Biker Boyz

by Calligrafiti

Summary

Darth Maul has to perform menial labor for his Master, falls in love with a thinly Star Wars-ized Ducati, and has an enjoyable interlude with Obi-Wan. This makes a lot more sense if you're familiar with the Sith Academy 'verse.

Notes

Originally posted to Sith Academy. My first fic, and it probably shows. Maul, Obi-Wan, Sidious, Coruscant, and other recognizable bits of Lucasania belong to George Lucas. The Sith Academy is, of course, Siubhan's; many thanks to her for letting me wander about in it. The polka lyrics are from "I Want to Polka", on The Molly's album Moon over the Interstate and they're really much better than they look herein. Many thanks to the Roomie Jen who did the initial beta, and to Siubhan for her many helpful suggestions (Oh, yeah. Continuity. That could be good. D'oh.--Calligrafiti re: a previous draft).

This work was inspired by Sith Academy by This is a multi-author 'verse.

Sidious stared down at his apprentice, who slept in the nest-like remains of the couch. The couch's upholstery had long since been shredded by My Apprentice, its cushions mined for building supplies for the Pizza Cultural Center beneath it. The PlayStation was paused, its controls clutched like Ben-Wa's wallet in Maul's hand. Maul looked peaceful and content. But Sidious could fix that.

A quick zap of purple lightning and the game controls melted into a free-form plastic and wire sculpture. The controls did get in a last gasp of energy, unfreezing the action on the screen. Maul
woke up to the sensation of melting plastic searing his hand and the sight of Darth Lara Croft falling into a spiky pit.

"NoooooOOooOOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo0
"Welcome to Calrissian's Speeder Bike Emporium!" Next to him, a young man with a blinding smile broke into Maul's worshipful reverie.

"What? Oh, yeah, the bike..." Maul was having trouble tearing his eyes from the speeder bike long enough to focus on this new person.

Simon Calrissian sighed. This was the third drool case to plant himself in front of the display window that morning. He looked at the grungy speeder the guy'd come in and weighed its appearance against the guy's expensive-looking boots. Eh, maybe Simon could sell him on one of the overstocked Kessel Ninjas if he didn't have the price of the Agacazzi. Most didn't "She's a beauty, isn't she? Why not come inside and get a closer look?"

Inside. Closer to the bike. Maul's lust-addled brain caught the important parts of the message and he followed Simon into the store. There were other speeder bikes in the shop, of course, but Maul saw none of them. They were simply obstacles between him and the Agacazzi. Passing them, Maul stopped in front of the bike and reached out his hand. One finger traced the handlebars, the line of the fuselage, the curve of the seat. Close up, the bike looked even better, with an air of sweet menace emanating from headlight to exhaust pipes. Next to the exhaust, Maul's finger brushed up against a sign, the bike's price tag.

"Thirty-five thousand Republic credits?" he said, incredulously. He thought of Ben-Wa's credit card, so maxed out that the plastic was nearly limp. He looked through the window at his speeder. Had it ever been worth half the Agacazzi's price, even when new?

You're a Sith lord. Sith don't have to pay full retail. In a dingy apartment, the Sith Handbook hesitated, waiting to see if this new rule held true.

Maul turned toward Simon, feeling the dark Force surge within him. He pictured himself sweeping down on the Jedi on the 'Cazzi, the ruddy glow of his saber glinting off the fuselage's fiery detail work. "I want this bike," he proclaimed and prepared to whammy the hell out of the salesman. "My speeder is suf..." He stopped abruptly as a blue, nasally-overdeveloped flying creature buzzed up behind the humanoid.

"Ah, Simon. I-a see we have a customer. This-a bike is an excellent choice-a." The Toydarian smiled ingratiatingly at Maul.

Maul ground his teeth. Toydarians were immune to mind whammys, no matter how much Force he used. Maul briefly considered just taking the bike, but there was a slight chance that some of the other bikes in the building might be able to catch it. Like another Agacazzi, he thought sullenly, glancing at the other Corellian bikes. And if they're trying to catch me, they might hurt my beautiful bike.

