STAR WARS: A Jedi’s Daughter

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Summary

She had been lost to her family at a young age forced to live on an alien plant a slave to cruel masters. All that was about to change after one chance meeting. Never could she imagine that her life would or should change from anything other than bad to worse. She wondered if this was real or just another cruel twist of fate.

Takes place during Phantom Menace and follows the movie.

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Notes

Hello All!
This is my first posting on AO3, and it is a re-posting of a story that is up on FanFiction.net. (same title, same pen name). I just wanted to get my feet wet over here and test the waters and thought this was a good piece to cut my AO3 teeth on. This is slightly different since I've done some editing before posting each chapter. No beta so any
mistakes you see are my own. If you see anything painfully awful please let me know!

WARNING
Just so you are aware there is mentions of unsavory situations and violence in this fic. I like to think it is handled in a tasteful manner and not too explicit, but there is a reason I've rated it an M. If this is a problem for you either skip over the questionable bits or just bypass the story entirely. No hard feelings. I appreciate you giving it a chance.

I must give credit where credit is due: the Star Wars universe and characters do not belong to me but to George Lucas. The only thing that is mine are certain plot twists, new characters, and new dialogue. The rest is George’s. I’ve also researched entries on Wookieepedia for greater knowledge of the Star Wars universe.
Life on Tatooine could never be anything that anyone would call simple, easy or enjoyable; although it had its moments. For all of its rough edges it was the one planet that she could honestly (and with some confidence) call home. Vaguely she was aware of the fact that she had not been born on the desert planet; it was not her ancestral home. Still, she had grown up on the desert planet. For that, it carried a special place in her memory. It was not a particularly pleasant memory but it was there.

Any recollection she did have of her life (before the unending sand and the harsh suns of Tatooine) was as fragile as a mirage of water. The only thing she could claim absolute knowledge of was that she had been free. She assumed that she had been happy as well. Happiness and freedom should go hand-in-hand, she often thought. It would be a pity if freedom brought no more happiness than slavery. She had no way of knowing for certain; but she was comforted by the few day dreams she allowed herself. They had yet to fail her; unlike reality. It failed her daily.

Tatooine wasn’t the nastiest planet in the galaxy, but it certainly wasn’t the gentlest planet. The arid planet was harsh in every sense of the word; from its climate to the few laws that governed its inhabitants. It was a particularly unforgiving place to live for the lowliest of the low; the slaves. It was to that category she had been banished. A man who owed Gardulla the Hutt money had found her wandering the desert on the outskirts of town. He had tricked her into trusting him and then had sold her to Gardulla in order to cancel his own debts. At the time she had only been five years old and she quickly learned the first lesson Tatooine had to offer; never trust anyone.

She may have learned it but she had a hard time believing it. She still remembered that there was some good in the galaxy. Gardulla enjoyed beating that, and other foolish ideals a slave could not afford, out of her. She proved to be tougher than she looked and Gardulla enjoyed attempting to break the child. The girl assumed that it was because the Hutt enjoyed owning a readymade punching bag. Whatever the reason her insolence amused the crime lord and because of that she earned some begrudging respect. She took it even though more often than not it earned her more blows than any reward. She truly did not care if she was respected as a human/sentient being or not. She was more concerned about winning her freedom and that of the family she had forged for herself. If that meant she would have to take a few beatings then so be it.

Some slave owners feared that Gardulla had given her too much personal power by respecting her stubborn refusal to yield. They would not dare approach Gardulla and criticize the Hutt in person – only a fool would be so stupid – but they did grumble and plotted half-hearted rebellions against the Hutt. Eventually their displeasure reached Gardulla’s attention and it stopped the moment she offered to let the grumblers take a stab at breaking the ‘renegade’ slave. She had had more ruthless owners than she cared to count and had more cruelties done to her than she cared to remember. The memories of her torments threatened to drown her daydreams.

The injustice of her life was running through her mind (as it always did) while she traveled the crowded streets of Mos Espa. She was on her way to her second ‘job’ of the day and had decided to risk being late by taking a small detour through the junk dealer’s shops. She wanted to stop by Watto’s shop to check in on her adopted brother. There had been a vague threat made against him and if she was publically seen checking up on him than no harm would come of it. As she neared the shop she saw her little brother running off in the direction of home. Wondering why Watto would let him go early she quickly adjusted her path to follow the boy. Anakin had left the shop...
hastily and while it was not unusual to see him tearing through the streets of Mos Espa she did wonder what his current urgency was all about.

Fearing the worst she hurried her own steps; still maintaining a discreet distance between them so that she could spot any trouble that might be following the boy. When she reached the market to find her brother coming to the rescue of some outlander, she felt a moment of relief. Until she saw that Anakin was defending the outlander against Sebulba. It was her turn to tear through the crowd and she did, a path opening up in front of her once people got a good look at the icy glint in her dark eyes.

“Achutta Sebulba,” she said her voice low and quiet even as she placed her hand protectively on Anakin’s shoulder. (hello Sebulba).

“Bona nai kachu,” the boy added helpfully. (you’re in trouble now).

“Hi chuba da nagg, shag?” The Dug asked belligerently ignoring Anakin. (what do you want, slave?) Although he tried to hide it she could sense the alien’s nerves. She had a reputation just as bloody as his own and if it came to a fight no one in this crowd would back him.

“Hodrudda,” she replied her eyes glowing wickedly. “Tinka uba vopa tah nee choo, kung?” (a challenge, think you want to die, scum?)

For a moment it looked like he would finally take up the challenge. Then with a snarl he turned back to Anakin and took out his frustrations on the boy. Sebulba was scum, belligerent and cowardly, he knew that he could not answer her challenge without going to the arenas. The arenas were her domain and to enter them would be the death of the Dug. Everyone knew that she would gladly kill him.

The threats he leveled at Anakin infuriated her. She knew that Sebulba would gain credit for great daring, threatening her brother in front of her. Everyone knew how protective of Ani she was and everyone knew how much she wanted to turn Sebulba into bantha fodder. They also knew that she would not act on those impulses – she kept the bloodshed in the arenas. Anakin’s parting shot to Sebulba was rather masterful and she found herself resisting the urge to swell with pride for the lad.

At the approach of more outlanders she remembered that she was supposed to be somewhere and she was now dangerously late. Still she could not abruptly leave without saying goodbye to Anakin. After all she never could know when or if she would see him again.

“I must go Ani. Tell Shmi I’ll be late for dinner and you need not wait for me,” the boy nodded in response although she doubted if he understood. His attention was rather focused on the outlanders. Smiling to herself, she gave him a swift kiss on the check then said, “I’m proud of you for standing up to that slimo Ani.”

She left then without a backwards glance.

She thought about trying to enter the training rooms of the arenas as unobtrusively as possible but then decided against it. Her tardiness had already been noticed. They always kept an eye out for her arrival. She was the one slave that brought the biggest crowd to the arenas, which translated into the largest cash flow they would see in a week. Sure enough the moment she entered the training room she was greeted by the gruff bellow of the fight master.

“Hosta!” He bellowed across the room using the stupid nickname he had given her. “Do alay!” (you’re late) She sighed in resignation then obediently (for once) turned to face the expected
punishment. She wondered briefly if today’s brutality would be any different than yesterdays.

It was not bad, certainly not the worst she had ever received; just a few lashes with some white-hot iron coils. She did not even feel the need to flinch as they connected with her skin creating new and re-opening old scars. The fight master did not whip her for long or too harshly and then wonders upon wonders even applied rough medical attention to the wounds. That could only mean that Gardulla was in the audience and was betting heavily on the outcome of today’s fight. The female crime lord would be livid if her best (only) money making slave was too wounded to perform properly. The slave must be punished but not so damaged that it cannot work, she thought sarcastically.

Today she would fight some random challenger; often they were forcefully pulled off the streets and shoved into the arena. It was this element of the unknown that drew in the spectators. Sometimes those random opponents would defeat the current reigning champion. She had been such a challenger; randomly thrown into the violence of the arena at the tender age of nine in response to one of Gardulla’s whims. She had not only managed to defeat her opponent that day but went on to reach a position that most free female fighters never achieved let alone a female slave.

It was only with a slight sense of trepidation and anxiety that she entered the fighting ring. Rolling her shoulders to loosen her sore back she took her place in the center of the ring. A place that some days was more her home than the hovel she shared with the Skywalkers.

What anxiety she had turned into excitement the moment she felt centered. This rush before a fight was something she never wanted to enjoy but looked forward to feeling every time. It was a blatant contradiction but one she had come to accept and expect. Her excitement grew when she saw that this time her challenger was a Dug. For a brief nanosecond she wondered if Sebulba had actually taken the bait she laid out for him. To her disappointment the Dug was just one of Sebulba’s cronies. She should have known better, with a podrace just a day away Sebulba would do nothing to risk his own neck.

She gave vent to a bored sigh and lazily braced herself for the first attack. Impatiently she wanted for the gong to sound; she wanted this finished as quickly as possible. The only place she wanted to be right now was home, safe in the hovel with Shmi and Ani.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading folks! I appreciate any comments/concerns/cookies(?!??) you might choose to leave
Noticing that Jar Jar was no longer with them the Jedi turned around to try and find what kind of trouble the Gungan had gotten into now. He discovered the clumsy Gungan being bullied by a Dug. With a sigh he moved to come to Jar Jar’s rescue when the child from the junk shop beat him to it. The boy only made one or two exchanges with the Dug before he was joined by another figure; an adolescent girl. Qui-Gon was immediately drawn to the flinty eyed girl. There was something about the girl that arrested his attention. Perhaps it was her obvious disdain for the tyrannical Dug that captured Qui-Gon’s interest. Even from a distance he could tell that she had no tolerance for the alien.

He may not have been able to hear what she said to the Dug or the tone in which she spoke but he could discern that she had insulted him in some way. Judging by the crowd’s suddenly tense silence Qui-Gon realized that the girl had shamed the Dug in a way that could not be ignored. They glared at each other, the Dug holding an obviously aggressive pose the girl looking deceptively relaxed. From the way the crowd resolutely concentrated on her and nothing else Qui-Gon gathered that she was capable of being just as violent as her opponent, if not more so. For a moment the Jedi wondered if he would be forced to get involved. To his surprise the Dug backed down from the girl’s blatant challenge. He seemed petrified of the girl for some reason that Qui-Gon could not fathom. The Dug actually physically flinched away from the fire in her eyes.

Qui-Gon watched as the girl continued to glare daggers at the Dug while the alien attempted to intimidate the boy. The lad appeared to be just as unafraid of the Dug as the girl. Curious at the children’s bravery (as well as needing to collect Jar Jar) Qui-Gon finally started walking towards the group. At his approach the girl braced herself for a hasty retreat; but not before leaning down and whispering something to the boy. Satisfied by whatever she had told him the girl looked up glancing at Qui-Gon and Padmé for a brief moment.

In that brief moment he was given his first glimpse of the girl’s face. She was pretty enough, her guarded expression masking any real beauty she may or may not possess. At first he thought she looked coldly indifferent to all that went on around her; but he could sense that she was someone who cared more deeply than she wanted to risk expressing. As he came closer he could see conflicting emotions swarming in her dark eyes. She left abruptly before Qui-Gon could discover anything else.

That brief glimpse stayed with him distracting him from the boy’s chatter. There was something about those eyes that tugged at his memory and it ate away at him. For the life of him he could not place how those eyes could be so familiar; for Force sake he hadn’t even seen what color they were!

At the lad’s candid remark that the Dug could have turned Jar Jar into orange goo, the boy recaptured the Jedi’s wandering attention.

“Nevertheless, the boy is right” Qui-Gon began agreeing with the child but was distracted by something he sensed in the boy. With a slight nearly unnoticeable shake of his head he brought back his wandering attention. “You were heading for trouble. Thank you, my young friend.”

He turned to leave then not surprised to notice that the boy had joined them. The Jedi made no issue out of it either; for upon meeting the boy everything felt at once right and wrong about the Force. Mindful of that feeling Qui-Gon paid more careful attention to the lad. When he offered to have them seek shelter from the sandstorm with him Qui-Gon did not object. He viewed it as an excellent opportunity to learn more about the boy and perhaps the girl.
They followed Anakin through the dusty streets of Mos Espa into a slightly less well kept area (by Mos Espa standards). Qui-Gon ignored the handmaiden’s silent disapproval which slowly dissipated as the winds began to pick up flinging stinging sand into their faces. Anakin lead them to the door of a clay home no different from those surrounding it; but to Qui-Gon the place felt different. It vibrated subtly with the life force of those who called the sturdy clay construction home.

“Mom I’m home!” Anakin announced upon entering his home. His casual announcement did nothing to prepare his mother for the shock of seeking visitors crowding in her front door. A shock that was clearly written on her face when she came around the corner to greet her son, even though she masked it quickly. Anakin excited by the visitors, Padmé in particular, did not bother to reassure his mother beyond the explanation that they were his new friends. Qui-Gon took it upon himself to reassure her.

“Your son was kind enough to offer us shelter,” he explained and at her answering smile, Qui-Gon continued. “He’s a very special boy.” Her smile became even brighter at that.

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The fight could not end soon enough for her. But, judging from the roars of protests, its ending came about too abruptly for the crowd. She could not be bothered to care. The maniacs had been given their fair share of bloodshed – more than they deserved. The majority of blood spilled today had been hers. Someone thought it would be entertaining to allow the Dug to sneak in an old steel blade; one that had rusted terribly from age and disuse. It was now currently sticking out of her shoulder where the Dug had plunged it into the joint hoping to immobilize her arm. She no opportunity to remove it during the fight and the bastard Dug had taken advantage of the fact. He often used it as a handle of sorts grabbing the hilt in order to get enough leverage to hit her in the head. In the process the dagger got jerked back and forth widening the wound but never fully dislodging from her shoulder.

Eventually she had managed to overpower him; moving too quickly for him to track and delivering so many swift jarring blows that he could not keep up with her. After calming yet another empty victory she had decided to spare the Dug’s life. It was only after a fierce internal battle did her better nature win. Being stabbed like that had truly pissed her off and for a moment she had been sorely tempted to break her one and only rule – do not kill, if given the choice. Although he was alive, the Dug in worse shape than her. Some other fighter could mop up what she had left behind; she hated killing and would not do it unless Gardulla demanded it of her.

Apparently Gardulla had been pleased with her performance. For when she had looked to the Hutt to see if the crime lord approved of her decision to spare the Dug’s life Gardulla had given her assent. Furthermore, Gardulla showed her pleasure by having a medic waiting to attend to her prize fighter’s wound. The girl ignored the medic’s attention, at first, waiting to see if she would be called upon to fight again. When three fights had passed and Gardulla had not called for her again the girl relaxed and finally allowed her shoulder to be seen too.

Not that it would be given the medical attention truly due to such a severe wound. As for the whip lashes on her back – which had slowly bled throughout the fight – they would not be seen to again; after all the fight master had already attended to them. Slaves were not to be fawned over and precious medical supplies should never be wasted upon them. In one day she had already received more medical attention than she could ever expect to see. Although ‘medical attention’ and ‘medic’ in Mos Espa actually meant haphazard cleaning and binding of wounds by an intoxicated and horny idiot; such as Delcep Noirth.

She groaned inwardly at the male Zeltron’s approach. Zeltron’s were known for their lustful ways and Delcep was no exception. He used his exotic looks and his telepathic abilities to charm
everyone he wanted into his bed. Unfortunately for her, she had become Delcep’s favorite playmate.

“I do not need your help Delcep,” she growled at him. She would rather leave the arenas and travel through the streets to home with the dagger still sitting in her skin and muscle than to allow him to touch her.

“Come now Hosta,” he purred using that damnable nickname, “do not be too hasty.”

Tired and annoyed she took a swing at him with her good arm. Delcep must have anticipated the move for he easily caught her by the wrist and effortlessly spun her around so that her arm was twisted up behind her; trapped between her back and his stomach.

“Always so hasty mwa stupa pateesa,” he whispered in her ear taking a moment to nibble at her earlobe while it was so handy. My foolish darling, he called her. She disliked that just as much as she did the fight master’s nickname for her.

“I am nobody’s pateesa Delcep.”

“True, but you are everybody’s favorite slave,” he agreed nuzzling at her neck. His one free hand roaming at will up her injured left arm. Despite herself she could feel that she was yielding to his particular brand of hormonally charged telepathy.

“Now relax Hosta just relax.” Delcep murmured against the skin of her neck. Then he placed a tender kiss at the base of her neck even as with one swift motion he yanked the dagger out of her shoulder.

She screamed broke his hold on her and elbowed him in the gut for good measure. Delcep laughed hysterically and while still holding the bloody steel blade in one hand he looked like the red-skinned lunatic she knew him to be.

“Echutta! Chuba doompa, dopa-maskey kung!” She growled at him snatching the few pieces of gauze he had brought with him out of his hands. She began to bandage her own wound as she stormed away from him. (expletive. you low-down, two-faced scum).

“Koono t’cHutta?” He called after her still laughing. (going somewhere). “No matter slave, I will find you later at the cantina!”

“Cha skrunee da pat, Sleemo.” (don’t count on it, slimo) She murmured underneath her breath knowing full well that he would find her at the cantina. She wouldn’t be able to escape from his advances there for Shol expected every one of his girls to bring in good money. She was Delcep’s favorite plaything which meant she was in for one hell of a long day.

Not caring currently that there was a ranging sandstorm going on outside she left the arenas desperate to get home. She needed at least one moment of relief before she was expected to report at Shol’s cantina for the entertainment of raucous human and near-human males.

But first she needed to take better care of her wound. Shmi would not leave her in peace if she came home injured. More importantly she couldn’t stand to be the cause of more anxiety for Shmi. Fighting against the wind she decided to stop off at Jira’s food stand, the old woman had become accustomed to helping her patch herself up.

The storm was in full swing by the time she reached Jira’s. She huddled outside of the old woman’s door knocking until it eventually opened.

“Oh child, come in quick.”
Qui-Gon listened to Obi-Wan’s news about the transmission from Naboo. He did not like the implications the transmission made any more than Obi-Wan had. The situation swiftly getting out of hand and time was now against them more than ever. Qui-Gon disliked being pushed into follow someone else’s agenda – particularly when it was a hidden agenda and he could not figure out who was pulling the strings. He turned off his comlink feeling like he was being backed into a corner. All he had done so far was to react to someone else’s move; it did not suit his personality. He hoped that this necessary stop over on Tatooine would allow him to stop reacting and start making his own moves in this game.

Contemplating all the possible outcomes of the events that have transpired so far today, Qui-Gon reentered the Skywalker’s kitchen to help Shmi prepare for the midday meal. They had just settled down to eat at the makeshift table (Anakin had built it the boy told them proudly) when there was an unexpected commotion at the front door. Clearly they could hear the howling of the sandstorms winds as the door opened and someone stepped inside. Shmi paused in the act of sitting down, her expression worried and her eyes burned with concern. Without a word she began to move from the kitchen and towards the entranceway her steps hesitant.

“It’s me Shmi,” a young feminine voice called out. Shmi’s expression instantly changed from one of hesitant worry to one of motherly affection. She moved to stand in the doorway.

“Lyyr I thought you were going to come home earlier,” she called out in response her voice only slightly reproachful.

“Didn’t Anakin tell you I was going to be late?” The voice replied. Shmi did not answer right away; instead she turned her reproachful gaze on her now sheepish son. “I take it that he did not,” this Lyyr answered her own question with a touch of amusement coloring her voice.

“I’m sorry Lyyr,” Anakin called out, blushing under his mother’s gaze.

“It’s alright Ani,” the voice assured him. Although it still sounded amused Qui-Gon could now hear the utter exhaustion of the speaker.

“Lyyr come join us and eat,” Shmi gently coaxed, “let me fetch it for you.”

“No Shmi, don’t trouble yourself. I’ll fetch my own plate after I’ve tidied up a bit.”

“Tidy up?” The worry in Shmi’s voice returned. At her question the Force brought to Qui-Gon the image of a dark haired girl fighting for her life against a random opponent, the vision was tinged with the overwhelming fear that this time the girl would not survive. It was clear to the Jedi that this was the fate that Shmi feared for Lyyr; yet the Force made it clear to him that it would not be her fate (at least not now).

“I’m covered in sand Shmi,” the girl responded “the storm is still raging outside.” Lyyr’s attempt to reassure Shmi failed to convince Qui-Gon and he sensed that Shmi had her doubts. She returned to her seat at the table, however, despite what concerns she might still harbor. They sat in silence for a moment until Padmé broached the topic of slavery. The girl’s naive faith in the rulings of the Republic were endearing if somewhat misguided. Shmi was explaining to them how every salve has a transmitter placed within their bodies, so that their owners could always locate them.

“Any attempt to escape…”Shmi began then drifted off as something in the doorway caught her attention.
“They usually try to avoid blowing slaves up, bad for business you know.” She remarked with dry humor, moving out of the doorway and towards the table. It was then that Qui-Gon could see her eyes clearly and their intense violet color hit him with an almost physical blow. They pulled at him, dredging up memories he had assumed were buried and gone. With a sudden clarity the Living Force gave him a reason to hope.

Oblivious to Qui-Gon’s inner turmoil, the girl set her stool down in the remaining empty space – between him and Shmi and directly across from Jar Jar. Lyyr then began rummaging about the kitchen fixing herself a plate and grabbing a drink.

“Lyyr, I wish you would let me help you.” Shmi told her, watching the girl as she moved carefully about the room. She moved with a lethal grace; using no more energy for each gesture than was absolutely needed. It was fascinating to watch, Qui-Gon had only seen Jedi move with such flowing grace. It was almost like watching a breeze floating lazily through a grove of trees.

“Please Shmi; you do so much for me already.” Lyyr answered her back still towards them. Qui-Gon watched the girl trying to ferret out the reason why she felt so familiar. While watching her, he absent mindedly noticed that the left shoulder of her tunic had fresh stitching on it, like it had been recently torn and then expertly mended. He also noticed a rust colored stain surrounding the mended rip. It was a disturbingly large stain.

Lyyr turned around back towards the table and caught Qui-Gon’s eye. There was wariness to her gaze that reminded him of a wild animal or someone who expected to receive a blow from everyone she encountered. This worried him more than the stain on her tunic.

“Lyyr,” Shmi questioned the girl, “why exactly are you late?’ The sound of Shmi’s voice changed the way the girl held herself. She visibly relaxed and her eyes lost their wary reserve.

Lyyr sat down on her stool before she answered Shmi and even then she took a quick spoon full and kept her eyes trained on her plate.

