to watch the two.

They ended up in front of Destina's Place, a respectable cantina. The place was well lit and had tables spread out around the room. At the far side there was a bar with stools spread out around it. Some uniformed waiters and waitresses wandered the room serving their customers. There was an empty table in one corner, which Qui-Gon led the group to.

They all sat down at the table. A waitress appeared as soon as they settled down and inquired, "What would you gentlemen like?"

"A beer." The words flew out of Methos' mouth just as she had finished asking.

"I'll have one also," said Duncan with a smile on his face.

"Nothing for us, thank you," said Qui-Gon answering for himself and Obi-Wan.

The waitress returned with two open beer bottles quickly then left the foursome alone to converse. Duncan took a sip of his beer, while Methos drank a quarter of the bottle before resting it on the
"You said you have information? Something pertaining to our assignment?" questioned Qui-Gon.

"We can't discuss it here. We'll take you to our place where it's safer. Just have to let the old man have his drink first." replied Duncan.

"Why isn't it safe to talk here?" asked Obi-Wan.

"We'll explain when we're someplace safer." said Methos, finally breathing after taking another long gulp of beer.

Methos started mumbling some calculations, then waved a waitress over. "How much beer do you have on hand?"

"Well, the stuff doesn't sell much in here, most of our patrons like wine or some other types of drinks." said the young waitress.

"Can you send over the owner of this place, or whoever's in charge?" stated Methos with a gleam in his eye.

"Ohh no, Methos think of our budget," begged Duncan.

"Now MacLeod, you woke me up early this morning and dragged me down to this planet. I think I should at least be able to bring home some souvenirs." stated Methos, his grin growing larger by the minute.

A couple of minutes later a lovely lady wearing black pants and a shimmering blue shirt walked over to the table. "Hello, I'm Destina. Do you gentlemen have a problem?"

Methos grinned at her and replied, "No, just a business proposition. I heard you don't sell too much beer here. I'd like to buy some of your stock."

Duncan groaned feeling his credstick loose quite a bit of weight in his pocket already.

Methos and Destina negotiated for a while, he wasn't exactly trying to get the lowest price possible enjoying making Duncan squirm in his seat. Eventually he purchased several crates of the stuff, and made arrangements to have them delivered to their ship immediately. Duncan settled the bill with the owner then said, "Alright, lets get going."

"Exactly where are we going?" asked Qui-Gon.

"The moon. Our place is there. It's very secluded and we won't be interrupted there. Hmmm, you might want to stop by the temple and gather your things first. You'll be there for at least a couple of days." replied Duncan.

Obi-Wan was quietly simmering, but neither Jedi said anything as they went to gather up their bags that had yet to be unpacked. At least, nothing was said aloud, but the stiff line of his Padawan's back and clenched jaw spoke volumes to Qui-Gon. The older man sighed, but left the matter alone. Neither of their guides seemed inclined to small talk, Methos exchanging sullen quiet one of smug air, while MacLeod was steadfastly ignoring his companion.

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The men's ship itself was a small but sturdy vessel, one with the wear of the years on its exterior but with a more than adequate engine and parts throughout the interior. It was comfortable,
something Qui-Gon had expected after observing the two, but also quite functional. "We've had the Dawson for years," MacLeod told him, when the Jedi Master politely inquired. "She's a good enough ship, does what we need."

The short trip to the moon was uncomfortable at best, MacLeod's attention absorbed in piloting. Methos was no sort of conversationalist, seeming to hold the two Jedi in some small contempt, an attitude which endeared him not at all to the sulking Obi-Wan and left Qui-Gon at loose ends.

The moon itself, tucked into the shadow of the planet, offered little to look at beyond quiet landscape. MacLeod gave them no time to get their bearings, ushering them into the modest dwelling that the two men made their home in. Despite MacLeod's no-nonsense attitude in finding rooms for the two Jedi and giving them a whirlwind tour of the building, there seemed to be less tension in the man - and in Methos - than there had been on the planet.

Their bags tucked away, Obi-Wan seated himself stiffly in a chair in the main room, across from and in direct contrast to Methos' boneless sprawl across a couch on the other side, one of his precious beers cradled in his hand. Qui-Gon seated himself near his Padawan, refusing the drink that MacLeod offered and waited until the other man had taken a seat himself.

"I imagine you have a lot of questions," MacLeod said before Qui-Gon could draw breath to ask. Methos grimaced, the picture of disinterest as he lay with closed eyes.

"Oh yes," he drawled softly, earning a frustrated look from MacLeod. "Ask anything you want. Mac certainly has the answers. He always does."

"Methos," Duncan sighed, "either make your contributions useful, or keep them to yourself."

Methos twisted the top from his beer, tossing it irritably at Duncan, who made no move to avoid it as it bounced off his chest. Settling himself back on the couch, Methos gestured with the bottle. "Go on," he urged. "I won't say anything."