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Maul stomped toward the Coruscant Renaissance Center. He'd told the salesmen that he was going to arrange financing. "Financing. Hmmm. My speeder's worth maybe 1,000, I have about 72 credits to my name, I could sell some of the Pizza Colonies to the pet store for maybe 50-60 credits...which would leave me only 33,868 short. Shit! Maybe I could whammy Cynthia into giving me some money. That bitch still owes me for calling the cops outside of the Grey Side of the Force." He stomped through the crowd of picketing Padawans. "Or maybe I could just sell her to Huttse Slavers." A placard was waved in his face--"Save Historic Coruscant"--and Maul ripped it from the padawan's hands with a snarl. Breaking the sign in two, Maul threw the pieces through one of the few unbroken windows in the old building and stomped on. "Wonder how much the Huttse would give me..."
"Hey, Maul." Maul turned to see a sleepy Obi-Wan lounging on the condemned building's front stoop.

"What are you doing here?" Maul asked.

Obi-Wan picked up a placard he'd been using as a pillow. "Building good. Change bad. Rah rah," he said in a monotone. "Master Yaddle is all for historic preservation, so she let us out of 'Advanced Ethical Paradoxes 410' for this. I woke up to growling and breakage and thought I was back home. What are you doing here?"

"More shit work for Palpatine. He's got me handling the arrangements for some Senate-Jedi committee meeting at the Ren. Cen." Maul gestured in the building's general direction.

"The anti-social violence thing? Master Qui-Gon is on that committee. I'd been planning on having Temple work I had to finish. Or maybe a headache or some...what the Force happened to your hand?" He stared at the hand Maul'd been gesturing with.

Maul looked at his blistered fingers. "Oh, that. I had an electrical accident."

"Come on." Obi-Wan walked around a corner of the condemned building, with Maul following. "Electricity's dangerous. You've got to learn to use the right kind of connections." He drew Maul's hand up to his mouth and popped Maul's blistered pinky into his mouth.

"Uh-hmmm." said Maul.

"Remember the last time I did this?" asked Obi-wan before laving Maul's ring finger.

"Oh yeah."

Obi-Wan ran his wet tongue in circles around Maul's middle finger before sucking it into his mouth. Obi-Wan moved it in and out of his mouth while watching Maul's pupils dilate. Scraping his teeth on the newly healed finger, Obi-Wan drew it out of his mouth with a last lick and smiled before running the tip of his tongue in a feather-light caress along Maul's index finger. A few more barely there touches and the blisters were gone from it. Obi-Wan bent over Maul's hand, drawing circles with his tongue on the blistered palm and thumb. Within moments Maul's hand was whole and the rest of him was ready to melt into the walkway. He looked down the alley for a convenient niche.

"Hey, Obi-Wan!"

They both turned toward the main street. A young female padawan, barely old enough for training, was looking around the corner at them. "Watcha doing?"

"My friend hurt his hand, Kira. I'm helping him," replied Obi-Wan.

"Your 'friend' could use some more help," growled Maul softly.

"That's Yaddle's apprentice. I'm not going to explain to her why we're ducking into dark doorways together. And you've got a meeting to arrange." He waved at Kira, saying, "I'll be back in a few minutes," and turned to Maul. "C'mon. I'll walk to the Ren. Cen. with you. It'll give me something to do besides sleep on historic sites."

"I wish I could do that. I've got lots of things I'd rather do than play "aide" in a room full of bleeding hearts. Unless that phrase is being used literally."

Obi-Wan grinned at Maul, but then noticed that Maul was looking distractedly backup the main
street. "Something on your mind, Maul?"

"Force, yeah. There's this bike..."

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Walking along side Maul ten minutes later Obi-Wan was no closer to figuring out if Maul wanted to ride this new speeder bike or mate with it.

"And it's...it's...it's red and it's got this, this curve to its fuselage," Maul said.