“There’s a podrace tomorrow and Jabba the Hutt is in town, apparently he’s considered a guest of honor,” her tone suggested otherwise. “Gardulla felt the need to trot out her prize mule.” Lyyr finished with a distinct sneer in her voice as if she was mocking herself.

“So you were at the arenas” Shmi replied her voice resigned. “Who did you fight today?”

“A Dug,” she answered still keeping her head down. At Shmi’s small gasp Lyyr looked up. “It wasn’t Sebulba,” she reassured the woman, “just one of his cronies.”

“Did you kill him?” Anakin asked eagerly. Lyyr who was in the process of transferring another spoonful to her mouth slowly put her spoon down. She turned to look searchingly at Anakin for a moment before speaking again.

“That question is beneath you Ani,” she rebuked him gently. “No, Ani, I did not kill him. I never
kill, you know that.” She finished her voice utterly still.

“You do when Gardulla commands it Lyyr,” Shmi reminded the girl. Lyyr looked over at Shmi and her expression was one of profound regret.

“I know that Shmi.” She replied her voice harsh. She stood up abruptly then and turning on her heel walked back out into the storm. She left silence in her wake, until Anakin decided to ask something that clearly had been nagging at him for some time.

“You’re a Jedi, aren’t you?”
The cantina would be busier than usual tonight. Every time she fought Shol’s business saw an uptick in popularity. It was a game to the free (male) citizens of Mos Espa; who would be the one to break Gardulla’s pet. After an exhibition in the arenas there were always more contestants. For a few days, perhaps even a week or two, her body would suffer more abuse than Lyyr had become accustomed to receiving. Shol expected her to entertain every single ‘gentleman’ who came seeking her company. Lyyr would only be able to refuse so many before Shol took matters into his own hands.

Shol expected his ‘girls’ to obey him unconditionally. He allowed Lyyr to rebel because it amused him to watch her struggle in vain. When she fought off the customers too much, or it looked like he was in danger of losing a loyal customer because of her stubborn refusal to be used for another’s pleasure; Shol had her subdued. He would drug her, tie her down, or simply hit her over the head with a heavy object. The fact that the majority of the time Lyyr was unconscious hardly bothered the paying customer. Shol’s place catered to the type of clientele that did not care about what sort of condition the goods came in; just as long as it was a warm body. Some did not even care about that.

As much as she detested fighting in the arenas, Lyyr hated working for Shol even more. At least in the arenas Lyyr had nearly complete control over what happened to her. At the cantina what options she had were taken from her. All so some fool could go and brag to his companions that he had bedded Gardulla’s favorite slave. The fact that Lyyr had been rendered unconscious by Shol’s bullyboys was usually omitted by the bragger; they always told the story as if they had gotten the better of her.

Lyyr knew that what was done to her was rape. But she was a slave with a Hutt as a master. She was not and never would be given the basic rights given to any sentient being in the galaxy (despite what little so-called respect Gardulla felt inclined to show her). As a slave she had no rights and therefore was fair game. At least some of the other girls working at the cantina did so because they had chosen to become prostitutes. The rest, like Lyyr, were slaves and Shol was their master. In that regard at least Lyyr was spared. Shol was answerable to Gardulla for any damage done to her in the course of her working hours. Although that did not save her from much, it did mean that Shol couldn’t kill her. A number of his girl had mysteriously ‘disappeared’ after failing to perform to his standards one too many times.

Shol ran his brothel with an iron fist. He had only two rules that he expected everyone, prostitute and customer both, to follow. Failing to do so resulted in consequences that many found severe. Even from a Mos Espa business man. Shol’s first rule was that the client was always right; as long as he had enough money anything was permissible. The second, only Shol was allowed to leave visible and lasting marks on the girls. If a client did anything to ruin one of the girls looks the individual paid with a chunk out of his own skin. Shol had quite a number of dried hides in various sizes (and species) mounted in glass cases above his desk. They served as an ever present reminder of the brutal consequences to those paying for services.
Lyyr entered the cantina by the back way. She did not feel like announcing her presence by entering at the bar and weaving her way through the drunks. More than likely a number of customers had already paid for an hour in her company and she did not want to encourage anyone else. Therefore she took the entrance from the alley, trying not to step in the piles of rubbish and waste that the sandstorm had covered with its howling winds.

The backroom was nothing more than a small space behind the stage and partitioned off from a corridor that was lined with private rooms as well as Shol’s office. In fact Shol’s office was the first door one came too after leaving the backroom and was directly across from the entrance to the bar. Access to the private rooms and the girl’s was only granted after Shol’s approval. For those who couldn’t pay for a private room there was the bar and the stage. There scantily clad dancers constantly performed for the entertainment of drunken fools.

Lyyr had barely stepped inside when Shakti, one of the many Twi’lek dancers Shol owned, stopped her.

“Shol’s stuta uba.” Shakti informed her. Lyyr anticipated that to be the case, so she wasn’t surprised that someone told her that the minute she entered the place. (Shol’s looking for you)

“Koose cheekta nei!” Shol’s voice rang out before Lyyr could even respond to Shakti. Torkin, one of the bouncers, grabbed her by the arm and fog marched her down to Shol’s office. (Bring her to me).

Lyyr went quietly, but only because Torkin had grabbed her left arm and if she tried to struggle out of his grasp she risked undoing the work Jira had done to patch up her shoulder. She knew that the wound would be re-opened by the end of the night. That didn’t mean she had to hasten the inevitable.

Torkin brought her as far as the door then unceremoniously shoved her inside the room shutting the door behind her. Shol’s office was nearly barren, the only things worthy of attention being his desk and the wall of hides behind it. He kept any signs of prosperity to his private quarters and to some of the more expensive rooms rented out for his client’s usage.

Shol was a tall, well-muscled human man in his mid-forties. There was nothing remarkable about him; brown hair and brown eyes an average face. He had a knack for looking at others as if they were inanimate objects; only useful to him as tools. He was currently regarding Lyyr as if she were service droid that had performed unexpectedly well. Lyyr knew that Shol’s apparent indifference concealed a pitiless disposition that was positively sadistic in nature.

“You must have captured the attention of someone important today, shag.” Shol greeted her not bothering to get up from behind his desk. “I’ve received a large sum so the man could have you for as long as he wishes. You will make sure his time and money is spent to his satisfaction. I want no complaints about you.”

At that statement Shol got up from his desk and made his way leisurely towards Lyyr. He stopped directly in front of her; forcing her to tilt her head back in order to look him in the eye. He studied her possessively for a moment before smiling; it was a smile that did not meet his eyes.

“If I hear anything else about your unwillingness then I’m afraid I’ll have to teach you a lesson.” He did not sound apologetic but instead excited. Lyyr knew all about Shol’s special lessons, she had been given more than she wanted to recall. There was a time where the prospect of being raped, again, by Shol was enough to make her toe the line, but not today. She could no longer bring herself to care about what happened to her.

He seemed frustrated by her lack of reaction but let it pass. Shol went to open the door to reveal
that Torkin was waiting outside.

“Torkin will take you to the assigned room where you will prepare yourself according to the client’s wishes.” He dismissed her. “Make sure she washes the filth of the arenas off,” he said to Torkin. “Once you are presentable Torkin will bring the client to you.”

Lyyr turned to leave then but was stopped at the door by Shol grabbing a fistful of her hair and forcing her to look at him.

“Do not disappoint me Dysar.”

Torkin led her to the most expensive room in the cantina. It was also, coincidently one of the few rooms with a proper bed and its own fully functioning refresher; one where no expense had been spared. It had both a turbo shower and sonic bath along with the other amenities. The only thing it lacked was privacy – only a sheer curtain separated it from the rest of the room.

Lyyr saw her chosen costume laid out for her on the bed. A tiny bikini made out of translucent silk scarves that would leave nothing to the imagination. Torkin gestured towards the turbo shower before leaving the room. Just in case she failed to grasp his meaning he decided to add words to his gesture.

“Do clean up Lyyr,” he spoke gently, even affectionately to her despite his previous treatment of her. Torkin was actually one of the few people Lyyr could call friend outside of her makeshift family. “I can see some dried blood on your neck. And please, if not for your own sake then as a favor to me, play along tonight. I don’t relish the idea of having to carry you home again.”

She smiled wanly at him and patted his cheek. “No promises.”

He shook his head in exasperation at that. “Let me know when you’re ready,” he shot over his shoulder as he left the room.

Lyyr took the clothing off the bed and set it on the vanity table. She quickly undressed herself and stepped into the turbo shower. The quicker she readied herself the sooner she would find out what koochоo (idiot) spent so much money for the debatable pleasure of her company. Once she knew who she was dealing with she could decide whether or not she would ‘play along’ as Torkin put it.

Once out of the shower she quickly dried off and then wriggled into the skimpy outfit. She was not comfortable with so much exposed skin but she had learned long ago to ignore any and all discomforts. She sat down at the vanity to rearrange her damp hair when she sensed the door to the room open behind her.

It wasn’t Torkin; he would have announced himself, so she assumed it was the mysterious client. Lyyr ignored the sensation of being watched pretending to be occupied with her hair. In truth she was looking past her reflection in the mirror hoping to catch a glimpse of the intruder. He seemed to be aware of the mirror’s scope and did his best to stay out of it. Then out of her peripheral vision she caught a flicker of movement in the mirror along with a quick glance of a red cheek and black hair. She knew immediately who it was she was expected to entertain.

Delcep Norith; she should have known it would be him from the beginning. The Zeltron had all but screamed his desire for her. It actually relieved her to discover that the mysterious high roller was Norith. At least with the aid of the Zeltron’s naturally secreted pheromones and emotionally charged telepathy Norith could deceive Lyyr so that she enjoyed the experience. Oh it was still rape, and afterwards she would feel violated and suffer the emotional backlash. But at least for a moment, under the influence of a pheromone induced haze, Lyyr could pretend that what
happened did not arise out of a lust for power and domination but out of mutual attraction. It was still an illusion, one that did more harm in the long run. For the meantime, however, she was content to allow Delcep to manipulate her.

“Nal Huttta,” he murmured using another one of his pet names for her and officially announcing his presence, “chespo kutata krensta krenko, nyakoska.” (Glorious jewel, I’ve been looking forward to this for a long time)

“Really,” she said catching his reflection in the mirror and raising an eyebrow at him. “How much did you have to pay off Shol for the privilege?” She continued trying for some playful banter.

She needed to make an effort to be seductive and alluring; not for Delcep’s benefit but for Shol’s. As every one of his ‘girls’ knew Shol watched their performances and critiqued them. Shol liked to watch, he liked to find reasons to punish them. Truthfully Lyyr was tired and just wanted to get the inevitable over with. Delcep would sense her mood the moment he touched her; after that Lyyr need only become his puppet. As much as she hated dancing to another’s pull of the strings she tolerated it better than being rendered unconscious and unaware of what was done to her.

“Two months’ worth of drinking money” was his answer, “and I intended to get my money’s worth.”

Lyyr had been right in thinking she was in for a very, very long day.

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After the storm had died down Qui-Gon went with Anakin back to Watto’s shop. The Toydarian had bought Qui-Gon’s story about recently acquiring a podracer hook line and sinker. From that point on it had been disturbingly easy to deceive Watto into agreeing to allow Anakin to pilot the pod. Gambling was truly the flighty blue alien’s weakness. Turing his dealing with the Toydarian into a bet was like using a mind trick on him. Watto fell into his plans perfectly.

Qui-Gon may have been tempted to question the wisdom of this plan if convincing Watto had proven to be difficult. It was bad enough that the Queen’s handmaiden questioned every move made by the Jedi Knight. Padmé was making things more complicated than they needed to be.

Back at the Skywalker’s home Qui-Gon’s thoughts were drawn to the terse conversation with the girl Lyyr. He found himself wondering where the girl had gone and what it was about her that made him feel as if he already knew her. He decided to question Shmi at the first chance he got to speak with the woman privately. As if the thought summoned her; Shmi joined him on the porch to oversee Anakin working on the engines of his podracer with Padmé and Jar Jar’s help.

“Do you know where Lyyr is?” He asked, making the effort to sound casual. He did not want the woman to sense his interest in her daughter.

“Gardulla owns Lyyr, but the Hutt also loans Lyyr out to other slave owners. That’s how Gardulla curries favor with the local businessmen. Watto, for example, has an agreement with Gardulla for the privilege to use Lyyr as a mechanic and that is why she still lives with us. She is most likely off working for another one of her ‘owners’.”

Qui-Gon did not bother to respond to Shmi’s answer. He could sense that she did not approve of how the girl was passed about like some prized possession. It seemed that although Shmi could accept the fact that she was a slave, she could not resign herself to how she and her children were treated. He decided not to pursue the matter with Shmi anymore. Instead he turned his attention to Anakin.
“You should be proud of your son; he gives without any thought of reward.”
Qui-Gon and Anakin sat out on the balcony after a long afternoon spent working the boy’s podracer. It had been a very productive afternoon; the pod was now ready for the race. Qui-Gon was trying to treat a cut the boy had gotten while working on the racer. It was proving difficult because the boy was full of questions managing to distract Qui-Gon from his self-appointed task. Although, truth be told he did not mind the distraction. He enjoyed the boy’s natural curiosity and was happy to answer as many of his questions as he could. It was surprising to him that Anakin could still be an innocent child, despite the circumstances he had been born into. The boy’s seemingly never ending curiosity about the stars and their corresponding planetary systems was endearing. It reminded Qui-Gon of Obi-Wan as a boy; serious one moment and then inquisitive and cheerful the next.

He was taken aback by how disappointed he was when Shmi called him in for bed. Carefully Qui-Gon collected a sample of the boy’s blood telling him only half the truth when he said he wanted to check it for infections. Qui-Gon had every intention of checking the sample for more than just possible infections.

Again Shmi called out for her son, sounding annoyed by his lack of response. Anakin lingered deliberately pretending not to have heard his mother. Qui-Gon was just about to send the boy inside when a shadow fell across them.

“Come along now Ani,” Lyyr softly implored the boy, “before she really gets upset with you.”

Both Jedi and boy looked up startled; neither one of them had been aware of her return. She leaned casually against the archway her arms folded akimbo across her chest, waiting for them to recover their senses. Anakin left his perch on the railing without the protest he had earlier given Shmi. Nearing the girl he reached up and grabbed a hold of her arm. Qui-Gon saw the girl jump slightly at his touch but cover it quickly enough that Anakin did not notice.

“Lyyr, will you come tuck me in?” He asked his voice soft and rather hesitant. She smiled down at him with genuine affection. She took his small hand in her own and allowed him to lead her into the hovel. As she turned away from him, Qui-Gon noticed that the dark stain on her sleeve had spread down her left arm.

Curious, but realizing he could not do anything about it, Qui-Gon pushed the image of that stain out of his mind. He needed to focus his attention on the conversation he was about to have with Obi-Wan. He called his padawan informing him what it was he wanted done, then taking the data chip stained with Anakin’s blood he inserted into the comlink. Obi-Wan quickly analyzed the sample for him and the results were disturbing. A midi-chlorian count of over twenty-thousand; no Jedi alive had such a high concentration of midi-chlorian within his system. This boy was an anomaly – a vergence in the Force.

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Lyrr finished tucking in Anakin, an involved process that included a story and a song. It was also one that he was getting too old for, but truthfully, she did not mind indulging him. There were so few happy moments in their life, she had not been hardened enough to deprive Anakin. She left his room quietly, trying not to bump into any stay mechanical part which might cause a racket and wake him. The excitement of the day must have been too much for her little brother. After little persuasion he passed out almost immediately.

Upon extracting herself from Ani’s room without incident Lyrr made her way towards the kitchen. There she would find Shmi at this time of night and she could use the woman’s help in re-
Lyyr did not look forward to informing Shmi about the state of her wound. It had surely begun to fester by now despite the steps she had taken to treat it. That knife had been more rust than steel and she was bound to have grains of sand trapped under her skin irritating matters. Still this was not the first time Lyyr had returned home battered, bruised and in general the worst for wear; it probably would not be the last. Her record for injury was rather impressive. Not that Shmi appreciated it.

As she passed the outlander on the balcony she could sense his gaze on her. Lyyr ignored him. She had her plate full as it was; trying to think up of a way to tell Shmi what had happened. The fact that she had sought out Jira’s help and attempted to care for the wound properly herself would not do much to help her case. Shmi would be upset no matter what Lyyr said. She took these things as a personal affront, particularly Lyyr’s casual acceptance at being a living punching bag.

Lyyr could only hope that Shmi would keep her examinations of outrage to a minimum and at a respectable volume. She did not want to announce to the outlanders that she was injured. Long ago Lyyr had learned the hard way never to let a stranger catch her in a moment of weakness.

Still there was little she could do if Shmi decided to make a scene. Lyyr would rather ignore the wound entirely but Delcep had managed to tear open Jira’s careful stitching. Then Shol had found immense pleasure in ruining it further. Lyyr had felt the blood seep through the bandages again and it was now at a point where she really should not continue ignoring it.

She entered the kitchen with apprehension still uncertain on what to tell Shmi. To cover her confusion she began to dry then put away the dishes Shmi had cleaned and left sitting in the sink.

“Did Anakin fall asleep?” Shmi questioned her. Lyyr nodded in response.

“Good. He needs his rest; tomorrow is a big day for him.”

“Oh,” Lyyr asked. She was both curious and attempting to stall for time.

“He’s entered that pod of his in the Boonta race; Qui-Gon is sponsoring him.” Shmi informed her and the irritation in her quite voice was unmistakable to someone who knew her well. Lyyr had often been a source of irritation to the woman so she was used to listening for it. Shmi masked it well but Lyyr always knew. “Qui-Gon seems to believe that Ani will win. The prize money could then pay for the parts for their ship.”

“You don’t agree with this plan,” Lyyr remarked getting to the heart of the matter.

“Of course I don’t!” Shmi replied in a rare burst of anger. “But Ani can help them, I know that; besides Qui-Gon truly believes that he will win. I just do not share the Jedi’s confidence but then I am a mother and it is my job to worry.”

Lyyr kept her surprise at the revelation that the man was a Jedi to herself. She also kept her doubts to herself. The fact that the Jedi was sure of his plan seemed to be all the reassurance Shmi needed, and Lyyr was not about to give her any reasons to doubt him. Shmi always said she was too mistrustful Lyyr decided to keep her comments to herself and remain silent.

“I told Padmé to spend the night in your room Lyyr.” Shmi announced after the silence had stretched on, “I hope that is alright? I did not know if you would be back tonight.” She continued with a delicate mention of Lyyr’s other occupation.

“That’s fine Shmi. I can sleep out in the main room tonight.” Lyyr said with a smile trying to convey some reassurance.
Shmi smiled in return and reached out to lightly pat Lyyr’s shoulder – her injured shoulder. Lyyr flinched from the touch than quickly tried to school her expression into anything other than a grimace of pain. She could not disguise the hiss of pain that escaped her. For a moment Shmi stared at her in bewilderment than her eyes narrowed in suspicion. Shmi grabbed Lyyr by the forearm and pulled back the clothing around the girls shoulder. She found the soggy bandages and frowning gently peeled them away from her skin.

“Oh Lyyr!” She exclaimed in a mixture of exasperation and concern upon discovering what state the girl’s shoulder was in. “Why did you hide this from me?”

“That wasn’t my intention,” Lyyr tried to explain; suddenly reduced to the mannerisms of sheepish six year old in the face of Shmi’s motherly concern.

“That’s never your intention Lyyr; but it always happens.” Shmi began sternly stressing the last two words. Lyyr could tell that Shmi wanted to remain stern (and scold the girl she called daughter) but for some reason she relented.

“Lyyr I do appreciate your attempts not to worry me, but really child,” the woman sighed then and gave the stunned girl a quick fierce hug. Upon releasing Lyyr, her face and manner was serious.

“Come, it looks like you have allowed this to fester.”

Maintaining her grip on Lyyr’s forearm, Shmi lead the girl out of the kitchen and towards the balcony. Lyyr was still stunned by Shmi’s obvious affection for her that it did not occur to her to resist until it was too late. By this time Shmi had half lead half dragged her to the Jedi. Lyyr was hard pressed to think of a legitimate and reasonable excuse to avoid the man. She did not know why she disliked him so but she had learned to trust her gut instinct; at least until it was proven wrong.

He was still sitting where he had been earlier – perched on the railing and looking pensively at the night sky. She saw a comlink in his hand and she wondered what kind of news he had received to make him look so peevish.

At the sound of their approach Qui-Gon turned his gaze on them tucking the comlink away so quickly that for a moment Lyyr wondered if she had actually seen it. There was something about his face and its serious expression that seemed familiar. Memories that she had tried to bury and forget began to stir but Lyyr quickly squashed them. Old memories were not beneficial; she needed to erase her past in order to endure her present reality. Unfortunately that had always been a challenge for her.

“Qui-Gon,” Shmi addressed the man before he could say anything. “Would you please take a look at this?” She finished pulling Lyyr forward. An easy thing for Shmi to do since she had yet to relinquish her grip on Lyyr’s arm; she found it a far too convenient handle.

“Sit down and let him take a look,” she commanded Lyyr.

“This isn’t necessary Shmi,” Lyyr stalled.

“You may not care Lyyr but I do.” Shmi snapped. Clearly she was no longer up to discussing the matter.

While they were talking Qui-Gon had stood up and reached for the fabric at Lyyr’s shoulder. He towered over the girl and she was made extremely uncomfortable by his close proximity. He peeled back the layers of bandage, much like Shmi had, to see the flesh beneath. Unlike Shmi he had to bend over a bit in order to look at the wound closely. Lyyr masked her true feelings with her surprise at the man’s knowledge.

“How did you know?” Lyyr asked with amazement and barely concealed suspicion. “We did not
“I saw the stain on your tunic,” was his succinct reply. He seemed more interested in prodding at her wound then carrying on a conversation.

“It is not as terrible as I feared,” he finally announced, looking up and addressing Shmi. “It will have to be re-stitched and cleaned thoroughly but she should avoid any lasting damage.”

Lyyr was annoyed at him for talking about her as if she was not there. She was fully capable of hearing and understanding what was being said.

“That is a relief. I had feared she done herself permanent harm by not taking care of it.” Shmi was exhausted; Lyyr could hear it in her voice.

Apparently her concern for Lyyr on top of her anxiety about Anakin racing had wiped Shmi out. Lyyr felt a twinge of guilt at causing Shmi pain through her indifference. Qui-Gon must have sensed the woman’s exhaustion as well for he encouraged her to go in to bed with reassurances that he would care for the wound. Shmi smiled at him in gratitude before kissing Lyyr on the cheek and then leaving. Using Lyyr’s arm as a handle, Qui-Gon steered her over to the balcony railing then through the gentle application of pressure forced her to sit down. My arm is too convenient for far too many people, Lyyr thought with a cynical snarl as she perched hesitantly on the railing. She was ready for any opportunity to bolt.