Qui-Gon sighed softly to himself. Tension emanated from Obi-Wan, grating at the Jedi Master's nerves as much as the strangeness of their surroundings, the men before them and the entire situation from Naboo on had. "I would be most interested to hear anything you have to tell me," he said firmly.

MacLeod also sighed. "This never gets any easier, does it?" he asked softly of the room at large. Methos raised one dark brow, then drew his fingertip across his sealed lips, keeping them firmly closed. MacLeod looked at him sourly, then back to Qui-Gon.

The two men regarded each other for a moment, until MacLeod shrugged slightly. "You died," he stated flatly. "And came back to life."

Qui-Gon froze, eyeing the man warily. Beside him, Obi-Wan had half risen to his feet, eyes wide. The Jedi Master put out a hand to restrain his Padawan from any hasty movements. "This would be what Master Yoda sent you to us for?" he inquired softly.

A small noise escaped Methos but none of the other three paid it any mind. "Yes," MacLeod acknowledged. "I have known Master Yoda for some years. When he learned what had happened to you, he contacted me."

At his Master's urging Obi-Wan reluctantly sat back, though he was nearly vibrating with suppressed emotion. Qui-Gon himself was not much better; he folded his hands within the sleeves of his robe, where the slight tremble of them could not be seen. "You sound as though you have a better idea of what happened then I do," he admitted, forcing a small smile.
"You might say that," MacLeod said with a small, tense smile. Reaching up, he ran a hand across his dark hair, smoothing back loose strands. "I've had a few hundred years worth of experience with it." When neither Jedi blinked an eye at that pronouncement his smile turned wry. "Not that saying that draws the reaction it used to - not when Yoda is over 800."

"There are a number of long lived species," Qui-Gon replied mildly. "But I have yet to hear of a species that comes back from the dead." He spread his hands slightly. "And as I am quite certain that if they did exist I am not one of them..."

"That's where you're wrong," MacLeod said firmly, cutting him off.

Qui-Gon blinked slightly, startled. MacLeod stepped into the lapse, his words steady in their solemnness. "You're immortal. You can not die. Not unless someone takes your head."

Silence descended in the room, broken only as Methos raised his bottle in a wordless toast and downed half of it. Qui-Gon forced himself to swallow, frowning. MacLeod utterly believed his words, that much was obvious. But... "Immortal?" he asked hesitantly. The man couldn't possibly mean that.

"You can't die," MacLeod repeated. "Not permanently. Wounds of any sort will heal. Unless," he held up one hand, forestalling Qui-Gon's words, "unless someone takes your head." He ran his thumb across his throat in a gesture that was only too descriptive. "And with it, your life, your knowledge and your power. That's your only weakness now."

"That's impossible," Obi-Wan said flatly, his voice breaking into the silence that followed MacLeod's pronouncement.

"No, it's not," MacLeod said firmly, his eyes never leaving Qui-Gon. "You died. You felt it, you know what it was like. You'll do it again, many times. But you won't ever stay that way."

"You're saying..." Qui-Gon began, then had to stop and swallow, letting the enormity of what MacLeod had said fully wash over him. "You are saying I can't die. Ever. Unless..." He paused, looking at the two men. "You're like this? As well?"

"Yes," MacLeod confirmed. "Immortal."

Qui-Gon took a deep breath. The information simply would not seep in, there was nothing he could relate it to. "How?" he asked at last, floundering. "Why?"

"No one knows how," MacLeod admitted quietly. "Or why. We just are. And now, so are you."

"This is impossible," Qui-Gon whispered, echoing Obi-Wan. "This isn't... I can't believe this. I've never heard..."

Methos broke his silence at last, voice cutting sharply across the Jedi Master's but without the sarcasm evident before. "It doesn't matter whether you believe it or not. It's real. And the faster you accept that, the better your chances."

"Chances against what?" Obi-Wan demanded, but Qui-Gon held up a hand to silence him.

MacLeod rose to his feet, shaking his head. "Everyone has a hard time accepting it at first," he assured the Jedi. "But Methos is right. The sooner you can, the better." He walked into the next room, his voice floating back to them. "There's a lot of things you're going to have to learn. You already know the saber and that's good, but there's more to it than that."

MacLeod returned, holding a small blade between his teeth as he rolled up one sleeve. Taking the
blade in hand, he sat back down. "I assume you can tell I'm not lying," he said mildly, not waiting for Qui-Gon's jerked nod. "But the best evidence is still that of your own eyes."

Before either of the Jedi could react or stop him, MacLeod held out his hand and sank the tip of the knife deep into his wrist, slicing upwards as the blood welled red across his skin.