"We're at the Ren. Cen., Maul."

"Uh-huh. Hey, where are you going?"

"Back to the protest. I love to hear you rant, but Master Yaddle will be coming by to check on us soon. It would be nice if I were actually there."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Hey, keep an eye out in the Ren. Cen. for convenient closets. If I can't get out of coming tonight we might as well both be coming tonight," Obi-Wan winked and headed back up the walkway.

Maul watched Obi-Wan's ass for a moment, then shook his head. "Room set-up. You're not here for bikes, or for Obi-Wan, you're here to oversee a simple meeting room set-up," he told himself.

"What do you mean, 'What reservation?'" growled Maul, five minutes later. The mauve, four-armed semi-humanoid behind the counter double-checked the screen. Its gilded nametag read, "I'm Eil'n! How can I be of service?"

"Our records show no reservation for the Jedi, the Senate, the Jedi-Senate committee, or for any combination thereof, today." The receptionist smiled. "I'm sorry for any inconvenience. Have a nice day. Next."

The man behind Maul started to move forward, only to be clotheslined by Maul's outflung arm.

"Wait a minute. You've got the official representatives of 8 planets, as well as the highest-ranking members of the Jedi Council arriving in 2 hours. Don't you think you should find a place to put them?"

"I'm sorry sir. We're fully booked. If you'd like to make a new reservation we have openings in three weeks."

"Three weeks! I can't wait for three weeks. I can't wait 3 hours!"

Eil'n began to look annoyed. "I'm sorry sir. But that's not our problem."

Maul's fingers dug centimeter-deep grooves into the marble counter top. He considered bludgeoning Eil'n to death with it, but he didn't have time to wreak havoc and find an appropriate meeting space. "Show me the reservation listings," he snarled, slapping the receptionist with a quick mind whammy as encouragement.

"Certainly, sir." Eyes glazed, it turned the monitor screen toward him. He looked over the listings. Aha. "There's been a mistake. The Calimarian Trade Coalition isn't meeting until next month." He cranked the whammy up a few amps. "You will put the Senate-Jedi Committee in the Grande Republic room instead."
"Certainly, sir." The keyboard clattered as 24 fingers made short work of the changes. "Will there be anything else?"

Maul briefly considered what four sets of hands might be able to do for him, but let it pass. "Who do I see about the room set up?" he asked.

Maul followed Eil'n's directions to an office in the Ren. Cen.'s administrivia area. Two doors away from the lobby all the Ren. Cen.'s marble, plant life, and gently recessed lighting disappeared; replaced by pea green paint and bare fluorescent tubes. Convention Center personnel scurried through the halls like rats in the wainscoting. Maul walked in the door labeled "Service Manager."

"I'm here about the set-up for the Grande Republic room this evening," he stated. The middle-aged woman behind a cheap plastic desk blinked at him a few times.

"That room's already set up."

Maul frowned suspiciously. It couldn't be this easy. Fishing the list Sidious had given him from his back pocket, Maul asked, "You have seating and a table for 30, ice-water, coffee, and audio-visual equipment ready?"

Oliravet, or so the name on the door claimed, frowned back at him. "Of course not. We've got 6 Denebian couches, 14 buckets of Tatooinan sand frogs, and a heavy-duty heat exchanger set up. You've got the standard Calimarian meeting package."


"The one that you..." Oliravet turned to her monitor and hit a few keys. Apparently the reservation changes went system-wide quickly. "Oh, dear."

"Yes."

"You're not Calimarian," she said sadly.

"No shit."

"Oh, dear."

"You said that already."

"You probably didn't ask for the strobe lights or Mimgonian Polka music then."

Maul just looked at her.

"Well, I'll just see about getting your furniture and refreshments," she said.

Maul frowned. "You will?" Without threats of bodily harm? He felt a nagging disappointment. "Er, you will. Yes, right. Within," he checked his watch, "an hour and a half."