Qui-Gon must have sensed that for he pulled out his own mini-medical kit from a pouch attached to his belt. Lyyr found herself at eye level with the hilt of his laser sword. She suppressed an involuntary shiver. She did not trust Jedi (she hardly trusted anyone) the fact that Qui-Gon was a man only made her less inclined to trust him.

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Qui-Gon was as close to becoming furious as he had not been in a long time. It was not a state of being that he enjoyed. Infuriating him like this without actually doing anything was a feat that not even his padawan could manage. Somehow the girl had pushed him beyond the limits of his patience; all because she did not care for own safety. Taking a deep breath Qui-Gon called upon the Living Force to soothe his nerves.

As he reached for his medical kit he caught a glimpse of her unguarded expression. She looked like she would rather be anywhere else and he could clearly see that she did not trust him. The girl had to have seen his lightsaber; he was no longer bothering to keep it concealed while at the Skywalker’s home. If Anakin was able to guess what he was then the girl must have realized that he was a Jedi. Surely a Jedi was just as worthy of her trust as her family.

Instead her eyes narrowed with some suppressed emotion he could not pinpoint. She looked positively venomous then; almost like she wished she could take his lightsaber and skewer him with it. With her black hair curling about her face and her frosty eyes she radiated a sense of barely controlled and primitive power. That sense of power reminded Qui-Gon of someone he had known long ago; a woman that Lyyr resembled uncannily.

He sat down next to her without a word; his own irritation forgotten in the face of her obvious dislike for him. He could not help but wonder what had happened in the girl’s life to make her so mistrustful that she would be suspicious of a Jedi. Usually only criminals had reasons to regard Jedi in such a fashion. Keeping his questions to himself (for now) Qui-Gon set about fixing the damage that had been done.

First he would have to remove what was left of someone else’s attempt to stitch the wound shut.
Whoever had first done so clearly had no medical—even at rudimentary level—training but was just as clearly an old hand at sewing.

As he worked on taking out the stitches (which had been done with common tailors thread) he became aware of how Lyyr held herself. There was tension in her body almost as if she was fighting the urge to flee from him. That told him clearer than anything she might say that she was afraid of men. She must have suffered some form of abuse. The thought wounded him. Qui-Gon found himself wishing that she had been spared such cruelty.

Once the last of the stitches were removed and the wound was fully opened up Qui-Gon could see the full extent of the original damage done to her. At the sight of the gaping jagged hole Qui-Gon found himself becoming irate again; he wanted to know who could do such harm to a child. He wanted to protect the girl. Wanting to protect a young child was not a foreign felling for the Jedi—so he did not devout any time to examining the feeling. Instead he focused his concentration back on the gaping hole in the girl’s skin.

Qui-Gon set about properly cleaning the wound; noticing that at times Lyyr would flinch away from his touch in an involuntary expression of discomfort. While he had practically free access to it Qui-Gon took some of her blood and smeared it on a data chip to be analyzed latter. As he set the chip aside he noticed her eyes flicker from him back to their stubborn and stoic contemplation of the night sky. Even though she had not questioned his actions (she had remained eerily silent so far) Qui-Gon felt compelled to explain himself.

“I want to check your blood for infections. There is no need for you to risk possibly losing your arm because this was not treated thoroughly.” She made no response; in fact she did not even acknowledge that she had heard him. Once more Qui-Gon found himself squashing a sense of aggravation. Apparently he could not cope with the silent treatment. But then, he had never known someone to use silence as skillfully as a weapon. Silence just might be the only ‘weapon’ she possessed which could explain why she was so successful at using it.

After the wound was cleaned to his satisfaction; Qui-Gon retrieved a needle and some thread to re-stitch it close. Unlike the course and common tailor’s thread that had been holding her skin together, what he used was a specially designed synthetic medical thread that would dissolve over time. He did not believe that she would remember to have the stitching removed once her shoulder healed. As his needle pierced her enflamed skin, Lyyr gave the first true indication that she found the whole process painful. She hissed sharply between clenched teeth and Qui-Gon looked up not only to catch a flickering expression of pain on her face but the unexpected sight of one shimmering tear falling from the corner of her violet eye.

He took a moment to track its progression down her young cheek; unsurprised to note that she ignored it. Her gaze and all of her attention remained resolutely focused on the stars above. Her composure was remarkable, admirable really, and Qui-Gon felt himself compelled to speak to her again. He would have offered words of comfort, as his paternal instincts were urging him to do, but he sensed that she would not welcome them. She was too proud and too mistrustful to seek comfort from a stranger let alone accept it. Instead, he asked;

“How was this done to you?”

“With an antique,” was the succinct answer. He wished she had bothered to be more specific, still he had half expected her to not answer. The fact that she had bothered to say anything at all he considered a victory.

“Why?”

“Because my master wished it,” Lyyr answered; infusing the word ‘master’ with such contempt and loathing that to Qui-Gon it was almost a physical blow.
As a padawan leaner that word had been synonymous with ‘father’ to him; it was a term meant to show respect and affection. Qui-Gon regarded Lyyr with such pity then that if she noticed it, it would have angered and embarriss her. He wondered if the child had ever known affection; if she was even capable of expressing such emotions. But then he recalled Shmi’s obvious concern and love for the girl and he chided himself for his unkind thoughts. Beneath Lyyr’s rough façade and beyond the harsh realities of her life, she must have found a way to still allow love and good-will into her heart. Qui-Gon had to admire her for that. There were not many who could still maintain some variation of hope after experiencing what she saw every day. He had a feeling that he did not the half of what she had suffered.

“There are impressive aren’t they?” She murmured interrupting his train of thought. He did not answer her for he wasn’t sure if she had meant to address him. He finished the last stitch and tied off the thread, then laid a thick piece of gauze over his handy work to protect it. She did not say anymore and the silence stretched on.

“Lyyr,” he began when the silence dragged out, “why did you ignore this?”

“I didn’t,” she answered honestly enough. He had seen the evidence that someone had attempted to treat the wound for himself, so he knew she did not lie.

“Then why do you insist on acting in a manner that you know upsets your mother?” Qui-Gon asked allowing some of his own irritation to show through. He was no longer able to push off asking that particular question. It had been bugging him since Shmi left.

That one question earned him Lyyr’s undivided attention. Her head snapped around towards him so quickly that he wondered if she injured himself. She stared at him in surprise for a moment before her vibrant eyes harden into a glare.

“Excuse me?” She queried her voice low and quiet. Once again Qui-Gon was given the impression that she could be a dangerous woman. But the Jedi was not about to back down; particularly sense the girl’s outwardly indifference was causing Shmi a great deal of pain. Life was tough enough; Lyyr did not have to make it worse with her bitterness.

“Yes are you incapable of seeing the pain you’re causing Shmi with your complete disregard for your own safety? Your carelessness eats away at her and you are too” —

“I do not need or want a lecture from you,” Lyyr cut him off her voice cold and full of scorn. “Or anyone who thinks himself morally superior to me.” She rebuked him and Qui-Gon was stunned. “Believe it or not I am aware of the consequences of my behavior. Besides, what concern of yours is my relationship with Shmi? You do not even know it. The minute you can fix your ship you will just leave us on this rock to suffer through such brutalities that even animals are spared. You’ll do so without a second thought either, I’d wager. Do us a favor and leave your meddling ways for the rest of the galaxy. It’s only out there that they matter.”

Lyyr stood then suddenly restless in her indignation. Qui-Gon considered it a minor blessing that he had finished with his ministrations already. He did not want to think of what could have happened if he still had the needle in her skin when she jumped up. She crossed the balcony in a few swift sides then suddenly stopped at the door to look back at him. Qui-Gon kept his expression smooth and composed – giving no hint to his inner thoughts and emotions. As would any Jedi. He caught a flash of further aggravation from her when she could not read his expression.

“What gave you the brilliant idea that Shmi is my mother Jedi?” She stressed the last word, disdain in her voice. The child had a remarkable ability to make anything sound loathsome.
“It only seemed natural that Shmi would be your mother.” He answered ignoring her attitude. “Isn’t she?”

“No, my mother is dead.” With that Lyyr left him.
High Stakes Gambling

Qui-Gon did not sleep much that night. He stayed awake for a long time thinking over what Lyrr had said and the raw accusation of her words. He could not ignore the fact that she had a point – several in fact. Although he had begun the conversation with the best of intentions, it was also with an assumed position of superiority. As a Jedi, and a negotiator, he should have known better than to assume anything. All he had accomplished with that conversation was give her reasons to think that all Jedi were pretentious fools and he was perhaps the biggest one. He certainly was not infallible; Qui-Gon had known that and Lyrr reminded him.

Despite the lack of sleep Qui-Gon still managed to wake up early the morning of the race. He had hoped he could have spoken with Lyrr again before leaving, but she was nowhere to be found. Reluctantly he left for the stadium with Jar Jar in tow. Anakin was busy preparing the pod for transportation to the track so Qui-Gon left him to it. Qui-Gon made his way through the mulling early morning crowds trusting Jar Jar to keep up. His thoughts were far too preoccupied with Lyrr’s comments for him to be able to keep track of the Gungan. The girl had been right when she accused him of wanting to leave once the ship was repaired. But only half correct in her assumption that he would leave and never give them another moment of thought. If he had met only Shmi and Lyrr; then in all honesty he would have to admit that eventually he would forget them. Even though there was something about the girl that intrigued him and something that was so familiar – in time he would have forgotten. He had found the boy, however.

Qui-Gon could not forget Anakin. The boy was surrounded by the Force; Qui-Gon could sense that much. Moreover, what he sensed was equal parts disturbing and hopeful. After Shmi’s revelation that she had conceived the boy spontaneously, without a man, Qui-Gon became convinced that the Force had guided him to the child. Their meeting was no coincidence, but the Will of the Force. He could not leave the desert planet now without at least attempting to free the Skywalkers.

He wanted Watto to relinquish his hold on the little family; and was torn between making another bet with the Toydarian or just abusing his authority as a Jedi and just kidnap Shmi and the boy. Qui-Gon would have found it very satisfying to just inform the alien that he would be leaving with the Skywalkers – thankyouverymuch. As tempting as that would be now was not the time for such gallantries. He would make a bet with Watto and try and free the Skywalkers then come back for Lyrr. He wanted to free her now as well, but could not think of a way to do so without starting a war with a Hutt. Qui-Gon should be able to free the boy, at least, and he would have to content himself with that.

Qui-Gon found Watto fluttering about the main hanger watching the other pilots prepare themselves and their pods for the upcoming race. He wondered if the Toydarian was in a betting mood. It did not take long for the blue junk dealer to present Qui-Gon with the chance to purpose an additional wager. Watto was oddly reluctant about the idea at first, even becoming furious at the idea that a pod could be worth two slaves. He recovered himself somewhat after suggesting that they threw a gambling cube and allowed chance to decided which slave he would wager; the boy or his mother.

As Watto tossed the cube Qui-Gon was hard put to hide his sense of triumph. It was child’s play for him to make a blue side of the cube turn up. With just one small unseen hand gesture Watto was betting Anakin’s freedom against a podracer. The Toydarian’s angry reaction was expected; even if it was a little bit overdone. His blustering was inspired, however.
Qui-Gon could not have been more pleased. His knowledge of the Living Force made him positive that Anakin would win the race. There was no room for doubt in his mind. By the end of the day they would receive all that they needed to continue the journey to Coruscant and Anakin would be free.

Besides, the young handmaiden was doing all of his worrying for him. Every choice he made she second guessed. Qui-Gon actually found her seriousness enduring when it wasn’t an aggravation. Padmé reacted poorly to Ani’s candid admission that he had yet to win a race as well as finish one. Her expression of slack-jawed shock was a trifle overdone in the Jedi’s opinion. There was no need to be so surprised, trifles such as that were not worth worrying about.

He looked up from Padmé’s face to discover a pair of violet eyes trying to bore a hole through his body. Lyyr continued to glare at him then with a jerk of her chin motioned towards the hanger’s entrance. She then stalked off in that direction without bothering to see if he would follow her. He did after a moment, curiosity getting the better of him.

He found her standing off to the side of the entrance way watching intently as the other racers lined up their pods. At first she did not acknowledge his presence just stare d off into the crowd. He was beginning to wonder why he had followed her if he would only be ignored. When he was just about to turn and leave she finally spoke.

“What game are you playing Jedi?” She asked her manner hostile and she refused to look at him. Qui-Gon wanted to take offense at her attitude but he sensed that it rose out of her worry for Anakin.

“What do you mean Lyyr?” He asked, he wasn’t about to make the same mistake of assuming that he knew what she meant again. He tried to catch her eye. Lyyr kept her gaze resolutely focused on the activity of the racers.

“I watched you make that bet with Watto,” she answered him. For a split second Qui-Gon thought that was the source of her attitude; she was jealous that Anakin might be freed. He should have known better than to misjudge her.

“Do you think that’s such a wise thing to do?”

“You do not approve?” Qui-Gon asked, surprised to realize that he wanted her approval. Why he should seek it out made no sense to him; she was just a girl after all whereas he was a Jedi Master. He did not need her or the handmaiden’s approval.

“Did I say that?” She snapped turning away from him. “It is very noble of you to want to free Anakin, but did you think it through? What happens to Ani if he does not win the race and you lose all of your bets? It’s possible that you may very well gamble your way into slavery, did you think of that?”

Her questions were valid and once again she surprised him by her ability to see all aspects of an argument. She clearly had more intelligence then he had been inclined to give her credit for. But he was not going to stand for her lecturing him again. He would have had firmer ground to stand on if he could have thought of a better counter to her objections than the one he eventually gave her.

“Anakin will win,” Qui-Gon replied to her voiced and unvoiced concerns, “I feel this.”

It was a statement that would not have made much sense to anyone else but another Jedi yet it was the only explanation he could give her for his over confidence. She looked him directly in the eye then, her violet gaze piercing and searching, before she slowly nodded her head in understanding.
“I feel it too,” she murmured softly. So quiet was her voice that at first Qui-Gon was not certain that she had spoken at all. He barely had a moment to react to her remarkable statement before she was speaking again.

“Very well then,” she began squaring her shoulders and wincing slightly as the injured one troubled her, “when you leave I will go with you.” Qui-Gon stared at her in open disbelief.

“What makes you so certain that you need to travel with us?” He demanded.

“Shmi would be more likely to trust me to watch out for Ani,” she answered unfazed by his sharpness.

“So after scolding me for making bets with Watto, you are now purposing that I make a bet with a Hutt?” He was sorely tempted to question her sanity.

“No, I intended to be the one doing the betting.” She responded with a casual shrug. Qui-Gon was the closest to slack-jawed amazement that he had been in a long time. There had only ever been one other person who could utterly confuse and surprise him. But she had been dead for years now and he had never thought that he would find another human being in the galaxy like her. Yet here was Lyyr; capable of throwing him off balance.

“How old are you Lyyr?” Qui-Gon had to know.

“My age is irrelevant,” she dismissed the question. “That may be so, but I want to know.” Qui-Gon persisted.

“I’m fifteen,” she answered after a few minutes. “Go watch the race Jedi and leave me to my betting.”

With that she stalked off towards the stands not even bothering to look back at him. Qui-Gon watched her go, amazed that someone so young could be as daring as her. With that one trait she and Anakin could easily pass for blood relatives.

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It had all been nothing but bluster, and she knew it. As long as she had managed to fool the Jedi it was worth the effort. Shmi would trust the Jedi unconditionally – Lyyr didn’t, but that didn’t stop her from recognizing a golden opportunity to escape enslavement. She may have begun that conversation with Qui-Gon out of a desire to protect Anakin but if she was being honest with herself she would have to admit that she also had some selfish impulses. Besides all that, Lyyr had a gut feeling that she had to leave Tatooine with Anakin in the company of the Jedi’s party. She rarely ignored her gut.

She may have offhandedly decided to make a gamble for her freedom in front of the Jedi, but internally she was scared shitless. Lyyr might have a reputation for blatant insolence but she was always careful not to cross the line with Gardulla. The Hutt had made it perfectly clear to her that it would not be Lyyr who suffered the consequences if she pushed Gardulla too far. The Hutt had no qualms about making the Skywalker’s pay for Lyyr’s foolishness. She was effectively underneath Gardulla’s thumb, and did not have much to bet with. What she was about to attempt could be the signature on the Skywalker’s death warrants; or be her final act of defiance. Especially since Jabba would be a witness to whatever happened. Personally, she was hoping it would end up being an act of suicide rather than homicide.

Still she had to make the attempt and she was hoping that Jabba’s presence would keep Gardulla
honest. The female crime lord could not afford to embarrass herself in front of him. Making a bet with one’s own slave was an embarrassment but it would be even worse for Gardulla if she failed to honor the bet. The rules of gambling were the only laws that the people of Tatooine understood and honored. Gardulla would not dare to renege on a bet made in front of the more powerful Jabba, to do so would ruin her.

It did not take Lyyr as long as she hoped to reach the Hutt’s private box; she was quickly brought up short by roughhewed long handled axes suddenly blocking her way. She regained her composure quickly enough and stared calmly over the weapons of Gardulla’s Gamorrean guards. Outwardly she was impassive as stone; internally she was so nervous she felt like she had snakes twisting and slithering about in her stomach. Lyyr waited impatiently for the Hutts to notice her. Unfortunately it looked like she would have to first make her way past Bid Fortuna; Jabba the Hutt’s Twi’lek majordomo.

Lyyr loathed the pale-skinned Twi’lek. She had from the very first time she met him, and she suspected that the feeling was mutual.

“Hi chuba da nagg, cheeka?” Bid asked her in Huttese, his tone condescending. Lyyr lifted her chin arrogantly in response and looked him directly in the eye, something no slave was supposed to do. (what do you want, woman?)

“I wish to speak with Gardulla,” she replied in Basic, her own tone of voice rebellious. Fortuna glared back at her his upper lip curling in a silent snarl.

“Go away slave,” he contemptuously dismissed her turning his back on her; if they were in the arenas that would have been a deadly mistake.

“Chuba gaggalah mursto!” Lyyr hurled the insult at Fortuna’s back her tone as disrespectful and spiteful as she could make it. Bid froze mid-step his spine stiffing in outrage. He whipped back around to glower at her; the Twi’lek’s orange eyes were flashing fire. (hey you worm-eating liar) Now that she had his undivided attention she calmly asked;

“Since when do you speak for Gardulla?”

“Since now,” he chewed out between clenched teeth continuing to glower at her in obvious anger. She pretended to be indifferent to it. Lyyr was perfectly aware that with one word from Bid the Gamorrean’s would send her to the afterlife. She wasn’t really in a hurry to discover if there was one. The posturing was all part of the game.

“Peetch goolu che Gardulla,” Lyyr sneered. (too bad for Gardulla)

“Schutta, shag!” (shut it, slave)

“Coo ya maya stupa,” Lyyr pushed Fortuna by insulting him further. Either she would push him too far and he’ll have her killed or she would push him just far enough that he’d give in to her demands just to get rid of her. (you weak minded fool)

“Tah-kok tee womp rat c’nachu.” The Twi’lek informed her. Lyyr smiled coldly at him; he was about to cave. (you’ll end up womp rat food)

“Cha skrunee da pat, sleemo.” She scowled her icy smile not reaching her eyes. (don’t count on it slime ball)

Bid broke eye contact with her then. There were not many who could sustain prolonged eye contact with her; they found her violet gaze unnerving. He motioned for the Gamorreans to lower their weapons than indicated that Lyyr should follow him into the private box. She was surprised
to hear the Twi’lek chuckle then murmur:

“U kulle rah doe kankee kung.” (you are my kind of scum)

Lyrr did not know if she should be insulted or flattered. She decided to be insulted; it helped her to settle her nerves.

In a matter of nanoseconds she was watching Bid fawn in front of the two Hutt crime lords. Lyyr remained standing; she was going to conduct this interview on her own terms. She refused to be subservient to Gardulla or anyone else ever again.

“Bow to your master’s slave,” Fortuna hissed at Lyyr in Basic. She ignored him.

“Gardulla,” she began breaking all sorts of rules. No slave was allowed to address a Hutt directly let alone look one in the eye. Lyyr truly did not care, however. If Gardulla had her killed for this then Lyyr still won – she would be free and the freedom that death offered was far more appealing to her than continuing to live as chattel.

“Kee chai chai chu chu?” The Hutt demanded and Lyyr wasted no time in answering. (what are you doing here)

“Jee naga bedwana magoosa. Ting cooitiy koo sooah.” Both Gardulla and Jabba laughed heartily at her response. Lyyr had expected that. (I want to buy [free] myself. I have the credits)

“Nobata,” Gardulla eventually gargled out between her laughter. (no)

“Da chunkee fa goota?” Lyyr asked slyly knowing just how to peak Gardulla’s interest. She did not spend the past ten years as the Hutt’s slave without observing a thing or two about the creature’s personality. Gardulla was greedy and considered herself to be a great bargainer; Lyyr need only to play to Gardulla’s greed. (that’s your final offer)

“Hi chuba da naga?” (what do you want?)

“Buttmalia, Gardulla bu chawa.” That captured Gardulla’s undivided attention. (a bet Gardulla on the race)

After Lyyr set her terms Gardulla was practically drooling from greed.
Lyyr remained with the Hutts to watch the race at Gardulla’s invitation. But also because she thought it would be best to be able to demand her ‘winnings’ from Gardulla the moment Anakin had won. Lyyr did not want to give the Hutt any reason to dismiss their bet. Therefore with the slightest bit of apprehension in her heart Lyyr found a place from which she could watch the race in relative comfort. As she watched Lyyr had to constantly remind herself not to give away anything she felt. She was unused to this role of a spectator and found herself fighting the urge to chew her cheek or bite her nails. A couple of nervous habits she had developed long ago; moreover, such actions did not suit her reputation for icy indifference.

Sitting there pretending to be unconcern was perhaps one of the most difficult things she had ever done in her life; particularly when Anakin’s pod stalled before even reaching the starting line. She wanted to howl in frustration but instead remained silent outwardly unruffled by the delay. She contended herself with cheering silently as Ani finally got the blasted pod to start working.

Lyyr experienced another harrowing moment when Sebulba forced Anakin onto the service ramp in the second lap. With some quick thinking the boy managed to turn what could have been a disaster into an advantage; coming down in front of Sebulba’s pod and taking the lead. Lyyr almost forgot where she was, she was so excited. At the last moment she prevented herself from jumping up and crooning in delight out of sheer willpower.