Qui-Gon gasped, reaching out automatically to try to wrest the knife away from the man, to try to staunch the flow of blood. MacLeod pulled back, out of reach, face set as he watched the cut. Methos barely even glanced up, polishing off his beer and setting the bottle on the floor.

Before the Jedi's eyes, small, infinitesimal sparks of blue flashed and flared, skittering like wildfire across the wound. In a second, the cut was gone, healed completely. MacLeod wiped the blood away, revealing not so much as a scar on his tanned skin.

Qui-Gon couldn't help it - he reached out, barely skimming his fingertips across the skin where the cut had been. There was nothing, no lingering sense of ripples in the Force, nothing but smooth skin and the perfectly healthy beat of the pulse. MacLeod allowed the inspection, then proffered the said firmly, putting a touch of the Force behind the words, "I have to do this."

Obi-Wan said nothing. After a moment he released Qui-Gon, standing abruptly and turning away. The Jedi Master let out his breath, hearing his Padawan's footsteps echo as the younger man stomped to a corner of the room.

MacLeod's expression was nothing but sympathetic. "It's harder for those around you," he said quietly.

Setting his lips, Qui-Gon said nothing. He stared at the knife in his hand, then slowly pushed back the sleeve of his tunic to bare his wrist. Duncan was right. A shallow cut, done quickly - he could heal it easily with the Force.

It was best to do it before he thought too much about it. Steeling himself, he put the blade to the heel of his hand, gritting his teeth as the sharp edge easily parted the skin. A quick jerk upwards, blood flowing before the pain registered, nerves belatedly crying over the treatment.

He swallowed, realizing as he watched the blood stain his skin that the sight of it nearly made him ill. It wasn't a reaction he normally had to blood but something about having inflicted it himself... he clenched his teeth, forcing the pain away, forcing himself to watch without knowing what he was watching for.

It began as a sensation, trickling down his arm, scratching lightly like a shiver that one couldn't pinpoint. It flared like fire when it reached the cut, making him hiss softly. He could feel it, feel the flesh coming together, the cells reforming, feel the flickers of sensation as the cut sealed itself without any assistance from him. In a heartbeat it was gone, as thoroughly as though it had never been. Just as the Sith inflicted wound through his chest had been.

"Force," Qui-Gon whispered, the knife dropping from his nerveless hand.

"It's real," MacLeod assured him. "This is what you are now."

Trembling, Qui-Gon wiped the blood away. Nothing about his wrist felt at all different than it would have several minutes before.

"Force," he repeated again, stunned. There was nothing else he could think of to say.

MacLeod took the knife from him, setting it on the low table. "You'll get used to it," he said.
Sitting up, Methos stretched, a careless motion of flung out arms and muscle. "Eventually," he added with a grin, then rose to his feet to leave the room.

Qui-Gon blinked, swallowed, then blinked again. Regarding MacLeod, he sighed. "There's more, isn't there?"

"Yes," Duncan admitted. "But we don't need to cover it all right this instant if you need time."

Time... time to consider, to meditate, to try to reconcile the stranger his body had abruptly become. Qui-Gon shivered, hands clenching. "That might be for the best," he agreed. Standing, he looked helplessly at the blood on his hands. "I'll... I'll be in my room."

"Fine," MacLeod agreed. "Think on it, Master Qui-Gon. We'll speak more tomorrow."

Qui-Gon nodded, distractedly, and left.

Obi-Wan stood in the room until everyone had left. He had not moved or uttered a word, since Qui-Gon had last silenced him. He needed to go outside, needed the connection to the living force to help him make sense of everything.

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He wandered around outside until he found a tree that reminded him of in the temple gardens. On impulse, he climbed up into the branches of the tree and sat there, he could always think when he was up in a tree as a child, maybe it would help him now.

/Qui-Gon is immortal. He would never die. Wouldn't grow older from now on, if he was to believe what MacLeod said. He should believe MacLeod, Yoda sent them here because he knew him. Qui-Gon believed him. Qui-Gon would never die. I will grow old, I will die, Qui-Gon won't/.

/Now there's no chance that he'd want ... he wouldn't want someone who's going to grow old and die. All the hopes he had were destroyed when the Sith's saber slid through his flesh, the hopes that came back when Qui-Gon began breathing again were gone. He could never want me now. At least I know he won't die, except for one way./

He sat in the tree for hours, losing all track of time. The sky grew dark but he didn't notice, not until he heard Qui-Gon's voice in his head. "Padawan, you should get some sleep."

Obi-Wan quickly tightened his shields so there was as little chance that Qui-Gon would not see what he had been thinking. He climbed down from the tree and headed for the house. When he arrived, he nodded to his host, headed straight for his room and lay awake half the night before finally drifting into a restless sleep.

While he was sleeping Obi-Wan had nightmares about Qui-Gon rejecting him. Qui-Gon taking Anakin as his Padawan learner instead, and telling the Council it would be best just to send him back to Agri-Corps. He saw Qui-Gon falling beneath the Sith's lightstaff, but this time the blow severed the head from Qui-Gon's body. This time he wouldn't awaken.