"Oh, less than that, certainly. I'll get my people on it right away. Will there be anything else you need?" Oliravet smiled sweetly at him.

"Does this building have a bar?"
An hour later, Maul was on the outside of four Pete's Wicked Ales, on the Jedi-Senate Bilateral Committee's tab. "You're getting soft, Sidious," he thought. "This wasn't enough friction to hone my fingernails, much less my rage. I'll be striking you down any day now." He thought back to Obi-Wan's parting comments. Hmm. Cloakroom, closet, anteroom with couch and complimentary lube? Let's see how full service the Ren. Cen. really is.

Maul noted several good possible rendezvous sites on his way to the Grande Republic room. *Hey, a cleaning supply closet. We've never tried that one position with a really top-notch vacuum cleaner.* But the closer he got to the meeting room, the more a hauntingly peppy tune intruded on his thoughts.

I want to polka,
For a song, an hour, a day.
I want to polka,
I want to have my way.

He stood outside the meeting room door. Yes, there was no mistaking it. The sounds emanated from the meeting room.

I dream, and when I dream
I dream of polkas
But nobody polkas alone.

Maul cautiously opened the door. He was nearly flung back across the hall by the combination of strobe lights, polka music, hot air, and essence of Tatooine sand frog.

"Gaaah." Four Pete's Wicked Ales considered reversing their path. Maul looked inside the room and saw that all the items on his list had been set up--table, chairs, drinks, AV equipment. But none of the previous supplies had been taken away. Evidently the Calimarians were from a considerably warmer climate than Coruscant. Their snacks had been placed next to the heat exchanger and were the worse for it; the smell of decomposing Tatooine sand frog was nearly hallucinogenic. The chairs and table commanded the center of the room, but were completely blocked by the overstuffed Denebian couches.

I want to polka,
For a song, an hour, a day.

Maul leapt over the closet couch and did a back flip onto the table. With a twirl of his lightsaber, he reduced the audiovisual equipment to bits, stopping both the music and strobe light. His next blow took out the heat exchanger. He panted in the hot room, sweat gleaming on his tattoo, and running down his body. Strangely, the sweat seemed to be pooling most around his right foot. Maul looked down to see his right boot ankle-deep in sand frogs and some frog-infused liquid.
"Gaaah," he said again, kicking the bucket off his foot and onto one of the couches. He glanced at his watch. Twenty minutes until meeting time. "I am in deep shit," he thought. He spotted a phone and rang up the front desk.

"Get me Service Manager Oliravet!" he snarled.

"May I tell her who's calling?" chirped the receptionist.

"Her mortality. Get her now!"

"One moment please"

Oliravet made it to the room in under five minutes; Maul timed it. She looked inside the room.

"Oh dear."

Maul growled at her.

"I'm afraid we're going to have to take that out of your room deposit," she said, gesturing toward the remains of the heat exchanger. Maul had thrown the AV equipment bits into a closet while waiting for her.

"Screw the deposit. I've got 30 people coming in 15 minutes. I can't put them in here!"

"This is the only room available."

Maul closed his fist and watched her hands go to her throat in panic. "You will fix this room," he said, and then loosened his grip.

"Y-y-y-yes sir. Right away, sir." She backed away from him, toward the phone, to make a call. "Eil'n," she said, still watching him with wide eyes, "send up the post-convention emergency clean-up team to the Grande Republic room. Right away."

Five minutes later, seven burly men stood inside the meeting room door. Oliravet had been nervously rearranging the coffee and water on a table on the other side of the room from Maul. She looked at him. "They're yours." She looked at the men. "Do whatever this man says." Oliravet fled from the room.

Minions. Cool. He'd always wanted minions, but now he didn't have the time to really appreciate them.

"You, you, you, and you," he pointed at the first five men. "Get these couches out of here. You and you, get me new AV equipment. You have five minutes." Two men hurried from the room. One of the other men piped up, "Sir, I'm not sure how the couches fit through the door..."