From that point on she could clearly see that no matter what would happen Anakin was going to win. She waited impatiently for the final lap to be completed; unfazed by Anakin’s brief engine trouble and the unexpected connection between his and Sebulba’s pods. When her brother’s pod was the only one to cross the finish line she allowed herself one brief smile of triumph.

Lyyr ignored Bid as he tried to wake the sleeping Jabba; instead she focused all of her attention on the female Hutt. Gardulla looked furious – but that was not about to stop Lyyr.

“Molulee rah,” she demanded. Her voice was soft but firm and it gave her a great deal of pleasure to see how much it infuriated Gardulla. (payment)

“Ees hoppada nopa.” Gardulla responded, and although it was not totally unexpected Lyyr still found herself surprised by the Hutt reneging. (I’m not going to pay that)

“We had a deal Gardulla,” she retorted, reverting to Basic.

“Bargon wan chee kospah.” (there will be no deal)

“Gardulla, keel-ee calleya ku kah,” the now aware Jabba interjected. (Gardulla, you disappoint me)

At first Lyyr was confused by Jabba’s willingness to support her bid for freedom. Then it occurred to her that once freed from Gardulla, Jabba would have a chance to make her his slave. It was true what they said; Jabba never made a move unless he could make a profit from it. What neither Hutt knew was that she had no intention of remaining within the reach of their slimy greedy paws.

She waited patiently as the two Hutts argued back and forth; knowing that eventually Gardulla would be forced to honor their bet. Soon the female crime lord was left staring at her former slave in helpless frustration. After a moment she waved her hand in a quick dismissive gesture and that was all the invitation Lyyr needed. She turned her back on the Hutt and walked away; keeping the sudden euphoria she felt rushing through her veins concealed beneath an unreadable mask.

At first Lyyr thought to seek out Watto and tell him what had transpired but then on a whim
changed her mind. She walked off in the direction of the hanger, knowing she would find her family there and wanting to congratulate Anakin as soon as possible. It was not her place to deny Gardulla the honor of explain to Watto, Shol and the rest exactly how she had lost such a valuable slave. The thought brought a vindictive smile to Lyyr’s face. *It wouldn’t be fair of me to spare Gardulla such acute humiliation;* she thought unkindly relishing in the idea. Gardulla’s everlasting embarrassment was not the revenge she had dreamed about delivering but Lyyr was content with it. After all no one would ever forget how the mighty Hutt lost a bet to a lowly slave.

She entered the hanger just in time to witness Shmi give Anakin perhaps his tenth hung since he switched off the pod’s engines. Lyyr smiled at the boy’s obvious embarrassment at his mother’s affection. She stood slightly behind the Gungan and watched Anakin, proud of his accomplishment. As she stood there she wondered, briefly, who would notice her first; Anakin or Shmi. She also began to wonder when, if ever, Shmi would let her go of her son.

“Lyyr!” Anakin yelled joyously, spotting her. He squirmed free of his mother’s embrace and rushed head first towards his sister.

Without thinking Lyyr bent down and captured the nine-year-old in a hug then, standing suddenly, spun the boy around in a large arch. With a whoop of surprise Anakin began to laugh and his laughter encouraged her to spin him faster. She did so, her own excitement over the outcome of the race making her feel carefree and whimsical. Two emotions she hardly ever recalled feeling before and she happily indulged in them. She only set the boy down when she began to feel so dizzy that she thought she might fall. But she did not release her hold on him completely without first giving him a sound kiss on the cheek.

“Congratulations Ani, it was a masterful race,” she told her brother giving him one of her few genuine smiles. Sensing eyes upon her, she looked over to see Shmi and the others staring at her. The gawking of the outlanders, like the throbbing protest of her injured shoulder, could be ignored. But she could never, ever, ignore Shmi.

“So you did watch the race then,” Shmi stated more than asked. From the way she looked at her daughter, Lyyr came to understand that Shmi knew that something important had just occurred.

“I wouldn’t have missed it for anything.”

“Will you come home with me now Lyyr?”

“No, not yet Shmi,” she answered and her voice gave nothing away. The same could not be said of the look in her eyes. “Watto wants me to take those parts out to their ship.”

That wasn’t a complete lie, the flighty blue junk dealer had mentioned wanting Lyyr do just that. What he hadn’t known, and she did not mention, was that she had no intention of returning. With a nod Shmi accepted the lie then unexpectedly reached out to embrace the girl she called daughter. She held onto Lyyr tightly before pulling away slightly to whisper in the girl’s ear.

“Uma ji muna, Lyyr,” Shmi murmured softly correctly interpreting the girl’s gaze. (I love you)

“Chess ko, mee jurz ku.” (be careful, good-bye)

Lyyr only nodded in response, returning Shmi’s embrace while rapidly blinking away tears. Now was not the time for her to cry – latter, in privet, she would be able too.

“Let’s get these parts back to the ship,” the Jedi’s voice intruded upon Lyyr’s awareness and she welcomed the interruption. For the first time sense meeting him Lyyr felt something akin to gratitude towards Qui-Gon. “Come Lyyr you can ride behind Jar Jar."

With one last hug from Shmi and a quick tousle of Anakin’s hair she walked towards the Eopies.
She swung up behind the Gungan and grabbed his belt, not to steady herself but to keep the painfully clumsy outlander from falling off.

Lyrr remained silent as they traveled through the dessert towards the outskirts and the outlander’s ship. Never before had she found it so difficult to her keep her customary closed expression in place. Apparently today is not my day for rock steady composure; she thought ruefully. A small jolt of redemption made its way down her spine and Lyrr wondered if she had been wrong to trust her feelings so explicitly. Wrong or not it was too late for her to turn back now.

She would have had to be the unfeeling monster she pretended to be to not have any fear or uncertainty about her future. She may not have been happy as a slave but at least she had always known what to expect each day. Unlike what she faced now. She had thrown her lot in with a group of strangers and had no way of knowing if she had not just traded a bad situation for a worse one.

Her fears appeared to be confirmed as they neared the damaged ship and she saw for herself just how big it was. For some reason she had pictured nothing more complicated than a slightly larger pod retrofitted for space travel. She had never spent much time or paid any attention to space pilots, she didn’t even bother to notice the ship parts Watto had her haul around. Unlike Anakin, he noticed everything about the pilots and the vessels they flew. She might be capable of piloting a pod or speeder but that did not mean she took any interest in flying.

Now she was seeing firsthand what people meant by the word ‘spaceship’, somehow the word just did not seem sufficient. Her anxiety increased as she noticed all the activity about the ship, it announced that there were more people on board than just the Jedi, girl and Gungan. She had been a fool to think that the outlanders were only traveling with an astromech droid as company. When she realized that most of the people causing the flurry of activity were men, it was all Lyrr could do to stop herself from bolting out into the desert. She was sorely tempted to shove Jar Jar off the Eopie and then ride off into the endless sand.

Instead she did the only thing she could think of to calm herself – retreat behind a wall of cool indifference. She dismounted with the rest of the group and kept quiet hoping to fade into the background. When she was asked to help bring the parts containers into the ship she did so without protest. She viewed the manual labor as an opportunity to discreetly observe the people she now found herself with. Lyrr noticed a few puzzled looks in her direction but she ignored them.

In fact she ignored the majority of the activity surrounding her until she noticed that Qui-Gon was preparing to take the Eopies back and collect Anakin. For some reason the sight of him preparing to leave made her more anxious than she already felt. She did not fully trust the man and they did not get along but she felt more secure with the Jedi around. Not that she would ever let anyone (especially Qui-Gon) know that. Conflicted and uncertain about what to do Lyrr decided to continue loading the ship parts in silence. As she approached the remaining pile of part containers she noticed a young man talking to the now remounted Qui-Gon.

“Why do I sense we’ve picked up another pathetic life form?” Lyrr overhead the young stranger remark to Qui-Gon; she stopped what she was doing to glare at the stranger in open irritation. Outlanders, foolish and arrogant the lot of them; she thought harshly. Qui-Gon looked up in time to see Lyrr staring daggers at the young man’s back and smiled knowingly to himself.

“It’s the boy who’s responsible for getting us those parts,” Qui-Gon replied with more than a hint of rebuke in his voice. “The boy is not the only one joining us, however.”

“Who else then?”

“His sister,” Qui-Gon answered motioning to Lyrr who had remained rooted to the spot. Lyrr did
not blush at being found eavesdropping nor did her expression change as the young man turned to look at her.

“Pathetic life form, eh?” She asked her tone biting. The man gave her a hesitant sheepish grin in response. Lyyr refused to be charmed.
The girl merely glared at him for a moment before picking up a part container and hauling it onto the ship. Obi-Wan had really done it now. He made a complete fool out of himself. The look in her violet eyes only confirmed his idiocy. There was no possible response he could have made to her question without further solidifying her contempt for him; not that she had given him a chance to try and defend his remarks. Obi-Wan would not be surprised if she ignored him from now on – and he could not blame her. He had insulted her and her family.

He should have kept his smart remarks to himself. Obi-Wan had noticed the girl almost immediately upon her arrival from the city. Almost of its own accord his mind ran through different scenarios for introducing himself to the girl. Clearly that was not the first impression he had wanted to make. There was something about her wild black curls and the proud way she held herself that drew his attention. He watched her as she made her way back on to the ship hosting the latest crate of supplies. She seemed to be trying to go unnoticed but there was a quality about her that could not be ignored. He dearly wished that he could have a second chance at a first impression.

Muttering darkly under his breath irritated at himself Obi-Wan grabbed a crate of parts and hauled it onto the ship. He needed to get started on fixing the hyper drive so that everything was ready to go when Qui-Gon returned with the boy. He hoped the physical effort of repairing the hyper drive would help rid his mind of the image of those accusatory violet eyes.

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After the race, Anakin was elated. Words could not describe how proud of himself he was for winning the race. He did not think that life could get any better. Everything was suddenly looking up and Anakin could not hide his happiness as he walked with Kitster back to his home. He should have known better.

He was so proud of what he had accomplished. Not only had he built that pod himself; but he had piloted it to a victory against Sebulba. It felt good to help Qui-Gon but it felt even better to be the center of attention. Now he knew how Lyyr felt after winning a fight. Elated and powerful, on top of the world; like he could do anything he wanted to now and no one would stop him. It was this new sense of power and entitlement that was partially responsible for encouraging him into a physical fight with a young Rodian that dared to accuse him a cheating.

“Cheeska!” (cheat) Someone shouted and Anakin stopped in his tracks to find the Rodian pointing an accusatory finger at his chest.

“Schutta,” (shut it) Anakin yelled back not even thinking properly. He then launched himself at the obnoxious lying Rodian shoving him to the ground and then leaping on top of him. They began to scuffle in the dirt a circle of spectators forming and spurring them on. Anakin retained the upper hand and kept pummeling his squirming foe; he was going to teach the alien a lesson he would never forget. He did not let up until a strong grip on his upper arm pulled him off of the other youngster.

“What’s this?” Qui-Gon asked his tone surprisingly neutral.

“He said I cheated!” Anakin declared hotly, hoping that Qui-Gon would share his feelings of self-
righteous indignation at the insult.

“Did you?” The Jedi asked calmly folding his arms and waiting patiently for the boy’s answer. Feeling cheated Anakin answered with a sullen;

“No.”

“Ani, you know the truth and will have to tolerate other’s opinions; fighting won’t change their minds.” Qui-Gon chastised the boy then turned away and walked off in the direction of the Skywalker’s home. With one last hateful glare at the Rodian, Anakin followed.

Qui-Gon sensed the boy following sullenly behind him and elected to leave Anakin alone with his own thoughts. They made their way silently down the street for a while Qui-Gon monitoring Anakin’s mood all the while. The boy clearly thought he had been just in defending himself but seemed to recognize that he had overreacted. Pleased at Anakin’s conclusion, Qui-Gon decided to present him with the credits from the sale of the pod before reached the house.

“Here, we sold the Pod and these are yours.” He told the lad handing him the pile of credits which must have looked like a small fortune to the boy.

“Yes!” Anakin exclaimed with joy, beaming up at the Jedi. He then hurried forward entering his mother’s home before Qui-Gon. For his part, Qui-Gon was a little taken aback by the boy’s instantaneous change from sulky to joyful and frowned at the capriciousness of the boy’s moods. He quickly disregarded any concern or doubt it gave him, reasoning that once the boy was taught a Jedi’s discipline such inconsistencies would vanish.

With that thought in mind, Qui-Gon told Anakin and Shmi of the boy’s new found freedom. He was concerned by the boy’s obviously deep attachment to his mother but comfort himself with the thought that it too would pass.

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Obi-Wan tried to concentrate on installing the new hyper drive generator but he was continuously distracted by thoughts of the girl. He continued to replay the awful first impression he had made wishing he could take it back. It took him longer to fix the hyper drive than it should have but once it was finished he was satisfied with his work.

He returned to the cockpit and checked on the newly installed generator. He wanted to make sure that when Qui-Gon returned and ordered the jump into hyperspace that this time they could make it. Obi-Wan did not relish the idea of explaining to his master why the ship couldn’t make the jump because he was too busy woolgathering about a pair of violet eyes.

He had only been in the cockpit for a few minutes before Captain Panaka barged in declaring that Qui-Gon was in trouble. Obi-Wan turned to the pilot, Ric Olie, and directed him to fly low towards a rising cloud of dust off in the distance. Obi-Wan did not notice the boy that had followed Panaka. He did not notice much of anything; focusing on the dust that obscured Qui-Gon and whomever he was fighting.

Olie maneuvered the spacecraft over the combatants with remarkable skill, leaving the ramp half open so Qui-Gon was able to jump to it and board the ship. As soon as he sensed that Qui-Gon was safely onboard the ship Obi-Wan barreled out of the cockpit, not noticing the boy who followed closely at his heels.

Qui-Gon was collapsed on the floor of the ship’s main hallway. He was sprawled out on the floor in such a state of obvious exhaustion that it shocked Obi-Wan. He had seldom seen his master look winded let alone exhausted. Sudden movement in his peripheral vision distracted Obi-Wan
just in time to see a small urchin rush to Qui-Gon’s side.

“Are you alright?” The boy asked concern obvious in his voice. Obi-Wan stared at the child, trying to figure out where he came from. Qui-Gon took a moment to catch his breath before answering the boy’s question.

Although Obi-Wan heard Qui-Gon’s answer it did not register with the younger Jedi. For at that moment the girl had appeared seemingly out of thin air. She halted mid-step some distance down the hallway and watched the older Jedi with a look of what Obi-Wan thought was cautious fear. Puzzled by what could make her fear a Jedi; Obi-Wan found himself staring at her hoping to come across a reason. After a few moments she caught Obi-Wan’s gaze and he looked away embarrassed by the intensity of those violet eyes.

“What was it?” Obi-Wan asked refocusing his attention back on his master and the unknown foe.

“I don’t know...,” Qui-Gon answered almost reluctantly, Obi-Wan wondered if his master really did know but was hesitant to say. “But he was well trained in the Jedi arts. My guess is he was after the Queen.”

“What are we going to do about it?” The boy asked with a fresh faced eagerness. Obi-Wan turned to regard the boy with one raised eyebrow. They boy returned his look with one of boyish innocence. Obi-Wan sensed his master’s amusement at the exchange of looks.

“We will be patient,” Qui-Gon answered speaking in his teacher’s voice; a tone that Obi-Wan was all too familiar with it. “Anakin Skywalker meet Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

“Pleased to meet you,” the boy greeted Obi-wan enthusiastically shaking his hand. “Wow,” he exclaimed upon seeing the light saber hanging from Obi-Wan’s belt, “you’re a Jedi too!”

Obi-Wan could only stare at the boy, smiling slightly in amazed disbelief. *What in the blazes...*, he thought astonished by the boy’s natural enthusiasm. Qui-Gon actually chucked at it and he was not the only one to voice his amusement. At the sound of the girls laughter Anakin whipped around to look at her in slack-jawed astonishment. The surprise was followed by immediate joy and he leapt off the floor and rushed over to her.

“Lyyr, what are you doing here?” He asked her sounding dazed.

“The same thing you are Ani; traveling with Qui-Gon,” she answered. Obi-Wan noticed that her voice was pleasant when it was not laced with scorn.

“Did Qui-Gon set you free too Lyyr;” was Anakin’s next question. She regarded him silently for a moment her face serious. She grabbed his small hand in her own and led him off to another area of the ship.

“Not exactly Ani, you see I bet Gardulla,” Lyyr began her explanation as they walked away.

“You bet a Hutt!” The boy exclaimed and she laughed heartily.

Obi-Wan turned a raised eyebrow on his master only to have Qui-Gon clap him on the shoulder and say;

“Come Obi-Wan, let’s go and see if this hyper drive works.”

Chapter End Notes
Anakin's fight with the Rodian is inspired by some deleted scenes. Not an original idea of mine.
A Chill in Space

Lyyr found it difficult adjusting to space travel. For one thing the constant motion upset her stomach, for another she hated feeling confined. Nothing made her long for the endless stretch of sun and sand on Tatooine like being stuck in a place where she could clearly see the outlines. Then there was the constant chill and Lyyr just could not get warm. She could not remember ever being this cold in her life before. If anything she was use to feeling like her skin was about to boil off of her bones. Freezing was a new sensation to her and Lyyr did not like it at all.

Anakin adjusted easily to traveling in space. He enjoyed every minute of it and although the cold bothered him just as much as it did Lyyr, he was able to ignore it. He liked being around all the new people and when he wasn’t asking constant questions of whoever would listen, he was busy carving a japor snippet he had found. Lyyr had a shrewd notion who he was thinking of giving the final product too; and it wasn’t his sister. Although she may not have spent much time with the girl, barely any really, Lyyr could tell that Anakin was enthralled by Padmé. She could understand his curiosity; the girl lived a life of freedom one that until now she and Ani only imagined. Lyyr was equally interested about that arrogant young man but she set it aside. The way he had dismissed the idea of her joining their party and her even quicker rebuff did not encourage the making of friends.

She had other things on her mind, such as sleep. Lyyr wanted so desperately to sleep, having not had much rest in the past few days, but she did not want to fall asleep on the ship. At least, not anywhere she could easily be found. She learned not to be found in a vulnerable position, particularly by men. Lyyr would not appear weak among strangers.

The Queen’s handmaidens had offered Lyyr space with them in their area of the ship but she had declined. They unnerved her. Lyyr was not use to giggling, friendly girls but toughed women out to get everything that they could. It did not help that the girls had swarmed her making Lyyr shied away from them like a frightened Jawa. Moreover their immediate desire to include Lyyr in their group confused her. Outside of the few slave families it was very much everyone for themselves.

Lyyr had found herself forced to endure the silly girl’s endless chatter far beyond the limits of her patience. Therefore when the Queen summoned her handmaidens the tired and irritated Lyyr took the opportunity to flee. She left that area of the ship and went seeking a place she could hide and have a moment to herself. She wandered aimlessly for a while until she found a small little room that she thought was out of the way enough to suit her. She entered what she thought to be a utility closet and found a corner she could settle into. She pressed her back up against the cool metal of the hill and let herself just slide down until she was in a huddle.

Lyyr pillowed her head on her arms and gave vent to an exhausted sigh. She wanted to fall asleep and tried to but her hard earned instincts kept her awake. She could not be caught sleeping. Besides that, the consistent throbbing in her wounded shoulder was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. Sighing in frustration now Lyyr resisted the urge to rip off Qui-Gon’s carefully applied bandages and dig at the itchy wound. Instead she hugged her knees closer to her chest and attempted to fall into a light doze.

Some time passed before she became aware of someone calling her name. Lyyr ignored it. Figuring whoever was calling her would either find her or eventually give up. Lyyr kept her eyes resolutely closed trying to reclaim the momentary peace of her earlier doze. The voice kept calling her name and as it drew closer she could make out that it was a girl calling for her. Lyyr wanted nothing more to do with the silly handmaidens so she stayed put and stayed silent. Whoever it was, was persistent Lyyr had to give her that much credit.
“Lyyr,” the voice called out once again almost on top of her. She slowed her breathing wanting no sound to give away her location. She heard the sound of approaching footsteps pause just outside of her hiding place and knew that she was about to be discovered.

“Oh, there you are Lyyr,” the voice exclaimed and its vague familiarity was enough that Lyyr knew who had intruded on her desire to be alone. She could hear Padmé approach her and wished for the girl to leave. “Lyyr are you awake?” The girl asked and Lyyr remained still hoping that a lack of response would discourage her.

“It’s Padmé,” she announced reaching out to touch Lyyr’s arm. Knowing that the charade was up Lyyr lifted her head off her arms before the girl could touch her. Lyyr regarded the girl with open hostility and suspicion; to her credit Padmé met the former slave’s gaze with nothing but honest curiosity in her brown eyes.

“I apologize for disturbing you but Qui-Gon suggested that I check on your wound and he sounded urgent about it.” The girl explained with a charming half smile. “Can the Jedi not keep a secret,” Lyyr grumbled to herself. Padmé overheard and chuckled.

“They keep their own secrets,” the girl responded sounding equally frustrated by the Jedi. “If you want me to leave I will,” she suggested.

“Might as well have a look, you’re here now.” Lyyr responded not bothering to sound gracious.

“You don’t really like people do you?” Padmé asked after quietly regarding Lyyr for a moment.

“I’ve never been given a reason to like those I do not know and have plenty of reasons to hate some I do know.” Lyyr answered honestly enough. She did not bother to be polite for she did not care what the girl thought of her; that wasn’t her concern. Survival was, however, and if she had to be rude and ornery to survive then so be it.

“Oh,” was all the response Padmé had to offer. They observed each other in silence for a while, each taking her measure of the other. Padmé was the first to look away.

“May I,” she asked gesturing to the obvious bulge of gauze underneath the left shoulder of Lyyr’s tunic. Lyyr nodded her consent. Padmé was unsurprisingly gentle as she removed the gauze and Lyyr clearly heard the girl’s astounded gasp at what she found.

“How did this happen?” She asked echoing Qui-Gon’s question from the night before. Padmé sounded genuinely outraged and it startled Lyyr. So much so that she gave Padmé a queer look as the girl applied a bacta treatment to her shoulder. As before it puzzled her to see a stranger upset over something she thought of as nothing more than an occupational hazard.

“How did this happen?” Lyyr answered the bitterness oozing out of her. Then she thought better of her bad manners. “It’s really not as bad as it looks,” she quickly tried to reassure the girl.

Padmé’s expression of honest concern pierced Lyyr’s heart despite her desire to be unmoved. She really could not afford to care for anyone else. She had just lost Shmi and Anakin would be lost to her as soon as they arrived at Coursant. She needed to have a heart of stone; that has always been her problem. She was too easily tempted to care.