Obi-Wan awoke with a start. It was early morning and he decided to get out of bed now, instead of tossing and turning for another hour or so. He got dressed in his workout attire, and left his room planning on doing his morning workout, then working on his lightsaber after breakfast.

He stepped out of his room quietly so not to wake the others. As he headed to the front entrance he noticed the door to Qui-Gon's room was slightly open. He reached out to close the door, but instead opened it.
Obi-Wan tip-toed into the room. Qui-Gon was sprawled across the bed as he slept, his sheets laying about his feet. He was half naked wearing only a pair of shorts. His brown hair lay across the pillow, the silver flecks barely noticeable.

Obi-Wan stood there staring at him, memorizing the sight. He was about to leave when he saw Qui-Gon shiver. He silently walked to the bed and picked up the sheets at Qui-Gon's feet. He covered Qui-Gon with the sheets and stood there watching his face as he slept. He knelt down, mesmerized by the way the dawn light was playing on Qui-Gon's face - on his lips.

Obi-Wan leaned closer - and then he realized what he was about to do. Quietly, but quickly, he walked out of the room, shutting the door firmly behind him. He took a deep breath to collect himself and then went to make breakfast.

He was halfway done with breakfast when MacLeod appeared and asked "Is there enough for me?"

"Yes, though if your friend is going to join us, I will have to make a bit more."

"No, he won't be up until noon at the earliest." replied Duncan.

Obi-Wan continued cooking, while Duncan set the table. When he noticed that MacLeod was only setting it for two and he stated, "Master Qui-Gon will be down shortly, you might want to add another setting."

Just as breakfast was done and being served, Qui-Gon joined them.

So began a silent breakfast, everyone lost in his own world. Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon trying to cope with Qui-Gon's immortality, and Duncan MacLeod trying to figure out how best to explain "the game" to the Jedi Master.

Pushing some food around his plate, Duncan watched the Jedi Master. Qui-Gon appeared calm, almost serene, as he ate, but there was a fine line drawn between his brow and though he had thanked Obi-Wan for making breakfast, it had been in a very automatic voice. Duncan was willing to place odds that, asked later, the Jedi would be unable to remember what he had eaten.

"Qui-Gon," he said at last, putting down his own fork. The Jedi Master looked up briefly, acknowledging him. "Have you thought over what we spoke of last night?"

Qui-Gon paused, with his fork in the air, then slowly laid it back down. "If you mean, have I had a chance to think over and accept what you told me," he said quietly, meeting MacLeod's eyes, "the answer is no. Have I had a chance to think on it? Yes. But I am not comfortable with it."

MacLeod pulled forth a somewhat tired smile. "Well, I'm not going to ask for a miracle. It will take some time." He paused, then shrugged slightly. "You have the time, now."

Obi-Wan flinched, then rose, grabbing his plate and retreating from the table to clean it with quite a bit of rough clattering. Qui-Gon glanced at his Padawan, the line on his brow growing longer. "Perhaps we could continue this discussion elsewhere?" he suggested, pushing his own plate away.

"Of course," MacLeod agreed mildly. He gathered up the plates automatically, carrying them over to where Obi-Wan was cleaning. The young man scowled at him, lips tight as he took the utensils from MacLeod and added them to his pile.
MacLeod sighed. It was hardest not for a new immortal but for those closest to them. He tried to give the young man a reassuring look, but Obi-Wan would not meet his eyes and the immortal had to turn away, going back to the waiting Qui-Gon.

The other man's eyes were troubled, watching his Padawan. Shifting his gaze to MacLeod, he jerked his head slightly, indicating the door. The immortal nodded, leading the way back to the room they had talked in the night before.

Qui-Gon seated himself stiffly in a chair, waiting for MacLeod to take the other before speaking. "You have more to tell me about all of this?"

MacLeod took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "Yes," he admitted. "You need to know about the Game."

The Jedi Master's expression spoke entire volumes. His tone was dry, but there was an edge to it. "What about this would qualify as a 'game'?"

Duncan had to smile, appreciating the man's attempt at humor in the face of what he was learning. "None of it," he admitted. "It's just what we call it. There are rules, and we 'play' by them."

Qui-Gon's eyebrows climbed slightly. "Rules? For immortality?"

"Rules for the interaction of immortals together," MacLeod clarified. He waited for the Jedi's reluctant nod before continuing. "Do you recall the sensation you felt when Methos and I entered the garden at the Temple?"

"That feeling will tell you when another immortal is approaching you," he told the Jedi. "Pay attention to it, always. Even if you know who it is. You're safest if you're on guard when you feel it, regardless."