Maul turned on his light saber and carved the nearest couch into three chunks. "They fit that way."

Maul and the crew quickly fell into a rhythm: slice, slice, carry, slice, slice, carry. Within three minutes the new AV equipment arrived, carried by a disheveled duo. They plugged it in and it immediately began playing a MicroSith PowerPoint presentation for Gungan Exports, Ltd. Maul turned it off, popped out the disc, and tossed it in a bucket of sand frogs. He handed the bucket to the duo. "Take this, and anything that looks like this, away," he ordered. They scrambled around collecting buckets while Maul finished carving up furniture. The smell of hot, dead sand frog was joined by that of melted upholstery. "Six minutes left," he thought. He grabbed one of his minions by the throat and said, "Climate control!"
The minion gurgled and pointed at a wall switch. Maul stalked over to it and turned the fan level to "cyclone."

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The meeting leeches four hours from Maul's life. Aside from turning down the ventilation and raising an eyebrow at the stains on the carpet, Sidious hadn't found a lot to complain about before the others arrived.

*Maul had never "heard" a mental blink before. But, he heard one from Sidious.

*Blink.* Why does the meeting room smell like sand frog?

Part of the meeting package, Master. Maul carefully didn't tell him *which* meeting package.

Obi-Wan had trailed in behind Qui-Gon, who pointedly sat as far away from Maul as possible. Maul set his boredom tolerance to "high" as the meeting began.

"We have to wonder about the effect these video games are having on our youth," said Senator Bail Organa. "Alderaan is a peaceful planet, and yet..." The Corellian senator blithered on about movies, "...some of the most vile images infecting our children's minds..."

"A desensitizing effect these violent songs have..." burbled Yoda.

Obi-Wan was apparently serving as Qui-Gon's aid. Every time Qui-Gon sent Obi-Wan for something--water, extra pens, copies of handouts--Obi-Wan took the opportunity to brush up against Maul and pass along some interesting mental images. They broke up the drone of the meeting very nicely.

I saw the bike (mental image of Agacazzi)

I liked the bike.

I'd like to see you on the bike. (mental image of Maul on the bike in his black leather boots and nothing else)

Maul shivered. He really hoped Yoda didn't pick up on that image.

I'd like to see you doing me on the bike. (Ooooh, yes. Maul LIKED that mental image.)

The hours just flew by.

When Maul and Obi-Wan finally cut themselves loose from the meeting Calrissian's Speeder Emporium was the only place in the neighborhood still open, aside from the bars. And Calrissian looked like he was about to close. Obi-Wan went in first. Seeing the Padawan outfit, the Toydarian immediately buzzed up to him. "How-a can I help-a you, young-a Padawan?" he purred.

Maul gave Obi-Wan a minute or two to get the whammy-proof salesman engrossed in comparing a Kessel Ninja and a Sandorian Triumph. "Oh-a no. The Sandorians have fixed all-a the power fluctuation problemzzz," lied the Toydarian.
Maul strode over to Simon Calrissian. "I'm back for the bike."

Calrissian tried to look unsurprised and failed. "Going to arrange financing," was usually another way of saying, "I'm stone broke." He decided not to ask Maul where he'd gotten the money. There were things he didn't need to know.

"A wonderful choice," Simon said. "Let me just get my partner over here and we'll draw up the sales contract."

"Your partner?" Maul looked over where Obi-Wan straddled a Howasondi Super Hawk. The little blue nemesis hovered beside him.

"Right. Schooster's over there with another customer, but that shouldn't take long. He's the senior partner and has to co-sign all major sales. It's just a formality."

Well, shit. Maul glared at Schooster and then looked back at Simon. "I will ride this bike tonight, he thought. Then he smiled. "Say, Simon. While we're waiting, how about a test ride?"

It took surprisingly little whammy on Maul's part to get the keys from Simon. The reason became clear on his way out the door.

"Don't worry if you get lost, now," said Simon. "We've got a tracker on all our bikes. If you're gone for more than an hour or so we'll find you."