“You’re a peculiar person Lyyr,” Padmé commented as she bandaged her patient’s shoulder. “You pretend to be indifferent but anyone can see you care. You’re offended if anyone tries to get close to you and it doesn’t seem to bother you that you were treated like scum, like a” – She abruptly stopped her unsolicited evaluation of Lyyr’s character midsentence.

“A slave,” Lyyr finished for her taking the time to really look at Padmé. “You remind me of a
“A shyster, what’s that?” Padmé asked trying not to look guilty.

“What passes for a politician on Tatooine.”

“Lyyr, why did you allow this to happen to you?”

“I had no choice in the matter.” Her answer was a copout and she knew it but she did not feel like explaining her real reasons for enduring unnecessary physical harm.

“I don’t believe you. Anakin’s told me how you would rebel against your owners and how you’re the greatest arena fighter in the history of Mos Espa. You had a choice and you decided to do nothing, you could have resisted.” Padmé ranted and Lyyr bristled at her accusations.

“Don’t talk about what you cannot possibly understand,” Lyyr snapped. “Too much rebellion only earned me more blows and if I pushed them too far they would have killed Shmi and Anakin in retribution. If I had been on my own...” She stopped disgusted with herself for letting that slip. She had never told anyone that before; she didn’t want anyone else to use her family as leverage against her. It had been bad enough that Gardulla threatened her family’s safety daily. It was worse that her own bullheaded foolishness had almost cast the Skywalker’s their lives on more than one occasion. Anakin and Shmi never had a clue.

“You love your family, so you took the beatings in order to spare them.” Padmé murmured seeing Lyyr in a new light. Lyyr turned her gaze away from the genuine respect in the girl’s eyes.

“Yes,” she admitted after a moment her voice barely above a whisper. Somehow the serious young handmaiden had managed to circumvent Lyyr’s defenses and get her to admit that the Skywalkers were the cornerstone to her life.

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Obi-Wan had not expected to be so taken with the mysterious Lyyr; he was literally afire with curiosity. The girl had not said anything else to him or in his presence since the ship left Tatooine. In fact he hadn’t seen her sense then either. He understood why Qui-Gon had insisted on bringing the boy with them, and individual with such a high concentration of midi-chlorians could not be ignored. He had not even the vaguest of notions to explain the girl’s presence. If he did not know his master as well as he did, he would have cornered Qui-Gon and demand an answer. But Qui-Gon did not believe in just handing out answers.

Obi-Wan had taken to meandering about the ship hoping he would bump into the girl. Perhaps if he spent some time with her he would come to see what Qui-Gon thought was so important about her. That was a better option than the alternative. If he tried for a straight answer out of the older Jedi all he would get instead would be a lecture about being more observant. Obi-Wan could not stomach another lecture, he was still smarting over the last one he had received and the girl had only said one sentence to him.

He turned down a random hallway no longer paying attention to where he was going anymore. Obi-Wan noticed a faint humming and unconsciously followed it. It took him a moment before he realized the humming was actually the murmurings of two voices. Obi-Wan quieted his steps curious to know who it was he heard. Following the soft echoes of the conversation he came upon the opened doorway to a utility room. He glanced inside to find one of the Queen’s handmaidens and the slave girl sitting side by side on the floor of the small space talking quietly and earnestly to each other. He knew he should have announced his presence but some lingering visage of mischief kept him from giving his position away. Afire with curiosity Obi-Wan hovered out of
their direct line of sight and listened hungrily to their conversation.

“Anakin is such a sweet boy,” he overheard the handmaiden remark, “it seems as if he’s been truly unaffected by that awful place.”

“It’s affected him,” the girl countered, “but Shmi and I worked hard to keep the worst of it away from him.”

“The worst of it?” The handmaiden asked sounding dubious. “It looked pretty foul to me; you were slaves what could have been worse?”

“Plenty,” there was a rebuke in the girl’s quick reply. Obi-Wan felt better overhearing her scold someone else. It was petty of him but he liked knowing that he wasn’t the only one to offend her. “At least we were allowed to live together as a family.”

“I guess that would make things easier, but where was your father in all this?” “I have no idea, never knew my father or Anakin’s.”

“You have different fathers?”

“Yes but that’s to be expected, Shmi is not really my mother. I was already Gardulla’s property when Shmi was won in a bet. She was already pregnant with Anakin then and I took it upon myself to protect her from the backstabbing that is common in a Hutt’s palace; especially amongst the slaves. We sort of adopted each other.”

“Does Anakin know you are not related?”

“It’s possible, he is a perspective boy and neither Shmi nor I ever tried to hide that from him. It is enough that he grew up thinking of me as his sister and I have always considered him my brother. Just as Shmi is the only mother I have ever known.”

“How young were you?”

“Young,” was the short answer and even out in the hallway he could hear that the girl was tired of talking. He decided to make a strategic retreat before either girl noticed him. He started to step away from the doorway only to be stopped by a hand on his shoulder. He turned to find Qui-Gon regarding him speculatively – Obi-Wan fought the urge to blush. He had been caught red handed in the act of eavesdropping; an activity that wasn’t acceptable in any one over the age of six much less a Jedi.

Without saying anything Qui-Gon indicated that Obi-Wan should follow him back down the hallway. Obediently Obi-Wan followed his master, already wearing a chagrin expression in preparation for the lecture he was sure to receive. Qui-Gon lead them to another secluded spot along the corridor. Once there he turned to observe Obi-Wan for a moment and the young man began to feel like a boy under the strength of Qui-Gon’s gaze.

“Did you discover anything interesting?” Qui-Gon asked his voice sounding suspiciously amused. Obi-Wan started to say something to defend his actions but Qui-Gon waved off any explanation he was going to make. “If you are going to eavesdrop, my impetuous padawan, then I suggest you try not to get caught.”

Obi-Wan tried to keep his surprise to himself. He was both relieved and disappointed that Qui-Gon refrained from delivering a scathing lecture on proper etiquette.

“Of course Master,” Obi-Wan murmured, falling back on protocol in his uncertainty. His response only prompted Qui-Gon to laugh aloud.
“Obi-Wan you still have a lot to learn,” he told the younger man clasping him affectionately on the shoulder. He wasn’t certain what Qui-Gon was trying to say but he took note of the conversation anyways.

“What do you think of the boy Anakin?” Qui-Gon asked suddenly.

“He’s a nice enough boy and I think I understand why you wanted to bring him along,” Obi-Wan began only to be interrupted by an impatient hand gesture.

“That’s all good but what do you think of him.”

“There is something about him…” Obi-Wan answered vaguely unable to articulate what he wanted to say.

“I sense it as well.”

“That’s why you decided to free him and bring him along,” Obi-Wan asked trying to determine Qui-Gon’s motives.

Qui-Gon did not respond but his silence spoke volumes for him. It had taken years of studying under Qui-Gon before Obi-Wan learned that what the man did not say was just as important as what he did say. Moreover each of his silences had a different meaning behind them. This particular silence was telling Obi-Wan that he had only restated the obvious. Obi-Wan suddenly began to feel resentful and suppressed those feelings immediately. He had a suspicious feeling that Anakin would be at the center of many problems. Right now the boy was slowly driving a wedge between him and his master. A chill of premonition swept over him then but Obi-Wan mistook it for the natural coldness of space.

“Why free the girl then?” Obi-Wan asked sounding sharper than he intended. Qui-Gon raised an eyebrow noticing Obi-Wan’s tone. The padawan grimaced; apparently he still had a lot to learn about tact.

“She freed herself,” Qui-Gon answered off handedly. “Have you analyzed the second blood sample I sent you this morning?”

“Yes as soon as the transmission came through,” Obi-Wan answered puzzled by the sudden change of topic.

“What was the midi-chlorian count?”

“It was high, over eighteen thousand, but not off the charts like the boys.” Qui-Gon grunted at Obi-Wan’s response and he did not seem surprised that the count was so high. It was almost like he had expected it.

“The second sample was the girl’s blood wasn’t it? Why did you bring her with us?” Obi-Wan persisted. He sensed that there was something about the girl that Qui-Gon was connected to and he liked that implication even less than the thought of Anakin replacing him.

“She convinced me that it was necessary for her to come,” Qui-Gon answered vaguely. Obi-Wan could tell that the older Jedi was distracted.

“She convinced you? Or are you just letting her think that?”

“Perhaps a little of both.”
“Master, can you just give me a straight answer?” Obi-Wan blurted frustrated, even though he knew it was pointless.

“Then how will you learn, padawan? I am confident that after thinking about things you will arrive at the answer.” With that rather dismissive remark Qui-Gon left Obi-Wan to mull over what just happened.
Ill at Ease

Lyyr was unnerved by everything she found herself facing. The conversation with Padmé had been unsettling to her. It wasn’t the difficult memories that bothered her but the desire she had felt to befriend the girl. Lyyr had no idea what Coursant would be like but if it was anything like Tatooine the fewer people she was attached to the less leverage the Jedi would have against her. She only owed Anakin her allegiance and only needed to concern himself with him.

Right now she was mentally kicking herself in the ass for leaving Tatooine. The horror she knew was better than the one she did not and here she was flying blindly into the unknown. One unknown she found herself facing was her future and it was disconcerting. The fact that she would remain underneath Gardulla’s control for the remainder of her life had always seemed set in stone. The possibility that she wouldn’t live past the age of twenty had seemed to be equally absolute. Lyyr had always imagined that she would die in the arenas or Shol would finally go too far when disciplining her. No matter how she eventually went Lyyr figured that she wasn’t long for this world.

All of that changed the minute Anakin crossed the finish line; winning the race and allowing Lyyr to regain her freedom. Now she was faced with a galaxy full of possibilities and that frightened her. More than any challenger she had faced or any beating she endured, Lyyr was petrified of having a future. A future held promise and disappointment in equal measure. Disappointment was something Lyyr was familiar with if not entirely comfortable with; she was used to it and knew how to adapt to its bitter taste then carry on. Lyyr wouldn’t know what to do with a hope that had been fulfilled. That was the situation she found herself facing; the dream of freedom now a reality.

In her confusion Lyyr clung to what she knew and that was suspicion. She shamelessly remained close to Anakin for the remainder of the voyage. Lyyr did not want to be found alone by anyone else particularly by the Jedi. She sensed that Qui-Gon wanted to speak with her alone but he didn’t try very hard when it became evident that she would not separate herself from Anakin.

When the ship finally reached their destination Lyyr disembarked from it onto the landing platform and into further bewilderment. She had never seen anything like this bustling buzzing and teaming with life planet before and she felt her eyes widen in an effort to take everything in. She was assaulted by the various noises and smells emitted by the multitude of crafts that whipped about the atmosphere; she couldn’t even begin to identify all of them. She stood near the ships ramp torn between an intense curiosity and an even more overwhelming fear. That seemed to be all she was capable of feeling since leaving Tatooine.

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There was something vexingly familiar about the girl; the longer he thought about it the more certain he became. He would have a better chance of confirming his suspicions if he could only spend more time in the girl’s company. Yet, her obvious desire to avoid him and everyone else did not go unnoticed by Qui-Gon. Moreover, as long as they were on the ship he was content to leave her be. He spent the journey in quiet meditation; ruminating over all that had occurred since their ill-fated diplomatic mission imploded. Qui-Gon would have to speak with the Chancellor but more importantly he would need to speak to the Jedi High Council. They needed to know about the boy; they would want him to start training. It never occurred to him that the Council might refuse to train the boy; once they heard the story of his conception there would be no other decision to make. Even if by some astronomical chance they denied the boy, Qui-Gon would insist on training him regardless of their decision.

Although his mind was mostly occupied with thoughts of Anakin becoming a padawan learner, he
had not lost track of his primary mandate. To protect the Queen and that meant that he needed to inform the Council of the Queen’s mystery attacker. Qui-Gon had his suspicions but hoped that Grand Master Yoda would disagree. He was not comfortable with those suspicions and what they implied; particularly, what they implied about the Grand Master’s weakness to sense inimical stirrings within the Force. If they’re ancient enemy truly had returned Yoda should have sensed stirrings of its growing power before now. Still it was hard to ignore the evidence of his own senses and his opponent’s obvious powers with a lightsaber.

It pleased Qui-Gon to see Supreme Chancellor Valorum had anticipated their arrival and was waiting for them on the landing platform. He could report the failure of the negotiations and request a meeting with the High Council all at once. That made things neat and tidy; well, more so than what they had been. Qui-Gon preferred it when things could be neatly tied up; even though from long experience he knew that life and the Living Force was hardly ever neat. Before the day was out he would see the boy made an initiate in the Jedi Temple. As for the girl, Qui-Gon had thought about her despite the accusations she leveled at him on Tatooine. For one thing he thought she had been allowed to stew in her anxieties long enough. For another, Qui-Gon had decided to bring Lyyr to the attention of the Council as well. Perhaps then he would find some answers to his questions. He was beginning to suspect that the high midi-chlorian count in her blood and the reason she felt so familiar were linked.

As he was speaking to the Chancellor, Qui-Gon noticed Lyyr had frozen at the end of the ship’s ramp. He saw her bewildered expression and felt sympathy for the girl. Once he finished talking to the Chancellor he directed Obi-Wan to go get her while he located a transport. He might as well bring her to the Council with him now. When Obi-Wan and the girl joined him in the transport it was accompanied by a surly silence. Qui-Gon sensed his padawan’s curiosity as to why the girl was joining them but said nothing to satisfy that curiosity. Lyyr did not say anything and Qui-Gon could see that her habitual hard expression was back in place.

When they reached the Temple Qui-Gon lead the way directly to the Council Chambers. Before entering the chambers he stopped and turned to the girl.

“Lyyr, I would like for you to wait here,” Qui-Gon informed her. He did not expect her to react badly to that request but should not have been taken aback when she snapped.

“Here, in the hall?” She questioned him scornfully. “Are you certain you don’t want me to go find some forgotten corner to squeeze myself into? Or perhaps I could suspend myself from the wall just to guarantee I don’t wander off.”

“That’s enough miss,” Qui-Gon scolded her and she glared back at him. He should have realized that her confusion would cause her to lash out. “You will wait here until someone comes for you and you will kindly lose that attitude.”

She continued to glare at him and sighed in exasperation, folding her arms she propped herself reluctantly against the wall. Qui-Gon took her actions for consent, he nodded at her and not knowing what caused him to do it he reached out and ruffled her hair. While Lyyr stared at him in slack-jawed amazement Qui-Gon turned and walked into the Council Chamber, Obi-Wan following just one step behind.

The Council listened to his news about the mystery attacker with hardly any visible reaction, just as Qui-Gon had suspected they would. The Council members were well known for their stoicism. Their conclusions about what had happened also were not a surprise to him, but he was a little taken aback that they hesitated in agreeing to see Anakin. He did not mention Lyyr until he was prompted to speak once again by Master Yoda.

“More to say have you, Master Qui-Gon?” The venerable Jedi Master asked for the second time
after Qui-Gon failed, again, to leave when dismissed.

“There is someone else,” he began then paused uncertain how to explain his suspicions about the girl.

“Another vergence in the Force,” Mace Windu asked his voice tinged with sarcasm.

“Well yes in her own way she is.” Qui-Gon answered. His answer earned him the focus of every Master in the room. He did not have the chance to say anything more before a decision was made.

“See this girl, we will.” Yoda declared.

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She was confused ever since she entered the Jedi Temple an overwhelming sensation of peace took a hold of her. She did not know where it came from or what to make of it. So Lyyr tried to ignore it.

She did not understand why Qui-Gon had wanted her to accompany him only to then leave her waiting in the hall like some useless flunky. She tried to set aside this additional confusion and stared detachedly at her surroundings. Lyyr viewed this time cooling her heels similar to the moments she spent mentally preparing herself before a fight. She doubted that there was a Tusken Raider waiting to rip her throat out in the next room; but she felt like she would be facing a similar threat if/when she entered that chamber. Lyyr worked herself into such a state that when the chamber door unexpectedly slid open it startled her. She jumped and smothered an undignified squawk that threatened to escape her. She whipped around to find the arrogant Obi-Wan smiling knowingly at her. Lyyr’s eyes narrowed in irritation convinced that he was laughing at her.

“Come here child,” an elderly voice from somewhere behind Obi-Wan entreated her. She looked beyond the young man to see a room full of individuals serenely sitting in a half circle.

Lyyr couldn’t even begin to name the species some of those individuals belonged too. Living on Tatooine she had been exposed to what she thought was a large cross-section of alien life; apparently not. However, it wasn’t the variety of species that caused her eyes to widen. It was overwhelming sensation that she had been in their presence before. Lyyr hovered on the threshold; dazed by the emotions conflicting within her. The sense of déjà vu threatened to overthrow her learned instinct to mistrust everything and everyone. It was enough to leave anyone’s stomach in knots; even someone who grew up a slave in a Hutt’s palace.

“Lyyr,” Obi-Wan murmured her name reaching out and hesitantly touching her arm. His touch was enough to snap her out of the trance she had fallen into. Shaking his hand off her arm Lyyr rid herself of the obvious remains of her confusion. She stepped into the circular chamber faking a confidence she did not possess. She entered the room as if she was walking into the arenas; unwilling to show any hesitancy or vulnerability.

She came to stand next to Qui-Gon in the center of the room with a straight spine and her head held up proudly. Obi-Wan stood directly behind her. Although he was not standing very close to her, she could still feel his presence looming over her and it only added to her discomfort. Lyyr felt boxed in and grew more anxious even though she maintained her appearance of composure. Still she could not prevent one thought, infested with panic, from scurrying across her mind; there’s no way out. Now more than ever before she understood how the bantha felt when it was trapped between a rock and a hungry krayt dragon. The desire to run was nearly uncontrollable. If she was actually in the arena’s she would have known how to channel this panic into useful adrenaline. Once more Lyyr found herself at a loss as to how to act.
“This is the girl you spoke of,” a man she could easily identify as human remarked. He did not sound happy about seeing her. Lyyr centered her attention on the imposing black man; attempting to stare him down was more productive than gawking at the rest of the room. He met her gaze briefly before dismissively returning his attention to Qui-Gon.
“Very well Qui-Gon we shall test her.”

“Thank you Master Windu,” Qui-Gon replied bowing then turning to leave. Lyyr wanted to follow him and made a move to do so only to be stopped by the same voice that had entreated her to enter the chamber.

“One moment child, we wish to speak with you.” Feeling as though the ax had fallen Lyyr closed her eyes briefly before turning around to face the Jedi Masters.
She turned to face the Jedi Masters reluctantly and found the owner of the kind voice smiling encouragingly at her. The Jedi Master’s appearance surprised her; she could almost mistake him for a human if his skull was not so elongated that it resembled a stalagmite. Still she wished that she was walking out of the chamber along with Qui-Gon. Since she couldn’t do that she was silently plotting out potential escape routes and how she would react if they were to suddenly attack her. For all she knew Qui-Gon could have left her here to serve as a human sacrifice. It did not seem so farfetched when compared to what she had learned about the duplicity of strangers living on Tatooine.

“Your name, what is?” Someone else asked; he was a funny looking little green person with tuffs of white hair, floppy ears and bulbous eyes. It took a few moments for her to process his question; his syntax was different from what she was used to hearing.

“Lyyr.” She finally answered her voice cracking slightly and sounding pathetically weak. Lyyr stood taller and squared her shoulders wanting to appear more confident than she sounded.

“Your full name,” the one Qui-Gon called Master Windu demanded. The harshness of his demeanor steadied her and riled her at the same time. She knew how to react to someone trying to bully her. Her head snapped in his direction and she looked him fully in the eyes, her own narrowing in an unspoken challenge.

“What are your names?” She demanded in return, not bothering to sound respectful. She wanted to make it clear that just because she was a slave from some backwater planet on the outer rim she was not easily cowed. The man smiled at her brashness but it vanished so swiftly that she doubted that she really saw it.

“I am Master Windu, this is Master Yoda,” he said motioning first to himself than to the green one and concluded with a motion to the first who spoke, “and there is Master Mundi.”

“What no first names?” Lyyr asked snippily; intentionally pushing her luck.

“No last name?” Windu countered his voice infuriatingly unruffled.

“Dysar, my names is Lyyr Dysar,” she answered. Having her name seemed to both please and disturb the Jedi before her and they fell into silence. Tilting her head to one side she watched them for a moment allowing the silence to draw out before asking her first question.

“Why, for what possible reason, could a group of Jedi want to ‘test’ me?”

“Jedi are we, says who? Hmm..?” She watched Master Yoda for a moment before replying.

“I may not be formally educated but I am capable of simple reasoning,” she spit out her voice heavy with sarcasm. “Qui-Gon is a Jedi, it makes sense that he would bring me to a group of Jedi. Besides,” she continued her tone softening in her uncertainty about voicing her next opinion, “Jedi feel different.”

“Rely on this feeling, do you,” he queried and she shrugged uncomfortable with the knowing look he was giving her.

“It’s kept me alive,”

“I did not think that the Hutts gave their slaves a say in how long they lived.” Windu remarked.
Lyyr was not sure if he was deliberately trying to egg her on but Lyyr was not above taking the bait and running with it.

“That only proves your ignorance Master Jedi” she remarked, sneering at him.

“Surely the Hutts did not tolerate your impertinence girl,” he retorted sounding only slightly irritated. She flashed him a wicked and bitter grin, one that made her look like a vicious krayt dragon.

“The Hutts tolerate anything in a slave as long as it makes them money,” she explained her voice thick with bitterness she did not bother to hide. “I was Gardulla’s prized cash cow, despite my bad attitude. Nothing would persuade her to give me up.”

“If that’s the case, then how is it that Qui-Gon managed to free you?” Windu pressed sounding skeptic. Lyyr’s lip curled contemptuously.

“I freed myself,” was her response, “by exploiting Gardulla’s greatest weakness; greed.”

“What could you possible offer that the Hutt did not already possess?” He asked his skepticism now shaded with condescension to match hers.

“Take a wild guess Jedi.” She growled out. Lyyr was not about to divulge the details of her bet; she should be spared that humiliation at least.

“Bitter you are.” Yoda told her pointing one small accusatory green finger in her direction. She shifted her gaze so that she was now glaring at the diminutive Jedi.

“I have every reason to be bitter.”

“For bitterness there is reason not,” Yoda informed her. His voice was disapproving and Lyyr felt the sting of it keenly.

“You don’t consider having my life stolen from me a reason for bitterness? How about the fact that I was forced to kill in order to earn the right to live? Or that those I cared for were daily threatened and would be killed if I did not do as I was told, that is not a good enough reason? What about the fact that I was coerced into enduring daily beatings and rape for another’s amusement? Would you consider that a good reason for my bitterness,” she raved at him. Her voice remained coldly detached despite the passion of her words. Lyyr could have said more but restrained herself. A tirade was not worth her energy and would only cheapen her argument.