Qui-Gon's expression darkened. "Which implies that other immortals are a threat," he pointed out gruffly.

"And you'd be right," MacLeod agreed. Qui-Gon's expression hardened another notch, the set of his lips tight and grim. Raising his hand, Duncan traced a line across his own throat. "The goal of the Game is simple - there can be only one."

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Methos woke up abnormally early, uncomfortable with the thought of the Jedi immortal and his apprentice in the house. He turned over one last time, feeling the lingering warmth where MacLeod's body had been laying during the night.

Climbing out of bed he quickly threw on a comfortable pair of black slacks and a light green shirt. Sitting on the edge of the bed he then pulled on his boots and headed out towards the kitchen.

As he walked into the room, he saw Obi-Wan sitting at the table, holding his head in his hands. His body taut with stresses what little expression evident on his face was one of anguish and sorrow.

The young man composed himself quickly when he realized that Methos was there. He sat up straight in his chair, his chameleon eyes were the color of a stormy sea.

Methos walked over to the table and grabbed a ripe jar'don fruit the size of his fist from the fruit-basket on the counter. The orange and blue fruit was a known delicacy throughout the Republic.
He then walked over to the cold crate in the room, and pulled out the last beer that he had carried off the ship day before.

Methos opened the bottle and drank some of it down, not too much as it would have to last until he got the crates off the Dawson. He then bit into the jar'don fruit, chewing it slowly to savor the delicious juices.

Through the walls he could hear Duncan and Qui-Gon talking. Turning to the boy seated at the table he said, "If you're not doing anything I could use your help to unload the Dawson."

Obi-Wan stood up shrugging and said "I can work on my lightsaber later. I'd be glad to help," in a toneless voice.

"Lets go then," said Methos and he led the way out the backdoor to the storage shed. Powering up a repulsorlift cart he pushed it towards the small landing dock where the Dawson was residing.

The walk towards the hanger took only a few minutes, but the silence made it seem much longer. The look on Obi-Wan's face made the immortal feel sorry for him. A war began inside his mind, one part of him wanted to help get that look off of the boy's face, the other part of him didn't want to become involved. "Damn boy scout's influence," he mumbled under his breath.

When they reached the ship, they began unloading the crates, or rather Obi-Wan unloaded them onto the repulsorlift cart using the force, while Methos leaned against the ship and watched.

As he watched the young Jedi carefully stacked his crates on the cart, the war in Methos' mind continued. Finally, he was able to resolve it. He would help the young man, but in helping him he'd see if he could crack that stoic Jedi veneer. And he knew just how to do it too.

"So," he began, casually, as the Jedi secured the last crate. "I imagine this is quite a shock to you. Have you spoken with your Master about it?"

Obi-Wan stiffened, shoulders tight, expression shuttered. "I thought you were supposed to talk to him. Isn't that why we're here?" There was a bitter bite to the young man's tone, a note Methos made mark of.

"Me?" the immortal returned. "Hardly. I'm no teacher. Leave that to Macleod." Pushing himself up, he took the handle of the cart, putting his weight into it's slow glide as he walked. Obi-Wan's face was set, lips pressed thin, but he fell into step beside Methos all the same.

"You should talk to him," Methos suggested mildly, as though he remarked on nothing more than the morning weather around them. "He's not going to have an easy time of it." He knew he had scored a point when Obi-Wan's shoulders tightened another notch, the young man strung bow tight, arms crossed almost defensively over his chest.

"Of course," Methos continued, glancing sidelong at the Jedi, "I don't imagine you are either. You were with him when he died, weren't you?"

The immortal thought he could hear the Jedi's teeth grinding, his jaw was set so tensely. "I killed the Sith who struck him." There was pride in the words and not an insignificant amount of tightly reigned anger. Methos nodded slightly.

"A Sith? Well, that's a complicated way to die your first time." Methos let them walk a little farther in silence, then prodded again. "You don't really believe in immortality, do you?"

"It happened," Obi-Wan snapped sharply. "Whether I believe in it or not won't change that. And since it did, I have to believe it."
"Smart boy," Methos approved. "So... if you can't change it, what are you going to do about it?"

The Jedi glared at him, sidelong, anger flashing in his eyes. "What am I supposed to do about it? There's nothing that can be done, is there?"

"Not in the sense you mean," Methos replied. "There's nothing that can be done to reverse it. And even if we could... what then? He'd be dead. Do you want that?"

Shocked, Obi-Wan turned to look at him fully, eyes wide. "Dead? No, of course not! I... when he..." The Jedi broke off, turning away.

Methos smiled to himself, though he was careful not to let the expression touch his face. "Then why are you angry that he's immortal?"

"I'm not angry!" Obi-Wan protested, his cheeks flushed. "I..." he paused, glaring at the immortal. "Why are you doing this?"

Methos shook his head slightly. "I'm not doing anything," he denied smoothly.