Maul bared his teeth at Simon and pushed the Agacazzi out the door.

Outside the building, Maul started the engine. Suddenly it felt as if he were straddling a large, purring Denebian bloodcat. The motor's gentle vibration hit a low note that settled in the base of his skull. Maul pointed the bike toward the road and gently shifted to first.

"Holy shit!" Maul didn't know if he screamed this or not, but it didn't matter. Anyone who heard him was miles away already. By second gear, only the fastest speeders kept pace with him. By third gear, Maul had to pull up to the top levels of Coruscant traffic just to avoid ramming anything. Buildings were a blur below him. His speed caused traffic patterns to condense into streaks of red and white. A dark area to the left proved to be a traffic-free section surrounding the Jedi Temple reconstruction site, now closed for the evening. Maul took the Agacazzi into a tight descending radius turn, and buzzed the future site of the new main hall. He ignited his lightsaber, cut a cable supporting a 3-ton decorative column, and was out of the construction site before the marble smashed on the ground. Alarms sounded for a couple of seconds, but were soon left behind in the rushing wind.

"I am such hot shit," Maul exulted. He gunned the bike back up to building-blurring speed. He was going as fast as he'd ever gone without actually jumping to hyperspace, and he still had three gears left to go. "Life is great," he thought. "Life loves me."

He took the bike through several turns, just to feel it respond beneath him. As he dipped closer to the planet's surface he realized that he was near the bike shop, and on a quick fly-by he spotted Obi-Wan waiting by his speeder. Maul canted the bike over onto its side, drew up beside him, and said, "Hop on." With a roar of engine and scream of wind, they were gone.

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Forty-five minutes later, Maul and Obi-Wan were racing through the ruddy pre-dawn light a quarter of the way around Coruscant. A voice from the 'Cazzi's comm grill intruded, "Please return this vehicle to Calrissian's Speeder Bike Emporium or we will be forced to call the police. You have fifteen minutes to comply."
"Well, shit," said Obi-Wan.

"I'd better take it back. If you get caught on a stolen bike it'll be electrode fun at the Happy Farms again. And I'll probably end up in the next ward," said Maul.

"You're right."

"I'm always right. I keep telling you..."

"Oh, shut up. But you're right about the 'Cazzi, anyway. It's what you would be if someone turned you into a speederbike. You should have it. It's practically a moral imperative."

"Is that the kind of thing Yaddle teaches you in 'Advanced Ethical Paradoxes 410'?" asked Maul.

"Not hardly. Right now I wish she'd taught us something more useful."

"Like what?"

"For starters, I'd like to know how we're gonna make a half-hour trip in fifteen minutes."

Maul grinned. "Simple, young Padawan. We haven't even hit fifth gear on this thing. Let's see what it'll do in sixth."

As they plunged through the upper atmosphere, Maul thought he could see a redshift in the corner of his eye. It looked good.

The voice from the speaker grill piped up at the ten-minute mark, and became continuous at the five. If it had been any other bike Maul would have reprogrammed the comm equipment with his light saber. Instead he distracted himself for the last few miles with the feeling of Obi-Wan's hands under his shirt. He distracted himself a little too much—the oncoming gray delivery van was a rush of plasteel out of nowhere. Sithly reflexes combined with the best of Corellian steering to avoid a collision, but the spooked van veered into a Guinness truck that was nowhere near as dexterous. The truck yawed down and to the left, coming to a crashing halt on the remains of Maul's speeder. Bottles of beer flew everywhere, bringing a dozen winos out of the shadows. It soon looked like his late speeder was getting a better wake than Maul would have expected for himself. Maul graciously swerved around them, bringing the Agacazzi to the shop's front door.

Simon and Schooster were waiting nervously by the window. They came out to look over the bike, salesman-smiles pinned to their strained faces. "So, how do you like her?" asked Simon.

"Mmmmm. Not bad," replied Maul. "She gets an interesting note in the secondary exhaust system when she's doing around 350."