Lyyr closed her eyes and took a few deep breaths; notably suppressing the strong feelings and old hurts that the conversation had brought forth. She should not have allowed herself to be carried away by the bitterness she had been harboring for so long. It made her seem petty, vulnerable and exposed – things she could not allow these Jedi to see in or think of her as being. The chamber remained deathly silent as she wrestled with herself.

“What was done to you child?” Master Mundi asked gently breaking the oppressive silence.

“That’s a long story and a tall order,” she quipped with a shy apologetic half smile. She sensed some of the Jedi’s astonishment at her quickly regained composure. She was better at faking being composed than they could ever realize; she had had years of practice and a tough audience.

“There is time to hear it,” Mundi replied. She suppressed the urge to laugh from the tension.

“I do not doubt that. Very well if you insist on hearing my story than I am going to be comfortable,” she announced and without further preamble sunk gracefully to the chamber’s stone floor; sitting crossed legged with her hands resting on her knees. She looked up at them waiting
for permission to continue. There was an apprehensive gleam in her violet eyes and it was clear to the council members that she dreaded telling this tale. They did not need to see her frantic searching gaze trying to discover a way out to know that she would rather be elsewhere. Mace shared a quick glance with Yoda; they had to admire her courage.

“Where should I start?” Lyyr asked after the silence had stretched on for far too long.

“Of your parents, tell us.” Master Yoda prompted, although he could have easily guessed at their identity. Even without the echoes of familiarity he sensed in the Force her eyes would tell him. She closed those violet eyes for a moment to collect herself when she opened them again they were hardened with resolve.

“Of my father I have only vague impressions, nothing worth recalling,” she answered attempting and managing to keep her voice steady and void of any betraying emotion. “I remember very little of my mother, they are both ghosts to me.”

“What is your clearest memory?” Master Windu inquired. Lyyr bit the inside of her cheek to keep herself from sighing, cursing or doing both. That question was more difficult for her to answer than the Jedi could possibly imagine.

“The death of my mother,” she answered. Gritting her teeth and hoping that answer was satisfactory enough to end the interview. It proved to be a false hope.

“How did she die?” Windu asked and Lyyr thought she sensed a keen interest in his voice.

“What does that matter to you? She is dead and that cannot be undone.” Lyyr retorted her voice sharp with suppressed pain.

“Please, tell us child,” Master Mundi encouraged her. Lyyr regarded him warily for a moment, resenting his kindness with and audible sigh and squaring her shoulders she shoved aside her resentment before plowing forward.

“She was murdered,” Lyyr remarked succinctly. “I was five, I don’t remember much.” Her entire posture was defensive; she did not want to continue this conversation, but knew that they would push the issue.

“Do you remember anything of her attacker?” Mundi asked. His gentle persistence grated on Lyyr’s nerves and made it difficult for her not to feel offended.

“I was a child, whatever I remembered has become nightmares. I lived a life of nightmares; I no longer care to remember one particular horror amidst others.” Her voice remained sharp and tightly controlled.

“Anything else of your mother do you remember?” Master Yoda asked trying to shift the mood of the conversation.

“She used to sing to me, I remember that.”

“After her death, what of,” Yoda asked changing the subject entirely. Although that did not make anything better as far as Lyyr was concerned.

“I was found by a moisture farmer who sold me to Gardulla the Hutt in order to repay his own debt.”

“You sound bitter about that.” One of the unnamed Jedi pointed out.
“Yes I do and I am.” Lyyr replied raising her chin in defiance. “I was a child forced into slavery; I witnessed things no child should ever see. I do not blame the man for doing as he did, but I will not forget it either.”

“What hold did Gardulla have over you?” Someone else asked.

“The same one that strangled any slave; obey or die.”

“How does your insolence fit in?” Windu queried.

“It amused Gardulla to a point; she found it endlessly funny my refusal to accept my place.” Lyyr answered. “I suppose it was a game to her; knowing that she could swat me down whenever she chose, and watching me try to live free.” She paused then to swallow in an attempt to moisten her suddenly dry throat.

“I learned not to push too far when a boy I was close to was killed in response to my attempt to escape. The Skywalker’s lives were used as collateral against my obedience.”

“How did you meet the Skywalker’s?”

“When Shmi was first sold to Gardulla, she was still pregnant I befriended her thinking that it would keep the other slaves from hassling her. I was still just a child and Shmi became a mother to me. I was nine when she and Anakin were lost in a bet to the junk dealer Watto.”

“Then their lives could no longer be used as collateral against your obedience,” a female Jedi pointed out.

“Obviously you never lived under the tyranny of a Hutt,” Lyyr retorted looking over her shoulder at the Jedi Master. Her voice was heavy with scornful amusement; she couldn’t help but poke fun at these all too serious Jedi. “Just because the Skywalker’s had a new owner did not automatically make them safe. But that did not stop me from acting out, Gardulla found it even more amusing that after five years of a miserable existence I still refused to be broken.”

“Something tells me the Hutt’s amusement did not last very long,” Windu remarked.

“That would be an understatement.”

“Deal with you how, did she? Hmmm..?”

“She sent me to fight in the arenas so that I could be put to good use either earn money or die; a convenient way to get rid of an inconvenient pest.”

“Survive Gardulla did not expect you would.”

“A nine year old human female in a fight to the death against a full grown Rodian male, you could say that. It was pure luck that I manage to live through that fight and every one that followed after. It was pure entertainment to the lowlifes of Mos Espa to watch a scrawny female slave defeat older opponents of various species. As well as a steady cash flow for Gardulla, the winnings from all those bets barely satisfied her greedy nature. I was made to fight daily; she said I finally found my calling in life. I’ve been fighting in the arenas ever since.”

“You are how old now?”

“I am fifteen.”

“For six years you fought for your life, did you kill every one of your opponents?”

“Kill or be killed,” she answered conversationally enough although her voice registered her
disgust. “Once I firmly established myself as champion I only had to kill a defeated opponent when Gardulla commanded it. Most of my opponents wouldn’t yield until they could no longer stand; at that point their master’s found them useless and disposed of them.”

“To compensate for other’s loss of property and to line her own pockets further Gardulla started renting me out to other slave owners.” Lyyr continued growing tired of the conversation and bearing her wounds to the Jedi.

“What did these other owners have you do,” Windu asked his voice flat with a weariness of his own. It seemed that he too had grown tired of her litany of woe. She couldn’t really blame him.

“My body could tell the tale of my life on Tatooine better and quicker than I,” she informed them. “Every slave owner I worked for felt the need to mark me as their property.” She pulled up the sleeve of her tunic to show them her right wrist, on the back of it there had been an intricate circular design burned into her skin. Further down her arm they could see an old jagged scar starting mid-way up her forearm and disappearing into the depths of her sleeve.

“Who did that to you?”

“The owner of a specialized cantina catering to certain needs, he branded all of his girls with his own personal logo.” Lyyr let the sleeve of her tunic drop to cover the old scar. She stood up suddenly restless and feeling the need to pace or shout but restrained herself.

“Are we through?” She asked not bothering to hide the impatience in her voice. The Jedi observed her quietly for a moment then Master Yoda nodded his consent. Without preamble Lyyr turned swiftly on her heel and stomped out of the chamber.
Lyyr stormed out of the room surreptitiously wiping at her eyes and spotted both Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan lurking a sort ways down the hall. She could tell immediately that they were waiting for her. She started towards them debating the merits of reading them the riot act for leaving her to be scrapped over the coals, and then she noticed that they were not alone. Anakin was with them and with effort Lyyr reigned in her temper. She did not want him to see her angry. It was Ani who spotted her first, the boy had a knack for knowing where she was. He left the Jedi and walked towards her. Obi-Wan made a move to restrain Anakin, probably thinking that he was just wandering off. He looked up and caught Lyyr’s eyes the young man smiled wanly at her but she ignored it.

“Lyyr why weren’t you on the transport with me?” Anakin demanded his voice serious. She could feel the anxiety behind his words. His emotions battered painfully against her own raw nerves. Lyyr tried to set that aside and knelt down so that she was eye level with the boy and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Master Qui-Gon wanted me to meet some important people,” she told him her tone of voice just as serious. “I would have told you Ani but the transport had left before I could,” that was a bit of a stretch but saw no harm on letting him think it had been planned all along.

“Oh,” was Anakin’s response and she felt the anxiety flow out of him that relaxed her in turn. “Why didn’t you tell me earlier?”

“I had forgotten,” she admitted. Glancing up Lyyr saw both Jedi watching her with speculation in their eyes. Their gazes unnerved her.

“Lyyr,” Anakin’s now excited voice recaptured her attention. “You met the Jedi Council didn’t you, just like I’m going to. Does this mean you are going to be a Jedi too?” He continued in a breathless rush his blue eyes sparkling with a sense of adventure as this new idea carried him away.

Lyyr couldn’t help herself; she burst out in laughter his enthusiasm contagious. She pulled him into a quick hug. The laughter was just what she needed, after that calamity of an interview. She let him go, ruffled his hair then stood up. Anakin pulled a face in protest.

“Lyyr you’re acting like mom,” Ani complained. She was used to getting that complaint from him. Anakin would say that whenever she indulged in an unexpected show of affection.

“Am I not allowed to hug my baby brother?” She asked wrinkling her nose at him making him laugh. The moment between them was interrupted by Qui-Gon placing a hand on Anakin’s shoulder.

“Come Anakin,” the Jedi announced, “it’s time for you to meet the Jedi Council.”

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Mace watched the girl leave and her agitation visible for anyone with eyes to see it even though she tried her best to remain calm. The silence after her departure was profound. She had left every single council member in a confused mixture of their own thoughts and feelings.

He watched, attempting to settle his own thoughts and feelings, before turning to his fellow Jedi Masters. When he finally thought that he had achieved the proper level of serenity and objectivity
he turned his attention outwards. Looking to the right Mace suddenly found himself staring into the green globe-like eyes of Master Yoda.

“Of the girl, what think you? Hmm..?” The venerable old master asked him.

“The Force is strong with her,” he answered slowly, “there is no denying that.” He finished hesitant to say what everyone else were clearly thinking.

“Trained, the girl should be,” was Master Yoda’s immediate reply. “Uses the Force she does, without knowing, dangerous that is.”

“Indeed,” Windu replied, “her control is remarkable for such subconscious use. Qui-Gon was right to call her a vergence in the Force.” Jinn is right, more than he knows…, he continued the thought silently.

Mace could not forget how she used the Force throughout the entire interview. She seemed to be reading only surface thoughts and emotions. Still there were times when she looked at him with those violet eyes and Mace would have sworn that she saw past the Jedi Master’s well-built defenses; to places that Mace kept even himself locked out of.

“She must be trained,” Master Mundi resolutely proclaimed into the silence Windu’s last remark had created. Several other council members nodded in agreement.

“Too old, she is,” Yoda said in opposition to her training. There were nods of agreement to Yoda’s statement as well.

“The Force is strong with her,” Mundi persisted, again councilmembers nodded their agreement. It was evident that the council was conflicted.

“Not just the Force,” Mace murmured almost to himself drawing the attention of the entire High Council. “Her mother is strong with her as well,” he explained speaking firmer.

“Uncanny, the resemblance is, yes.” Master Yoda was the first to recover. Uncanny is an understatement, Mace thought mockingly; reflecting that Yoda was a master of understatement. There had only been one other person whose eyes could pierce his defenses the way young Lyyr’s had. It was not hard for him to accept Lyyr as that Jedi’s daughter; after all, they had the same eyes.

“Yes, uncanny.” Mace muttered, before turning his gaze to the rest of the council members. “Still, the fact remains we are ill-equipped to deal with the child of a Jedi that shows such force-sensitivity as she does, especially the child of two Jedi.”

“What do you propose that we do?” Depa Billaba the Chalactan Jedi Master and Mace Windu’s former padawan asked. “Do we train her despite her age, or do we disregard her despite her potential and because of her age?” It was another remark that sent the council into a conflicted silence.

“Ask her we will,” Master Yoda said with an air of finality. “Decide, she shall.”

“Until then,” Mace continued for Yoda, “let us test Jinn’s other vergence.”

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Qui-Gon and Anakin disappeared into the council chamber and the girl watched them her eyes boring a hole into Qui-Gon’s back. As soon as the door slide shut behind them a restlessness, an overwhelming need to move seemed to take a hold of her. Lyyr was used to such feelings; after a
fight (if she wasn’t expected at Shol’s) she would walk around Mos Espa for hours trying to settle herself. She needed fresh air and went searching it. Down the hallway Lyrr spotted a balcony and moved swiftly towards the promise of air. She walked past Obi-Wan ignoring his attempt to get her attention. Her thoughts were a tangled mess and she did not trust herself around anyone else.

“Enough with these bloody Jedi,” she snarled angrily under her breath. The anger was directed internally at herself and her inability to control herself.

With a heavy sigh she leaned against the railing and stared at the traffic that flew by underneath her. They must think me a fool, sentimental and weak; she mentally berated herself. Lyrr could not say what possessed her to answer their questions so fully and with such honesty. She had never been so forthcoming with Shmi when questioned by her. As for Anakin, she never told the boy anything and he often pestered her with questions for hours on end.

There had been something about those Jedi that had persuaded her to open up despite her natural suspicions. It occurred to her that they might have played with her mind to get her to talk. But she dismissed the thought; reasoning that they would have dispelled her bitterness and anger, as well as the nerves and fear she felt. If she had been tampered with then it should have been easier for her to talk and she wouldn’t have felt like each word was a struggle to say. She almost wished they had tampered with her mind, they could make all those awful experiences just disappear. Mesmerized by the traffic she churned that thought over before shuddering. Her life may have been a nightmare but it had made her strong and resilient. Feeling overwhelmed she put her head in her hands.

Gradually she became aware of voices arguing and she straightened up not wanting to be caught looking weak; especially since she recognized the voices:

“Don’t defy the Council, Master…not again,” she heard Obi-Wan plead. The response was lost in the traffic noise.

“You could be sitting on the Council by now if you would just follow the code.” Obi-Wan continued and a smile twitched about Lyrr’s lips. It amused her to learn that Qui-Gon was in a habit of disobeying. “They will not go along with you this time.” Obi-Wan predicted.

“You still have much to learn, my young apprentice.” Qui-Gon replied to Obi-Wan’s doubts. By now they had reached the balcony railing, Qui-Gon stood next to her silently for a minute.

“What do you think of the Council?” Qui-Gon asked turning to face Lyrr.

“Stoic,” she responded shortly. She saw him stifle a smile.

“Yes, they think it’s best to live objectively without allowing emotions to cloud their judgment.”

“Ah,” she contemplated that for a minute, “then I would not make a good Jedi.”

“You may be surprised Lyrr,” he murmured diverting his attention back to the traffic. She did not know if he had meant for her to hear that or not so she did not answer. The silence suited Lyrr and her pensive mood. After a while she became aware of eyes on her. She looked up to find Obi-Wan watching her. She gazed directly back into his blue-gray eyes; her own eyes held a challenge in them and what she saw in his confused her.

“What do you think so little of yourself?” He asked after a moment and Lyrr bristled at his question. She clamped down on her irritation enough to answer him honestly.

“I was raised a slave, and treated like garbage; why would I think otherwise?”

“What did you tell the Council?” His curiosity was obvious to her.
“The story of my life,” she quipped with a halfhearted smile. She turned away from the Jedi then not wanting them to see in her face how she was barely holding things together.
Revelations

Sooner than she would have liked Lyrr found herself standing before the High Council again. This time she was standing in the center of the room alongside Aankin. Lyrr briefly clasped his small hand within her own; a gesture meant to give her comfort as much as it comforted Ani. Qui-Gon stood behind Anakin and she was acutely aware of Obi-Wan hovering directly behind her. The sensation of someone breathing down her neck was never one she welcomed; it had always led to pain and unpleasantness in the past.

That had always been Shol’s calling card; a whisper of hot breath at the base of her neck and then Lyrr would find herself pinned between a wall and an unmovable body. That was how he kept her still while he burned his mark into her skin. Lyrr shuddered involuntarily at the memory. Obi-Wan shifted away from her in response and it was an immediate relief for Lyrr.

“No?!” Qui-Gon exclaimed and the strength of his outrage startled her. She dragged her attention back to what was in front of her just in time to notice a hurt expression flicker across Anakin’s face. Her jaw tightened with righteous indignation on Anakin’s behalf. Lyrr knew that he had been dreaming about becoming a Jedi for years and they just destroyed those dreams with cold efficiency.

“He is too old,” Mace said by way of explanation. “There is too much anger in him.”

Lyrr resisted the urge to scoff vocally at that statement. Anakin had never been an angry, or even moody, boy. He had been far more accepting of the way of life on Tatooine than Lyrr could ever manage. He never complained or ranted about being a slave and he had never thought that being a slave defined who he was as an individual. The bitterness that had razed her character had never taken root in Anakin.

Lyrr could sense that the Jedi Masters harsh criticism of him upset Anakin further. It pained her to see him that way and she attempted to project sympathetic and loving feelings towards him. She hoped that he would sense what she was doing and be encouraged as well as comforted.

The Jedi continued to discuss Anakin’s future in the Order, or lack of it, but she ignored them. After her disastrous interview, she started forming a plan to take Anakin and leave the Jedi. They could set up a repair shop somewhere and earn enough money to rescue Shmi. The only flaw in the plan was she couldn’t yet see how to get them away from the Jedi and their influence. She was trying to work that problem out when her thoughts were interrupted by Qui-Gon’s declaration that he would take on Anakin as an apprentice despite the Council’s decision.

She could see Ani’s immediate elation at the idea and it alarmed her. Seeing Qui-Gon place his hands possessively on Anakin’s shoulders vexed her even more; there was something fatherly in his gesture and Lyrr envied it. She was not the only one to be affected by the older man’s actions. She could feel the quick flare up of jealousy from Obi-Wan.

“An apprentice, you have,” Master Yoda reminded Qui-Gon. “Impossible, to take on a second.” Aggravated by the injustice of their attitude Lyrr continued to solidify her plans. She would have rather taken them to task for crushing the boy’s dreams but she knew that the more satisfying thing to do would be to live a fulfilling life away from their meddlesome influence.

“We forbid it,” Mace declared sternly. His declaration only led to Qui-Gon’s instance that Obi-Wan was ready to face the trials and become a Jedi Knight. The Council merely brushed aside his
“Besides,” Master Mundi finally interjected, “if you took on another apprentice would you not want to train your daughter?” Mundi’s question caused everyone in the room to pause.

“The girl will be trained,” Mace spoke into the collective silence; answering Qui-Gon’s unspoken question. It was a statement that shocked Lyrr and she did not bother to conceal it.

“You just claimed that Anakin is too old for this training and he is only nine,” she protested with an edge of anger to her voice. “Wouldn’t I at fifteen be considered too seasoned for your precious training?”

“Different, are you.” Master Yoda told Lyrr. That only infuriated her further.

“Different my ass,” she blurted out and she heard Obi-Wan choke on his surprise. She thought her outburst would earn a beating but no blow came and that made her nervous.

“There’s no disputing the fact that she is Veira’s and your daughter.” Windu finally said a suspicion of a smile around his mouth.

“So I was correct,” Qui-Gon murmured regarding Lyrr speculatively. Lyrr was utterly taken aback; her mind went blank trying to process what she had heard. She stepped back physically away from Qui-Gon.

“Yes, her resemblance to her mother is undeniable.” Master Mundi agreed with him.

“The more time I spend with her the more I am reminded of her mother.” Qui-Gon remarked almost to himself.

“My mother,” she said her eyes wide with shock and her voice sounding small and vulnerable; the bitterness leaving her. She sounded, like the child she was, and the Council members were struck by how unguarded she appeared.

Lyrr had never seriously considered the identities of her parents before; Shmi had always been the only parent she needed. Now the identity of both her mother and father had been dumped in her lap. For once she had no idea what to do or how to react, she couldn’t even fake composure.

“Veira Dysar, your mother was.” Master Yoda told the confused child, “A good woman and great Jedi was she.”

“A Jedi?” Lyrr asked still dazed and suspicious. “Are you certain that this Veira is my mother?”

She found it all impossible to believe; in fact she wasn’t willing to believe. After years of not knowing anything about her parentage, she did not think that pivotal mystery of her life could be so easily solved. The fact that the Jedi were providing her with this information did not ease her suspicions. She felt her jaw involuntarily tighten with stubbornness.

“We have no doubt,” Mace told her his voice stern and oddly gentle at the same time. “She disappeared eleven years ago journeying to Bakura in the Outer Rim. She had taken her young child with her and the last transmission from her ship originated near Tatooine. The coincidences are staggering; do you suggest we ignore them Lyrr?”


“Her eyes have you. And Qui-Gon’s defiance,” Yoda added.
“There is no denying it Lyyr, Veira Dysar was your mother and Qui-Gon Jinn is your father.” Mace concluded stressing the words ‘was’ and ‘is’ hoping that would convince her.

“Search your feelings child and you’ll see what we say is true.” Mundi suggested.

Lyyr did not know what the Jedi Master meant by that cryptic remark and was about to continue arguing when a small hand slipped into her own; jolting her out of her inner confusion. She looked down to find Anakin looking encouragingly up at her. In his gaze Lyyr found the steadying support she needed in that moment. Again she found herself wondering why the Jedi thought him unworthy of joining their ranks.

Her gaze wandered from Anakin to Qui-Gon who was watching her reaction. Finally, her brain processed what Windu told her. Startled by the realization Lyyr blurted the first thing that came to her mind.

“You’re my father?” She asked him her voice sounding both exasperated and exhausted. It was just too many shocks to her system and Lyyr was surprised she hadn’t keeled over from the stress. Then an idea occurred to her as she stared at Qui-Gon’s ruefully smiling face.

“You knew all along,” she accused him again just blurting out what popped into her head.

“I suspected,” he answered her truthfully. “Do as Master Mundi suggests Lyyr, search your feelings.”

Lyyr stared at him, her mouth slightly agape. She had no idea what they meant by that but decided to give it a try. She closed her mouth and shifted her gaze so that she was staring out of the glass windows behind the Jedi Master’s heads. Lyyr allowed her gaze to become unfocused as she thought about all they had told her. She drew comfort from the warmth of Anakin’s hand in her own.

Their story had a certain kind of logic to it. Lyyr could not deny that it would make sense but still there were some questions left to be answered. Such as why did it take them so long to find her? She had a feeling though that now was neither the time nor the place to ask them. Lyyr sensed them all watching her, waiting for a response and hesitantly she gave them one.