Obi-Wan eyed him, obviously unconvinced, but at last looked away again. "What do you think I should do?" he asked stiffly.

"You could start," Methos drawled, "by cutting out that."

Obi-Wan frowned. "What?"

"That," Methos replied. Drawing himself up, he tensed, mimicking the Jedi's taut posture. "Do you really think that's going to help him any?"

The flush was high on Obi-Wan's cheeks. "What of it? I'm no part of this. Whatever I do or don't do isn't going to make any difference."

"Isn't it? You're his Padawan, last I heard," Methos shot back. "That makes you a part of it, more than I am, more than MacLeod. We're just here to teach him what he needs to know - you've been with him for years. Which counts for more?"

Obi-Wan said nothing and Methos pressed the advantage. "Do you really think it's helping him for you to be wound up like a spring? You haven't spoken a word to him beyond 'yes Master' and 'no Master'. It'd take a blind man to see you're not angry. What do you think that's doing to him, now, when he needs your support?"

The Jedi glared, eyes narrowed. "What support of mine does he need? He's immortal, or so you keep telling us."

"Immortal in body. That doesn't make him impervious here," Methos tapped a finger against his forehead, "or here," and tapped his finger above his heart. "He's your Master. You're supposed to be close. Is there anyone else he should turn to?"

Obi-Wan looked away, not meeting the older man's eyes. "What should I do?" he muttered.

"What I said," Methos returned. "Stop shutting him out. Stop shutting yourself out! You Jedi wouldn't know an honest emotion if it bit you."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Obi-Wan snapped, turning back to face the immortal.

"It means," Methos drawled, "that you're some of the most repressed people in the galaxy. You all
have this serene calm about you, part of your 'Jedi mystique'. Not one of you have the sense to actually live." He snorted. "Immortality is wasted on a Jedi. None of you live life. You just exist in it."

Stung, Obi-Wan stiffened, pausing in mid-stride. Methos continued to nonchalantly walk, slowing only slightly as he waited for the younger man to begin moving again. He could feel the Jedi's eyes on him, a little stunned, and counted it a point in cracking the Obi-Wan's facade.

Obi-Wan caught up to him after a few steps, dropping into place beside him once more. The younger man kept his gaze down, a line creasing his brow, teeth biting slightly at his lower lip. He didn't seem inclined to say anything and Methos let him mull in his silence for a time. The Jedi wordlessly helped him situate the cart and began unloading the beer.

Bluntness seemed the only way to get through to the man. "Have you ever told him what you feel? No, erase that... have you ever told yourself what you feel?"

Obi-Wan stiffened again, then very deliberately dropped the crate he was carrying on top of the stack of others. Methos winced as he heard the clank of the glass inside. "What business is it of yours?" the Jedi snapped.

"None," Methos agreed, shouldering the Jedi out of the way as he carefully placed his own crate with the others. "None at all. But you might try asking it of yourself, some day." He glanced, sidelong, at the younger man. "Sooner, rather than later, if you want to keep him," he added beneath his breath.

Obi-Wan glared, his mouth set in a thin line. Whirling, he snatched up another crate, lifting it easily. "If you break that," Methos said pleasantly, "I will personally wring your neck."

The Jedi spared him an angry glance, but set the crate down gently nonetheless. Methos had to admit, the younger man had a certain attractiveness to him, eyes flashing as he shook back the tail of his braid. "I don't know why Master Yoda sent us to you," he snapped. "We don't need you."

"Don't be foolish," Methos snapped back. "There's young and then there's stupid - I'll forgive you one but not the other. Your Master needs to know the rules, the same as any other. After that, it's up to the both of you."

For a moment, Methos wondered if the younger man would actually be fool enough to assault him. Obi-Wan spun away from him, after a pause, continuing their task with rough speed. "It's nothing to you."

"I already said it wasn't," Methos replied, leaning back against the repulsorcart.

"Then why are you doing this?" the Jedi demanded.

Methos shrugged slightly. "To see if there's a person under those damn Jedi robes of yours. To see if, somewhere under all of that 'yes Master' 'no Master' training there's a man who's willing to take the risk of living or not."

"Not all of us live the way you do," Obi-Wan hissed. "The Jedi order..."

"Is noble and righteous and selfless and everything good," Methos finished smoothly. "Of course, there is no anger, is there?" he asked innocently, watching the younger man's thunderous expression. "No strong emotion... no passion..."

"So we should all be hedonistic meddlers like you?" the Jedi shot back.
"Oh, you don't want to be like me," Methos assured him, a small humorless smile tugging at his lips. "But you might try being human occasionally."

"I am human," Obi-Wan returned coldly. "My life is my own. I see nothing wrong with it."