Simon turned gray, and Schooster a shade of powder blue that Palpatine might have worn. Neither looked happy. "Errrr, right," said Simon, who looked more intently at the bike for scratches or scuffs. Maul and Obi-Wan reluctantly got off the bike and allowed it to be pushed back in the shop.

Maul turned his attention to the remains of his old speeder. "Damn. Now I don't even have that to trade in," he groused.

"Yousa stop! Stop! Thats meesa beer!" shouted the Gungan truck driver. He turned toward Maul and Obi-Wan. "Yousa crazy mensa, no? Flying that speeder so fast, making theesa van swerve into meesa lane. How rude! Whosa gonna pay for that, messa wanna know?" the driver pointed
toward Maul's old speeder.

"Good question," said Maul. "Since thatsa, damn, that is my speeder."

"What?"

"You destroyed my speeder, you idiot. What are you gonna do about it?" Maul ratcheted up to righteous indignation like the Agacazzi going through its gears.

"Meesa saw you on that red bike. Usa very fast. Thatsa," he pointed at the wreck, "parked!"

"It sure isn't going anywhere now." Maul worked up to one last mind whammy for the night. He was tired, his head ached from his earlier efforts, and he was hindered by the fact that he was saying nothing but the truth. Maul put every ounce of the evening's frustration behind his next words. "You saw us ride up on an extremely expensive speeder bike. You swerved to miss the gray van. You crashed your truck into my vehicle. You will make this right."

"Meesa will make this good, yes." The Gungun's thin shoulders drooped in dejection.

Behind him, Obi-Wan said, "Oh, come on Maul. You can't lay this on him. Have you ever seen a more pathetic lifeform?"

Maul suspected that two big blue eyes and a quivering lower lip lurked behind him, and refused to turn around. "This is why insurance was invented."

"But..."

"He had to swerve for the van, so it's not his fault. Everyone saw it. Heck, it's even true. Truth is soooo light-side." Maul shuddered and looked back. "Guinness won't even notice the insurance hike and I'll get the money for my speeder bike. What more could you want?"

Obi-Wan narrowed his eyes. But he didn't say a word while the driver gave a long, detailed description of the two main vehicles to a traffic cop, nor when Maul described in loving detail the wonders of the speeder that was now submerged in hops-scented froth. Maul was nearly poetic and had the cop's fullest sympathy. "I know they all go eventually," Maul said, "but she was so young and beautiful."

"I'll get the report in as quickly as possible. We'll make sure Guinness's insurance company comes through for you, mate," said the young cop.

"And the fuselage. She had such a wonderful curve to her fuselage. Did I mention her handling? Oh, the way she cornered at speed..."

Obi-Wan put his face in his hands and leaned against the shop wall, shaking hysterically. Maul gestured toward him. "See, even my friend there is torn up about it." The cop turned back to the truck and Obi-Wan gave Maul the finger.

Soon statements were taken and the shop was closed. The winos had carted off the beer bottles and any broken speeder bits that could hold the spilled beer or be sold for parts. Maul figured that most all of his old speeder would be scattered through grocery carts and cardboard boxes before the evidence 'bots came to collect it, which was just as well. Maul pressed his nose against the dark store window, where his Agacazzi sat deceptively still.

"Let's go home, Maul," said Obi-Wan. "I owe you a ride."

"Oh, yeah. It's really out of your way."
Obi-Wan grinned. "You can wait here until the insurance money comes through, or you can ride with me now."

Maul tore himself away from the window and as they started off down the street, asked, "Just what kinda ride are we talking about here?"

"Well, my speeder's pretty average. But when we get home I can show you a real ride." Obi-Wan grinned. "It's not as fast as an Agacazzi, but it handles really well."

"I'll bet."

Obi-Wan licked his finger and ran it down his own chest. "Oooh, and the lines of the fuselage..."

Maul growled approvingly and headed up the street. "Let's go. I wanna see how it handles in those tight corners."

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