“I cannot deny the possibility of what you say,” she said focusing on Master Yoda and ignoring everyone else. “However, you have yet to give me enough proof.” Yoda nodded as though he expected that answer from her.

“About being trained, what think you? Hmmm..?”

“I never wanted to be a Jedi.” She told him truthfully, in all her dreams that one never occurred to her.

“Daughter of two Jedi, are you,” Yoda told her pointing out that particular irony. “Trained you need to be, dangerous it is to not.”

“What of Anakin?” She asked. She was hyper aware of the boy who was now trying to meld himself into her leg.

“Young Skywalker’s fate will be decided later,” Windu decided, she turned to look at him them.

“Very well then so will mine,” she replied. Lyyr needed the time to think about all of this. That statement ended her second painful interview with the Jedi Council and as she left the Chamber she hoped fervently that she would never have to endure that again. Back in the hallway she broke away from Anakin and once more sought solace out on the balcony watching the traffic. In that
moment Lyyr felt akin to the way she felt walking into the arenas – shaken, anxious, nauseous, and resentful.
Aftershocks

He would be lying to himself if he claimed that the Council had decided in his favor. He had been so confident that they would unanimously agree to train Anakin, because he was the Chosen One spoken of in the ancient prophecy. Every single member on the Council should have sensed at least that much – otherwise how could they reasonably claim to be Jedi Masters? It flabbergasted him that the Council had postponed their decision about Anakin’s future in the Jedi Order. In his heart Qui-Gon knew that waiting was wrong; Anakin should begin his training immediately and Qui-Gon was determined that it would happen. He had no qualms about working around the Council’s decision and behind their backs, none at all. Particularly, since the Living Force spoke so strongly to him about the boy.

Obi-Wan would object and protest at his rebelliousness but Qui-Gon could ignore him too. Soon enough the young man would learn for himself that the Jedi Council was not the ultimate authority in the universe. When their choices went directly against the will of the Force the as a Jedi he was duty bound to disobey. Never mind the fact that human interpretation of the will of the Force was completely speculative and up for debate. Qui-Gon was adamant in his belief that the Force brought him to Anakin so that the boy could become a Jedi and bring balance to the Force.

The fact that the Living Force had revealed his daughter to him in the process was only further proof that his assumptions were correct. Rediscovering Lyyr has as much as an impact on his life as discovering the Chosen One. Qui-Gon had never forgotten his daughter and had held out hope that she might still be alive but he resigned himself to the fact that he would probably never know what had happened to her.

Veira’s sudden death had rattled him, more than he cared to admit. Although he had not flirted with the Dark Side after her death like he did after the death of Tahl; he had still been wounded by it. He grieved for Veira and their lost child but Thal’s death had taught him how to love without possession. Qui-Gon was able to grieve for them without that grief becoming a dangerous indulgence. Besides even in his very hour of grief the Living Force had given him a reason to hope; a vision of a young Jedi Knight with Veira’s eyes and a spirit that reflected both of her parents but was all her own. How could Qui-Gon give up hope that his child still lived with that vision to sustain him?

But now he was presented with a daughter who was grown – nearly an adult in her own right and certainly use to acting as one. Qui-Gon needed to adjust his thinking and did not know how to. Truthfully he had not a clue as to how to approach Lyyr; he had missed so much of her life and had to reacquaint himself with her and the idea that he was a father. One thing was certain he knew nothing of her and what she had endured. It was that fact that lead him to seek out someone who had a better idea of what she’d been through.

Qui-Gon found Mace in the meditation gardens. In grotto covered with foliage from his home world. It did not surprise him to find the other man there, it made sense that Mace would seek out the solitude of the gardens. After all Veira had been his padawan learner and Mace would understand better than most the eerie similarities between mother and daughter.

“I wondered how long you would wait,” Mace announced without preamble. He did not bother to turn around and look at Qui-Gon but continued to stare into the pool of water. “Truthfully I had hoped you would put this off until after the situation on Naboo had been settled.”

“Then it would be too late,” Qui-Gon responded not bothering to elaborate. He had the foreboding feeling that time was slipping away and he wanted to repair his relationship with Lyyr as quickly as possible.
At that Mace turned to look at him but only raised one questioning eyebrow. To which Qui-Gon shrugged in response. Silence fell between them then each man occupied with his own thoughts. Qui-Gon was the first to break the silence and the question he asked was one he did not originally intend.

“Why did the Council deny Anakin?” He blurted out, his words betraying his feelings on the matter. That was not the question he had intended to ask and instinctively Qui-Gon understood that he was focusing on Anakin in an effort to mask his concern for Lyyr.

“There is too much fear in him,” Mace answered the question honestly enough. Qui-Gon wondered if he had expected that particular question. His initial reaction was to protest Mace’s claim and was opening his mouth to do so when he was smoothly cut off by an unanticipated source.

“Full of fear the boy is,” Master Yoda remarked cutting off any protest Qui-Gon might make before he could even give voice to it. Startled Qui-Gon turned around to find Yoda standing behind him and Mace, his hoverchair cast off to the side.

“Possessive fear, it is.” Yoda continued. “Fear is the path to the Dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.” He concluded definitively, driving the end of his cane into the ground for emphasis.

“Surely the boy is in no danger of that,” Qui-Gon scoffed, feeling the need to defend Anakin and his own belief that the boy is the Chosen One. “He was raised in an atmosphere of fear, it will wear off now.”

“Anakin fears losing those close to him,” Mace pointed out with cold logic. “He is greatly attached to his mother and Lyyr; these relationships will impede his ability to follow the will of the Force.”

“Exceptions have been made before,” Qui-Gon countered, “and I don’t see Master’s Mundi’s various attachments impeding his ability to listen to the will of the Force.”

“Aware of these dispensations, we are,” Yoda retorted. “Without such allowances, exist your daughter would not.”

Qui-Gon bowed his head for a moment feeling properly chastised.

“Is she as attached to Anakin as you believe he is too her?”

“She obviously feels affection towards the boy, they were raised as siblings,” Mace answered, “she has already learned how to control her feelings.” That statement caught Qui-Gon’s attention unlike anything else Mace had said yet.

“What did she endure?” He asked and they told him; although he heard and sensed their sympathy in their voices, neither Mace nor Yoda spared him any details. As they recited all that Lyyr had told the Council Qui-Gon’s heart bleed for her. He thought he had seen the depths of depravity the galaxy had to offer, apparently he had been mistaken and if he had had any clue what Lyyr was suffering he would have put an end to it years ago.

“More there is,” Yoda finally concluded, “told everything to us she has not.”

“I sensed that as well,” Mace agreed. “There is a mistrust of human and humanoid males that she tries to hide and shouts of more than just physical or emotional abuse.”

Qui-Gon had suspected as much back on Tatooine. Her early belligerence towards him had more to do with his gender and less to do with the fact that he was a Jedi. Moreover, it did not take a
Jedi mind trick to see her uneasiness and determine its cause; particularly when Lyyr made an effort to be so impertinent at the risk of her own life.

“Now is not the time for this,” Mace announced squaring his shoulders. “You must return with the Queen to Naboo and discover the identity of the dark warrior you described. That is the clue we need to unraveling the mystery of the Sith.”

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To just say that Lyyr was angry would be lying – she was mad at the world right now, heck the whole galaxy. But mostly she was furious with herself for how she handled her interview with the Jedi Council and, above all, for being so blasted angry. Her time since that fiasco of an interview was taken up with an emotional merry-go-round. She had not accomplished a damned thing. She found that so distasteful about anger; it was an exercise in pure selfishness that wasted her time and energy in petty self-indulgence. Lyyr knew that there were only two ways to handle her anger- channel it into some useful employment or find a way to allow it to run its course.

She shoved herself away from the balcony railing. Watching traffic and brooding about her rage was doing nothing to calm her down; it was only revving her up more. She knew now that her only recourse was physical exertion. Lyyr doubted that they would allow her to pick a fight with someone so she settled for just walking. She set herself a brisk pace taking off in the first direction that presented itself. It occurred to her that she probably shouldn’t wander through the temple that they might view her meandering as trespassing but she brushed the thought aside. She had become restless in her fury and needed to do something. It had been easier on Tatooine to rid herself of such restlessness – as much as she disliked admitting it – Lyyr only had to show up at the arenas and present herself to the fight master. She could then have the poisonous emotion pounded out of her very flesh. Lyyr doubted that she would find that kind of distraction among the Jedi.

Lyyr did not bother to smoother her feelings knowing that the Jedi would sense them. If they wanted to judge her and think poorly of her for a natural human emotion than that was their problem. She thought that any judgments made by them would only reflect poorly upon the Jedi. Lyyr was aware of the dangers of excessive anger; she had often witnessed the dangers of all emotions as a slave. But she also recognized the saving grace one found in feeling such things as hope and love; for without either of those she would not have survived. Lyyr knew this to be true, even though she couldn’t properly explain it.

She had long since lost track of where she was going and only had unclear impressions of her surroundings. Gradually she became aware of a vague sense of opulence that warred with the Spartan lifestyle she believed the Jedi preached. For a group that disdained possessions they appeared to have an awful surplus. This apparent hypocrisy only irritated her further. Her rage had been a long time building with no outlet and now she needed to find one quickly. Lyyr increased her pace, moving further into the bowels of the Jedi Temple. Her focus turning inward and she was no longer aware of what went on around her.

Therefore, she was completely taken off guard when out of nowhere a hand came down on her injured shoulder in a crushing grip. Transforming the dull throbbing, that she had been ignoring, into a stabbing agony. Lyyr bit her lip to keep from screaming and swearing then reacting instinctively she reached up to pry the offending appendage off of her. She found the pressure point between thumb and forefinger common among all humanoid species and dug her finger nails in; applying all the pressure her work hardened hands could muster. She was rewarded for her efforts with a half stifled grunt of pain.

Her attacker tried to withdraw his hand but Lyyr kept a hold of it. She was pulled around by the mysterious shoulder grabber’s attempts to reclaim his hand. Lyyr wasn’t really that surprised to discover that the hand belonged to Obi-Wan.
“Force’s sake Lyyr! What are you doing?” He demanded jerking his hand back trying to break her hold. He didn’t have any luck and she watched, fascinated and slightly amused, as he became more flustered.

“I don’t like being sneak up on,” she answered her tone common place.

“I’ve been calling your name, you never answered.” He told her and she dropped his hand to consider what he said. She was slightly pleased with herself to see blood bead up in a half moon mark on the back of his hand, with any luck it would scar. He glared balefully at her but she ignored him. Lyyr was too busy checking the bandages around her wound to pamper the young man.

“Why did you do that?” He asked sounding surely. She looked at him with narrowed eyes, Lyyr guessed his age to be somewhere in his early twenties and so far she was not impressed by him.

“I don’t care for people trying to bully me,” she answered returning her attention to her wound. She noticed right away that he had managed to pop open some of Qui-Gon’s careful stitching.

“Bully,” he began to sputter obviously intent on denying that his actions had been that of a bully but his protests died when he saw the blood on Lyyr’s hand as she withdrew it from the neck of her tunic. She looked over in time to catch an expression of alarm flicker across Obi-Wan’s face.

“Lyyr I” – he stopped abruptly.

“It’s alright Obi-Wan,” she reassured him with misleading reasonableness. Even shrugging her shoulder’s dismissively which only exacerbated the pain. “After all it’s not like you knew.” She finished, appearing to focus all of her attention on her wound again but she was actually watching Obi-Wan through her eyelashes.

Lyyr was far better at reading facial expressions than he gave her credit for, she could easily see his guilt in the way his eyebrows pulled together and how he quickly bit his lip. He probably assumed that being a slave she would be oblivious to such subtleties as body language. Actually it was because she grew up a slave one’s survival depended on keeping those in power happy and to do that one needed to anticipate their needs. If you didn’t learn how to do that then you didn’t survive. Besides her enforced contact with that Zoltron Delcep Noirth certainly taught her a thing or two about reading body language.

She could easily read his guilt in his expression and the way he held himself but she did not expect his apology.

“Master Qui-Gon wanted me to find you and take you to where you’ll be staying,” Obi-Wan began to explain his voice losing some of its cocky self-assurance and he blushed as she looked him in the eye. Lyyr was trying to figure out if his blushing was for embarrassment over what had happened or because the neck of her tunic had stretched out while she checked her shoulder and he could now easily look down it.

“I called your name several times and you just didn’t respond, I only wanted to get your attention. I did not mean to hurt you.”

“Well you certainly got my attention.” She replied flippantly floored by his genuine apology. No one in her life outside of the Skywalkers had ever apologized for hurting her and meant it. She wondered if it was a trick but she could hear the truth of his words in his voice and see his sincerity in his body language. But more importantly that sixth sense of hers was telling her that what he said was true.
“Qui-Gon was pretty adamant that I find you and bring you back straight away but I think we should stop by the Halls of Healing first.” He decided surprising her once more by reaching out and taking her hand. When she did not immediately fall into step behind him, Obi-Wan gave her a gentle tug to encourage her into moving and to avoid jarring her shoulder anymore. She followed him meekly momentarily too stunned to protest.

Lyyr did not know what to make of him holding her hand. There was nothing possessive about the gesture on his part but it certainly felt different. She almost liked holding his hand and being led around by him – it felt oddly comforting – but then she remembered that she was angry at the world and the Jedi in particular. What’s more he had deliberately reopened her wound. If they had been on Tatooine she would have done more than just dig a fingernail into his palm. It occurred to her that the Jedi were already changing her and that thought only irritated her further. Lyyr broke his grip with ease causing Obi-Wan to stop and look back at her in puzzlement.

“I am neither an invalid nor a child and do not need to be treated as such,” she snapped at him her eyes flashing. “I am perfectly capable of taking care of my wound on my own. It’s not the first one I’ve ever had and won’t be the last.”

“Lyyr, I never considered you either of those,” he told her honestly enough. “I do think you should let the Jedi Healers take a look at your shoulder, however.” Lyyr opened her mouth to protest but he stopped her with a gesture, “At least let them look and make sure everything is fine as a favor to me.”

She did not want to do him a favor, she did not want to owe him anything; but she sensed that this was his way of making amends. The fact that he couldn’t come right out and say that only proved that he had as much pride as she did. Grudgingly she nodded her agreement and continued following him. The only problem now was she missed holding his hand.
Lyyr had made a point of avoiding any and all Jedi, especially since Obi-Wan had fogged marched her to the Halls of Healing and then back to the borrowed bed chamber set aside for her and Anakin’s use while on Coursant. In fact she just avoided everyone, including Anakin which meant attempting to ignore all the hurtful glances he gave her. Even the handmaiden Padmé appeared injured by Lyyr’s aloofness. Lyyr tried to act like she was unaffected by their obviously hurt feelings, she told herself she did not care but it was a transparent lie. In an effort to continue avoiding everyone Lyyr volunteered herself to repack a portion of the Queen’s abundant wardrobe. It kept her sufficiently busy and out of reach until they had to board the ship. The Queen had decided to return to Naboo and she and Anakin would be going along. Lyyr was beginning to feel like extra luggage.

She still wasn’t fit company for anyone even though her anger had long since dissipated. Her resentment, however, had only solidified. She could admit that much to herself at least. Moreover, she was certain that she had every right to feel resentment. Eleven years thinking she was an orphan only to have a biological father appear out of nowhere. Lyyr had long ago given up the fantasy of her family finding her and whisking her away from the nightmare of Gardulla’s cruelty and decided to forge one of her own. The stability of family life she had been able to find was now being threatened.

Lyyr felt torn. The Skywalkers were her family. Shmi may not have given birth to Lyyr but she had been the one to raise her; to encourage her when she needed it, and comfort her when she needed that as well. Qui-Gon may have played a role in her birth but not in her life; she couldn’t consider him to be her father just because biology said it was true.

Lyyr couldn’t reconcile herself to the idea that both of her parents had been Jedi Knights and couldn’t figure out how to blend the sense of family she had forged with the Skywalkers to her blood ties to Qui-Gon. Her confusion was not helped by Qui-Gon either. He had left her alone ever since the grand revelation almost as if he was struggling with the idea that they were related as much as she was. That in turn only reinforced her suspicion that she had never been wanted. Moreover, his obvious interest in Anakin was no help. For the first time in her life Lyyr found that she was truly jealous and resentful of Anakin. Lyyr took the elaborate robe she had just finished folding and threw it rather violently into the waiting open trunk.

“Lyyr,” a hesitant voice spoke up behind her.

She turned away from the waiting trunk to find herself facing a perplexed looking Anakin. She watched him patiently for a minute, taking a few deep calm breaths before saying anything. He spoke again before she got a chance too.

“Are you mad at me?” He asked fighting back tears. Seeing him trying bravely not to cry completely disarmed her.

Lyyr sank gracefully to the floor and sat crossed legged in order to look him in the eye. Without invitation Anakin plopped down in her lap throwing his arms about her neck. It was something he hadn’t done since he was five and it took Lyyr by surprise.

“I am not mad at you Ani,” she told him trying to catch his eye but he kept his resolutely down cast.

“Are you sure?”
“Ani look at me,” she told him her voice gentle but firm; reluctantly he met her gaze. “I am not mad at you.”

“You are mad at someone, is it Master Qui-Gon?” Lyyr stared at the boy for a moment; she had not expected that question.

“Why would I be upset with Qui-Gon?”

“He never told you that he’s your father and he left you on Tatooine like he never wanted you.” She blinked rapidly at that statement. It was eerie hearing Anakin say that for it was so close to what she had been thinking.

“All the Jedi knew, and they could have saved you,” Anakin continued unaware of her silence, “you should be angry at all of them; they deserve it!” He concluded his voice raised and face flush with anger of his own at the wrong he thought had been done to Lyyr. She was touched that he felt so strongly, but it worried her to see the strength of his reaction.

“Anakin listen to me,” she told him. “I am not angry at Qui-Gon or any of the Jedi. I’m hurt and upset that this happened but I cannot be angry about it.” Even as she said the words, Lyyr knew that she was speaking the truth.

“Why,” he demanded sounding incredulous.

“Well,” she started then paused considering his question. “If I did not grow up on Tatooine I would never have met your mother. Then I would not have a little brother and you wouldn’t have the best big sister in the whole galaxy.” She told him giving him a kiss on the cheek then hugging him fiercely.

Anakin giggled and returned her hug. Then with his arms still around her neck, Anakin rested his head on her right shoulder snuggling into her. Lyyr rested her cheek against his sandy hair and they sat there in silence.

“Lyyr,” Anakin finally said, “I’m glad they left you on Tatooine.”

“I am too, Ani, I am too.”

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Qui-Gon stood on the landing platform impatiently – though outwardly appearing unruffled – waiting for everyone to board the nearby Nabooian ship. He did not entirely approve of the Queen’s decision to return to Naboo, although he admired her daring. It was a bold move, one her enemies were not likely to anticipate. Her actions would either end the blockade or end her life and Amidala appeared to have accepted the risk she was taking. She had already proven herself to be a maverick in the political arena: Qui-Gon would not be surprised to find that she had the savvy to succeed on the battle field. The only one who had not been taken off guard by her call for a vote of no confidence against Chancellor Valorum was Senator Palpatine. In fact he seemed rather smug about the current turmoil; like a wolf among sheep. Qui-Gon made a mental note to keep his eye on Palpatine. The Senator could be doing more to help alleviate the current crisis using the existing diplomatic channels but Palpatine appeared to be adding fuel to the fire instead.

He paced the landing platform awaiting the arrival of the Queen and her entourage. He had not seen Lyrr since the meeting with the Council and he hope she would arrive with the Queen. Anakin was already on the platform interacting with the droid R2-D2. Qui-Gon briefly wondered what the boy and droid were discussing; he clearly heard the boy talking and the droid beeping in return but could make no sense of supposedly one-sided conversation. Obi-Wan was also already on the platform and he seemed unwilling to give up talking Qui-Gon into following the Council’s wishes.
“The boy is dangerous, they all sense it, why can’t you?” He argued with Qui-Gon trying to keep his voice respectful. Qui-Gon could sense that it was personal jealousy rather than desire to obey the Council that spurred the younger man’s continued objections.

“His fate is uncertain not dangerous,” Qui-Gon retorted. “The council will decide Anakin’s future that should be enough for you. Now get on board.” The last was said with a stern edge indicating that he would listen to the young man’s objections no more. Obi-Wan reluctantly and somewhat like a petulant child boarded the spacecraft. Qui-Gon watched him board the ship and could not help but sigh at his padawan’s behavior. He had thought that Obi-Wan’s rebellious and somewhat fiery nature had been tempered over the years, apparently not. That would serve him well in the future, if he learned to keep a better leash on it.

“Master Qui-Gon, sir,” a hesitant voice spoke up, “I do not wish to be a problem.”

“You won’t be Ani,” Qui-Gon reassured him.

“Master, sir...I’ve been wondering, what are midi-chlorians?” With that question the boy drew Qui-Gon into conversation about the importance of midi-chlorians to life and in particular the Jedi order. As they were talking a transport pulled up containing Queen Amidala and her handmaidens among them was Lyyr.

She paused to watch Qui-Gon speaking with Ani before being gently pushed by Jar Jar into moving again. She hovered around the edges of the crowd trying to keep out of Qui-Gon’s direct line of site. While Qui-Gon was speaking with the Queen, Lyyr took the opportunity to slip aboard the ship. He watched her disappearing into the hull of the ship out of the corner of his eye.

He waited until the ship had left Coursant’s atmosphere before attempting to search out Lyyr. They needed to talk, Qui-Gon had the feeling that if did not make the time to reconcile himself to Lyyr now the opportunity would never present itself again. He did not understand why he had such a feeling but over the years Qui-Gon had learned to trust almost explicitly what the Living Force told him. It was the Living Force that led him to Veira and Qui-Gon did not doubt that it would show him how to reconnect with his daughter.

Qui-Gon felt as though he had utterly failed his child. Until now, his only role in Lyyr’s life was that of a sperm donor. He flinched internally at the thought, for it echoed what he had said to Veira when she first approached him before he realized the true extent of both hers and his own feelings.

Qui-Gon remembered Veira reassuring him that he would be a fine father but he had never been convinced. He had always held his inability to help Vos against himself. It had been his greatest failure but she would shrug it off and claim that to err was natural and he was not wholly to blame. She would then tell him to focus on his mentoring of Obi-Wan for he would be a great Jedi and it would be Qui-Gon who helped unleash his potential. That was the only thing they ever argued over, his insecurity about fatherhood. Actually it was Qui-Gon who argued, Veira would either attempt to reason with him or ignore his ramblings.