"No?" Methos turned suddenly, leaning forward to confront the younger man, their faces only inches apart. "Then think on this, boy. You only live once. Everyone does. But... his life is going, luck willing, to continue for a very long time. Yours won't. You won't have this chance forever. Are you going to just throw it away? Bury it under that Jedi calm until all chances are gone and you've lost it?"

He knew he had scored when the Jedi's face blanched pale, eyes wide. Obi-Wan jerked back, arms wrapped tight around himself. Methos let him go, watching the blue eyes cloud over, a shiver slipped through the younger man's form.

The boy was probably going to hate him, Methos mused, but it just might be worth it. It was certainly more entertainment then he'd had in some time.

Obi-Wan drew a slow breath, letting it out, then drew another. Methos sighed, wondering if the younger man was going to meditate away all of the work the immortal had put into his current state. But when the Jedi looked up it was not with calm serenity but shaken vulnerability in his eyes. Oh, there was still anger there as well, all of it directed straight at Methos. "You're cold," Obi-Wan told him levelly. "Are all of you like this? So... careless of life?" He swallowed. "Will... will he be like this?"

Methos shook his head. "Jedi, I am older than you can imagine. I'm not careless of life. But seen from my years... there's little left that's not a joke." He met the younger man's eyes. "I'm not joking about this, though. Life is full of chances, but some of them you don't get often, no matter how long you live. And if you think you can throw away something like what you could have with him... and get it back later, or find it again with..."

"You have no right," Obi-Wan snarled. "And you have no idea what you're talking about."

"Maybe," Methos replied. "And maybe it's long past time someone said it to you."

The Jedi hesitated, seeming on the verge of snapping back again, then slowly looked away. "He doesn't need me," he said at last, bitterly.

"So you'll take that choice from him?" the immortal asked. "Make the decision for both of you?"

"There isn't any decision," Obi-Wan insisted, but some of the force had left his voice.

There was, Methos decided with a sigh, only so much pushing that could be done. "Have it your way, then," he said. "If you're frightened..."

"Stop it," Obi-Wan said, almost mildly. Blue eyes glared at him. "I know what you're doing. Stop it." The Jedi looked away, raking a hand through his short cropped hair. He took another deep breath. "I was terrified of loosing him," he admitted quietly. "And now... I wonder if I have already. He's..."

"Immortal," Methos finished. "But that doesn't change who he is." He paused, then dug deeper. "The only thing it changes is how much more time he will have to regret the chances you both never take."

Obi-Wan flinched again. His reply was long moments in coming, and Methos could almost feel the younger man crumbling. When the Jedi looked back, the anger had faded before the almost
helplessly confused look in his eyes. "What would you do?" he asked at last, the words whispered as though the soft volume might somehow make their transgression on his championed way of life less noticeable.

Methos shook his head, smiling. "This isn't about what I would do," he said. "It's about what you're going to do."

The younger man looked lost enough that Methos took pity on him. "Here," he offered, leaning forward to sling a companionable arm around the Jedi's shoulders, feeling the other man tense and edge slightly away. "Let me give you some advice..."

It was mid-afternoon by the time Methos finished giving him advice. Now to go out and confront his Master, but first he had to find him. Obi-Wan began searching the house and found a note on the table where they had eaten breakfast before. It read:

Went out to do some sparring in the clearing. -MacLeod

He placed the note back on the table so Methos would be able to find it when he finally came inside. Obi-Wan walked out the door, shutting it quietly behind him. He walked, letting the force guide him, and after a couple of minutes heard the hum and clashing of vibrosabers. As he approached the clearing he saw an amazing sight before him.

Qui-Gon and Duncan were sparring in a frenzied pace. Attacking, blocking and parrying almost as if they were performing a two-person kata that they had practiced together for years.

From the edge of the clearing Obi-Wan could see that both his Master's and Duncan's clothing were torn and bloody, yet both were fighting as if they had no injuries. The quick paced fight came to an abrupt halt. Qui-Gon managed to cut Duncan across the chest - a debilitating blow. Qui-Gon froze as he finished the strike, Duncan's vibrosaber was at his neck.

Duncan pulled his blade away from Qui-Gon's neck and brought the humming blade up in a salute. "You're an excellent swordsman Master Jinn," he said while shutting off his vibrosaber, "but when it your fighting an immortal, you are going to need to change your tactics a bit."

Qui-Gon neatly returned the salute with the vibrosaber in his hands then turned it off. "I see that I do. Perhaps we can do this again tomorrow."

The two men walked to a duffel bag lying near them in the clearing. Duncan pulled out two towels from the bag and tossed one to Qui-Gon, using the other to wipe some of the sweat off of his face. Duncan placed the vibrosabers in the bag and then both men turned and began walking to the house. When they were halfway to the path they finally noticed Obi-Wan standing at the edge of the clearing watching them.

Obi-Wan gave a respectful bow to Qui-Gon when he approached and then walked with them back to the house. Qui-Gon noticed a change in Obi-Wan as they walked. He appeared a bit calmer and less remote then he had been in the last couple of days. Though his Padawan was still shielding himself heavily, he seemed more at peace with the events that had transpired recently.

When they arrived at the house they found Methos sprawled back in a chair sipping from a half-empty bottle of beer. He took one look at Duncan and Qui-Gon's appearance and said, "If you get blood on anything in here, you're the one cleaning it up."

Duncan grinned at the comment. "I'm going to take a shower," he stated, while giving Methos a look, which asked, "Would you like to join me?" He then left the room, duffel bag in hand, and headed towards the master bedroom. Methos quickly followed, abandoning his beer.
Obi-Wan followed Qui-Gon into his room. Qui-Gon pulled the torn and bloody tunic off of himself. While his master's sight was blocked, Obi-Wan studied Qui-Gon's chest. He tore his gaze away and said in calm voice. "I'm ready to continue our talk, Master."

"All right Padawan, let me take a shower first," stated Qui-Gon as he walked into the bathroom.

The pulsing waves of the sonic shower were quickly removing all signs of his workout. It was a good sign that Obi-Wan wanted to talk, but his cooperation wouldn't do much good if he fled from the discussion. Turning off the shower, he quickly got dressed and left the bathroom.

He found Obi-Wan sitting on the chair that had been by the window, but now had been moved so it was facing the bed. Sitting down on the bed, Qui-Gon remarked, "Padawan, before we leave this room we will resolve all the issues, you brought up on the ship. There can be no running away from anything, for either of us."

"I understand Master. I think I am... no, I am ready to do this," said Obi-Wan calmly. There are so many things to say. I don't know where to start."

"Let the force guide you then Obi-Wan," replied Qui-Gon leaned forward and squeezed Obi-Wan's shoulder reassuringly. When Obi-Wan nodded, he let go and sat back again.

"I want to start by apologizing. I shouldn't have questioned you, about the promise you had me give you. With the time I've had to think about it, I know you must have believed that it was the only way for him to be trained. But what I don't understand is why, why you thought I was ready for the responsibility. Why not have me tell Master Yoda, or Master Windu that you wanted one of them to train him?" Obi-Wan questioned.

"Because Obi-Wan, despite whatever blow to your self-confidence these events have given you, I believe, I still believe that if I had to pick one person to train Anakin, then the best choice is you. I told you that you would become a great Knight. I also believe you would be an even better Master," stated Qui-Gon.

Obi-Wan blushed as he heard the words of praise. "That's all then, I spoke with Methos about your immortality. It's going to take a while to get use to it, but basically you are the same person, just with a longer life-span," he said as he stood up and started to leave the room.

He was stopped however by Qui-Gon, who had grabbed his arm and showed no sign of letting go. "There is still something we haven't resolved. You agreed to the terms of this conversation, Obi-Wan. I don't know what it is, but I sense there is something you are not telling me," he responded with a slight tone of disappointment in his voice.

Obi-Wan turned, if he took a step forward he would be touching Qui-Gon, pressed against his body. He hadn't wanted to discuss this now, but he had agreed to Qui-Gon's terms. "It's just..." he began and then stopped, trying to find a way to talk about how he felt for Qui-Gon, and why Qui-Gon's death had hurt so much.

Qui-Gon watched as Obi-Wan tried to find the words. Minutes passed and so Qui-Gon finally prompted, "What? What is it that you find so hard to talk about?"

Obi-Wan didn't respond. He still couldn't find the words to describe what he felt, so he decided to heed Methos' advice. "This," he said quietly as he stepped forward.

He brought his arms up, grabbed Qui-Gon's waist with one hand and pulled his head down closer with the other. Tilting his head back he pressed his lips against Qui-Gon's. His tongue reached out
and parted Qui-Gon's lips, reaching into his mouth to explore. The kiss seemed to last for an eternity, yet was still far too short. When they finally separated. Obi-Wan began speaking before Qui-Gon recovered say a thing.

"When you died. I lost everything I had ever hoped for. I regretted never telling you. Then, suddenly, you were alive. And I had a second chance. Then to find out you... you are immortal. I thought I would never have a chance. I didn't think you'd want someone who would grow old, who wasn't like you." Taking a breath Obi-Wan continued, "Methos helped me see that my attitude these past few days, has been pushing you away more then your immortality."

"Obi-Wan, I had no idea you felt this way..." Qui-Gon began.

"But you don't feel the same way I do, right," Obi-Wan replied resigned.

"No. As I was saying," Qui-Gon continued, giving his Padawan a reminder about interrupting. "I had no idea how you felt, but I'd like to do it again sometime, my love," With that Qui-Gon grabbed Obi-Wan, pulled both of them onto the bed and proceeded to kiss him again.

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