Then when Lyyr was born and he held his daughter for the first time Qui-Gon was rattled by the strength of his love for the babe. So much so that he retreated from his family accepting missions that took him from one end of the galaxy to another. He claimed that it was his duties and the Council that kept him away but Veira merely smiled and gently insisted that he spent time with them when he could. It would seem that Qui-Gon had made a mess out of being a father to Lyyr from the very start.

He really had been nothing more than a sperm donor; he loved Veira gotten her pregnant, but had left her to face the disproval of their fellow Jedi alone. Outside of Grand Master Yoda and the
Council, who would never discuss what went on in the chambers, no Jedi alive knew of his involvement with Veira. Until now not even Obi-Wan had known the truth. Qui-Gon tried to rid himself such thoughts as he roamed the ship searching for Lyyr it would do him no good to dwell on the past now. He couldn’t change what had already happened but at least he could try to make amends. The Jedi appeared to be roaming the ship aimlessly, when in actuality he was allowing the Force to guide him to Lyyr’s current hiding place. He had earlier determined that she was far too skilled at avoidance for him to track her down through normal less esoteric means.

Eventually he found her down in the barracks of the ship. She was sitting on one of the bunks in the chamber staring at a wall of lockers. Her expression was completely blank and she did not acknowledge Qui-Gon’s presence; instead she turned her attention to the hands clasped in her lap. He had never seen her so listless and unresponsive. He stood just inside the doorway waiting for Lyyr to acknowledge him.

She soon began to fidget a little under his gaze. Qui-Gon was well aware that his silent presence was making her uncomfortable. But he could not figure out how to begin the conversation he knew they needed to have. When he saw her move her hand to rub at her shoulder Qui-Gon realized that he would have to be the one to break the silence. Moreover, that she was trying to give him a way to do that.

“Still bothers you does it,” he said moving away from the door. She finally looked up at the sound of his voice. Her eyes were some unnamable shade between lavender and violet; it was a look he had seen before, many times. Whenever Veira was deeply troubled by something but did not know how to handle things she had worn that look. Seeing that exact same look in Lyyr’s eyes made Qui-Gon pause.

“It’s just a little sore,” she replied softly her voice hesitant. She seemed uncertain of how to act around him and Qui-Gon knew her well enough by now to know that uncertainty did not sit well with Lyyr.

“Let me take a look,” Qui-Gon offered using the relatively safe topic of her wounded shoulder as a way to get closer to her. For a moment, Lyyr looked as if she was going to protest but then with a half mumbled remark about obnoxious Jedi she allowed him to look at her shoulder. He let her comment pass unnoticed, viewing her feisty-ness as a positive sign.

The first thing he noticed about her wound was that there were no longer any bandages covering it. The skin was no longer as irritated and raw looking as it once had been. It would most certainly scar but it looked as if she had avoided infection, which would have become unavoidable if she had been allowed to continue letting it fester.

“You removed the bandages.”

“Yes, a while ago.”

“You should have left them on longer,” he advised looking at her sternly. She chuckled indifferently.

“Look, with your stitching job, Padmé’s bacta treatments and then Obi-Wan’s insistence that I cozy up with the Jedi Healers I’ve already received more medical treatment than I ever expected to see in my lifetime. I should be in the grips of a fever induced illusion from an infected wound right now.”

“Lyyr,” he said with an exasperated sigh, “I don’t understand how you can be so apathetic.”
“What do you expect Qui-Gon,” she snapped, “I was a slave. A Hutt or any other owner would never waste money on keeping a slave healthy; just provide enough of a patch job to ensure that the work gets done. I had no power to change that, so why become upset over it.”

“I’m sorry Lyyr,” he meant it too, even if she did not think he did.

She looked away from him then shaking her head. Qui-Gon sat down on the bunk next to her thinking that might relieve some of the tension in the room. Her immediate reaction was to scoot away from him towards the other end of the bunk putting as much space between them as she could.

“Lyyr, I do not know if you’ll understand or even believe me,” he began trying to ignore how rigidly she held herself. “Veira’s death, we, the Order, all felt it through ripples in the Force and it disturbed us. Her death was not just unexpected but a blow to the Order. She was on a peaceful mission to her home planet there was no anticipated danger that is why Veira took you with her. If she had any inclination that there was any risk she would not have taken you.”

“You felt her die,” Lyyr began her voice barely a whisper, “how is it that you didn’t know that I was still alive?”

“As a child you’re Force-signature was so intertwined with your mother’s that it was often impossible to tell the two of you of you apart. After Veira’s death, no one could sense anything from you any longer. If someone did, the echoes were so faint they thought it was reverberations from Veira’s death. A violent death’s echoes remain in the Force for an immeasurable time.” He paused, the pain and regret he felt evident. Lyyr turned back to look at him her gaze opaque and some of the stiffness leaving her body as she responded to his emotions. Seeing her relax a little relaxed Qui-Gon in return and allowed him to continue.

“Master Windu was sent to retrieve you, recover Veira’s body and find out what happened. When he arrived on Tatooine he found no traces of you and it was assumed that whoever killed your mother had stolen you. All that has ever been sense of you was fear and pain.”

“Then why not look for me?” She demanded her eyes flashing.

“I do,” he replied earnestly, “every planet I’m on I search for you. Over the years I sensed what I thought were the lingering echoes of your mother’s death but now know was you.” Unsure if the gesture would be accepted he reached out and laid a hand alongside her cheek. She flinched at the unexpected touch then visibly tried to suppress it but she did not withdraw from his hand.

“Lyyr, I never gave up hope,” he told her sincerely. At that Lyyr closed her eyes and two errant tears fell down her face unchecked.

That was the first Qui-Gon had seen Lyyr cry. Until now he had assumed that the aired planet had left her eyes completely unable to produce tears. Moved by her vulnerability, Qui-Gon reached up to wipe away one of her tears with his thumb. At his touch her eyes flew open to focus intently on him, they were a vibrant shade of violet.

“I know that this explanation is no comfort,” her lips twisted into a sneer, displaying the same caustic sense of humor her mother had. “I know that there really is no good reason for why you were never found, however, I believe it was the will of the Force.” At this she pulled away from him, turning her head to stare at the lockers again.

“That is a hollow comfort Qui-Gon.” There was a distinct catch to her voice as she said this.

“Yes I suppose it is,” he admitted. “Still, search your feelings Lyyr.” He urged her. Qui-Gon
needed her to accept it.

“Oh I have searched them Qui-Gon, for quite some time,” she responded turning back to him appearing composed but he could sense that she was only just maintaining control. “With time I can learn to accept all of this, perhaps even understand why, but don’t expect me to welcome you as my father immediately,” the last was said with an edge and her eyes had hardened defensively.

“If nothing else,” she mumbled ruefully, “I need to get use to the idea of having one.”

Qui-Gon began to laugh at that, he couldn’t help himself. She was really quite a loveable child and that contradicted the tough exterior she put up to protect herself. She looked offended by his mirth which only caused Qui-Gon to laugh harder. Without thinking about it Qui-Gon drew her into a hug. She tensed up against him at first but then she hesitantly returned his embrace and began to relax into his side. He held her close to him his thoughts once again wandering to her mother.

Qui-Gon clearly remembered the night Veira had confessed her love for him and when he realized that he loved her as well. Or more accurately it was the night that Veira finally convinced Qui-Gon that she was serious in her pursuit of him. They had recently returned from a diplomatic mission to Bakura, Veira’s home world. Something during the mission had shaken her and she had gone into meditation with Master Windu and Master Yoda upon their return. Qui-Gon had not seen her since separating from her on the landing platform. Therefore he was surprised when there was a knock on the door to his apartment and he opened it to find Veira on the other side.

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Qui-Gon clearly remembered the night Veira had confessed her love for him and when he realized that he loved her as well. Or more accurately it was the night that Veira finally convinced Qui-Gon that she was serious in her pursuit of him. They had recently returned from a diplomatic mission to Bakura, Veira’s home world. Something during the mission had shaken her and she had gone into meditation with Master Windu and Master Yoda upon their return. Qui-Gon had not seen her since separating from her on the landing platform. Therefore he was surprised when there was a knock on the door to his apartment and he opened it to find Veira on the other side.

“Veira, it’s late what is it?” she did not say anything as slipped past him and into the center of the room. She seemed to be nervous yet at the same time serene. Her brilliant eyes tracked him as he shut the door and moved to stand near her.

He stood in front of her uncertain of what was going on, Veira only watched him; searching for something. Then without preamble, she stepped towards him her arms snaking behind him, her body pressing close to his while her head rested on his chest. He kept his arms slack at his side out of shock at her daring. Qui-Gon stared down at the top of her head in confusion. She chuckled and he felt the vibrations of her mirth in his chest. She took his hands and guided them so that they were resting on her hips. Only then did she look up at him a curious smile playing about her lips.

“I have a confession to make Qui-Gon,” she told him her voice made husky by some suppressed emotion, “I have fallen in love with a Jedi Knight.” She shifted her body weight to the balls of her feet then so she could reach up to kiss him…

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Taking Lyrr to the Halls of Healing had seemed like a good idea at the time, he wanted to make up for popping open the stitching on her shoulder. Obi-Wan had known about her shoulder wound and had deliberately grabbed her left shoulder thinking that would get her attention when calling her name several times had failed.

The Halls of Healing had been an unmitigated disaster. There was really no better way to describe the experience. Lyrr had been surely and uncommunicative ever since he had suggested the idea. Obi-Wan couldn’t blame her entirely for her bad attitude; she had endured a great shock and her whole world had been turned upside down. But she wasn’t the only one and she did not need to make everyone else suffer because of her internal turmoil.

They had been greeted by Jedi Healer Vokara Che; the female Twi-lek appeared to have been waiting for them specifically. Obi-Wan knew Che and he knew how harsh she could come across
in her zest for her job. Lyrr was a ticking time bomb right now; she wouldn’t mix well with Master Che. Obi-Wan had desperately and surreptitiously looked about for another Jedi Healer, anyone else. Che took control of the situation immediately, grabbing a hold of Lyrr’s arm firmly at the elbow and steering her into a nearby exam room. Dreading the coming explosion Obi-Wan had tagged along behind them cautiously. The Twi-lek healer went to work on Lyrr’s shoulder all the while reprimanding her for removing the bandages too soon and not coming to the Halls straight away. Predictably Lyrr’s response was to argue with the Jedi, just for the sake of being contentious. Obi-Wan had waited with baited breath for Vokara to scold Lyrr, say anything to put her in her place but that never happened. Instead she engaged herself in the argument with Lyrr and seemed to enjoy the disagreement. As they left the Halls of Healing Vokara’s parting words were directed towards Obi-Wan and out of earshot from Lyrr.

“Stubborn as a mule that one is and a worse patient then you Kenobi,” was the professional assessment she shared with him, “which probably explains why she has so many scars.”

When he finally left Lyrr off at her borrowed chambers, Obi-Wan realized that he needed to do some thinking to straighten out his own feelings about what had been revealed in the Council Chambers. There had been an alternative, pettier, motive behind his grabbing her shoulder. He had been infuriated to learn that she was Qui-Gon’s daughter.

Obi-Wan had always known that Qui-Gon was a maverick; he had been labeled as a gray Jedi by those in the Order who disproved of him and his methods. Obi-Wan also knew of Qui-Gon’s attachment to Master Tahl, but he had never suspected that there had been anything between his Master and Master Dysar other than friendship. He certainly never imagined that Qui-Gon had fathered Master Dysar’s child.

He remembered the controversy that rippled through the Order at Veira Dysar’s obvious pregnancy and Obi-Wan had still been a youngling at the time. Many were outraged that she had not been removed from the Order for such a blatant disregard of the code; those same people were infuriated when Grand Master Yoda had allowed her to keep her child. Obi-Wan had once hoped that she would pick him as her padawan learner. With the stigma of the pregnancy surrounding her, however, he had given up on that hope. Dysar never appeared affected by the controversy even when her fellow Jedi were turning away from her and whispering backbiting rumors. It wasn’t until after Qui-Gon had accepted him as an apprentice that he learned how little it bothered her.

Veira would stop by Qui-Gon’s apartment, her toddler perched securely on one hip. She and Qui-Gon would engage in friendly conversation about their various exploits while Obi-Wan entertained her child. There never appeared to be anything to suggest that the two Jedi Masters were romantically involved. Obi-Wan had a hard time reconciling the brooding young woman with the giggling babe he used to play peek-a-boo with. The only thing that that little girl and Lyrr shared was eye color.

With a shake of his head Obi-Wan tried to dislodge those thoughts and left the ships central room. Qui-Gon had disappeared somewhere onboard the ship soon after takeoff, and he never saw Lyrr board. Knowing that it was truly none of his business, Obi-Wan went looking for them. He wanted to try and talk to him about the boy again. Perhaps successfully convince him that taking on Anakin as an apprentice was as dangerous as the Council claimed.

If he was honest with himself Obi-Wan would admit that it was jealousy that motivated him. He knew that eventually he would go on to become a Jedi Knight and Qui-Gon would eventually train another padawan learner. But he had not expected to be set aside so quickly. He was shocked by his Master’s willingness, even eagerness, at finding a replacement padawan for Obi-Wan. Perhaps he wasn’t as ready for the trials as he thought; if knowing that Qui-Gon would have
another apprentice upset him so much. That wasn’t exactly Jedi level objectivity.

He made his way towards the ships barracks on a hunch. Once down there he found them sitting on a bunk. Qui-Gon had one arm wrapped protectively around the girl as she rested against his side, her head on his shoulder and his face buried in her hair. Lyyr’s shoulders were shaking silently, she looked to be crying. Obi-Wan was immediately embarrassed for intruding on such a private moment. He tried to leave without bringing attention to himself.

“Obi-Wan,” Qui-Gon’s voice stopped him mid-step. He turned back around to find them both watching him. Lyyr looked remarkably composed for someone who had been crying; he could see the traces of her tears on her cheeks. He locked eyes with her then. Those violet eyes were opaque from unshed tears and there was something in them that soothed Obi-Wan and reminded him of the toddler he once knew.
Dreadful Feeling

Lyrr knew – in her gut – that Qui-Gon was truly her father. But she was determined to deny the familial connection, to herself and everyone else. She was stubborn like that; hanging on to a last defense even though she knew it was nothing more than a form of retreat. She wished she could just accept things like Anakin and Shmi did; especially Shmi, she never seemed to fight being a slave. Anakin had already embraced her new found family even though she wasn’t ready to. He was also fully convinced that they both would be accepted by the Council and trained as Jedi, even though it was still an uncertainty.

If the Jedi took Anakin on as one of their trainees then Lyrr would agree to join the Order. After Mace made the offer Lyrr found a desire for that life growing within her. She saw joining the Jedi Order as a means of learning more about her biological mother and a part of her could not pass up that opportunity. Still, she thought it more likely that the Council would not accept Anakin as a trainee. If that happened then she would take her brother and build a new life for them.

For the remainder of the journey to Naboo Lyrr did her best to stay quiet and out of the way; only interacting with other people when it was asked of her. But otherwise she sat silently in an out of the way corner of the ships main room. Occasionally she would catch Obi-Wan looking over at her with a questioning gaze. She would return his look with a blank stare of her own; he could not hold her gaze for very long. Lyrr found that to be perversely amusing. He seemed to have been aggravated by her mere presence since Lyrr joined their party and she liked knowing that she could get under his skin so thoroughly.

She only interacted with everyone else when Captain Panaka called them to a meeting in the Queen’s quarters. As she entered the chambers Lyrr looked around for Padmé. She had not seen the young handmaiden since they first arrived on Coursant. Padmé, however, was not there. Two different handmaidens stood behind the Queen, Sabe and Eirate, she thought their names were. Remembering her suspicions about the Queen, Lyrr studied her face and what she realized made her bite her lip to stop herself from laughing aloud. Queen Amidala is certainly more than she appears to be, Lyrr thought with amusement impressed by the young woman’s cleverness. She would have to remember to ask Padmé what her full name was.

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The conversation with Lyrr did not go as smoothly as he had expected; he did not think he had accomplished anything by it. An impression that was only reinforced by Lyrr’s silent withdrawal from everyone on board the ship. Over the next few days he began to sense a steady change in Lyrr’s feelings towards him. She seemed to be gradually accepting the truth, she seemed happier as well, and for that, he was glad.

Qui-Gon was disappointed that that she had not immediately embraced him as her father. He had harbored the thought that they would instantly rekindle a father/daughter relationship. He realized how unrealistic it was but couldn’t keep himself from believing it might be possible. Qui-Gon would have to try and rebuild the relationship they should have had from the start; for now he was content with just knowing Lyrr. It amazed him that she was still willing to try and trust others despite everything she had been through. It showed great strength of character on her part.

The Queen had finally announced the full extent of her intention to return to blockade Naboo. Qui-Gon had his reservations about what she purposed; although he admired her daring. He would not be the Jedi he had become without those reservations. Besides, knowing Jar Jar he could not help but worry that the use of a Gungan army would prove unwise. Qui-Gon would
keep such thoughts to himself, however, and trust that the Queen knew what she was putting into motion.

As soon as they landed on Naboo they went in search of Jar Jar’s people and Qui-Gon briefly wondered about what sort of reception they could expect to receive. The Gungan leaders certainly weren’t very welcoming to Binks the last time they were in the underwater city. It was an interview Binks had to do on his own and so the party waited on his return by the edge of the lake. Qui-Gon fell into a pensive mood as he waited on Jar Jar’s return and that was the state of mind that Obi-Wan found him in.

“Do you think the Queen’s plan will work?”

“The Gungans will not easily be swayed and we cannot use our power to help her.” Qui-Gon answered, adding the last to prevent Obi-Wan from getting any bright ideas.

“I’m..I’m sorry about my behavior master.” Obi-Wan began hesitantly “It’s not my place to disagree with you about the boy.”

“What of your suspicions towards Lyyr,” Qui-Gon prompted him.

“Ah, yes I am sorry about that as well,” Obi-Wan replied ducking his head to hide his blush. He obviously had not thought that Qui-Gon knew nothing about his feelings towards Lyyr. “I am grateful that you think I am ready to face the trails.” He continued not trying to give any excuses for his behavior just accepting that he was in the wrong. Qui-Gon watched the young Jedi for a long moment realizing that the young man had fulfilled all of his expectations and then some. In that moment Qui-Gon was extremely proud of Obi-Wan.

“You have been a good apprentice,” Qui-Gon finally spoke placing a hand on Obi-Wan’s shoulder. “You are much wiser than I, Obi-Wan. I foresee you will become a great Jedi.” Even as he said it, he knew that it was true. Obi-Wan looked momentarily stunned by what Qui-Gon said but recovered quickly.

Over Obi-Wan’s shoulder he could see Lyyr watching them. From the speculative look in her eyes, it was obvious that she had overheard their conversation. She stood there chewing on her lip for a moment before catching Qui-Gon’s eye. She nodded then and gave him a small but genuine smile. It was an encouraging sight and he wanted to talk to her but Jar Jar returned just then.

“Dare-sa nobody dare. All gone. Some kinda fight, I think. Sorry, no Gungans...no Gungans.” He concluded shaking his head mournfully and sounding very confused.

“Could the droids have found them?” Panaka began to speculate. Jar Jar was quick to shoot that theory down.

“No…mesa no think so. Gungan hiden. When in trouble, go to sacred place. Mackineeks no find them dare.” With that, they were on their way, and any chance to talk with Lyyr vanished.

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She was astonished and memorized by now different this planet was from what she knew. Lyyr had never before seen so many green and growing things outside of a holonet projection. She had no idea that the atmosphere could be so heavy with moisture. It all puzzled her greatly and like on Coursant her senses were assaulted at every turn. Unlike on Coursant Lyyr was enjoying the experience.

A desire to go exploring overwhelmed her. She wanted to know what it would feel like to submerge herself in one of the ponds they passed, how comforting it would be to lay down in the
lush grass or if she could accomplish the feat of climbing a tree. Lyyr promised herself that she would do those things with Anakin as soon as there was time. She followed along not caring where she was led, barely noticing anything going on around her as she tried to keep her mind from wandering. She did not realize that they had found the Gungans hiding place. Lyyr paid no mind to the weapons pointed at her and the rest of the Queen’s party with hostile suspicion. She had fallen towards the back of the party. Her lagging was partly due to being lost within her own thoughts and partly out of a conscious desire not to have those thoughts intruded upon. Unknowingly she placed herself at the back of the group near the Jedi.

Lyyr had discovered that if she cleared her mind of all distractions she could sense whispers of others thoughts. The quieter she made her own mind the clearer those thoughts became to her. She wanted to test the limits of this new ability. Lyyr pushed her ‘awareness’ out in on direction then the other only stopping when she sensed someone’s alarm. She quickly pulled her awareness back to herself hoping that the other mind she had encountered did not realize what she had been doing. She was fairly certain that whoever she had stumbled upon would not appreciate the intrusion.

“You should pay attention to what’s in front of you,” Qui-Gon leaned over and whispered in her ear. Lyyr smiled apologetically but did not bother to look at him. Her attention was brought back to what was going on in time to see Padmé make her way to the front of the group.

“Young Handmaiden” – They young handmaiden interrupted the queen midsentence.

“Whosa dis?” Boss Nass demanded sounding confused and irritated by it.

“I am Queen Amidala,” Padmé announced.

The girl’s announcement did not surprise Lyyr at all; in fact she found herself smothering a chuckle. The Jedi must have heard her for they both gave Lyyr a startled look.

“You should pay better attention to what’s in front of you,” she whispered cheekily back to Qui-Gon.

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The Gungans were swift to offer their help after the girl’s impassioned plea. They were all soon discussing plans for the impending battle. Lyyr found herself overcome with an awful feeling deep in the pit of her gut almost as if she would be sick. It came upon her suddenly and so fiercely that she physically took a step back from everyone else. She clenched her jaw repetitively to keep herself from vomiting.

She made no effort to help with the planning knowing that she would not be able to add anything of value. She had no concept of strategy and doubted that skills she learned as a slave would be useful. So she watched silently attempting to quell the sudden turmoil in her stomach as well as learn.

As the time to put their plan in action grew closer the uneasiness in her gut intensified. She as amazed that she could watch the strike team prepare to leave for Theed without ducking in the bushes to be sick. Qui-Gon insisted that Anakin and her go to Theed with them even though they would not be able to contribute anything to the battle. Perhaps knowing that she would be useless in the upcoming fight was causing her anxiety. Captain Panaka did not hesitate to establish her general incompetence for everyone to see.

“What help will you be?” He demanded. Panaka did not even wait for her to respond before continuing impatiently. “I need to know if I have to assign someone to protect you and honestly I don’t have anyone to spare.”
“I can look after myself,” she bristled. Panaka raised an eyebrow then snorted disdainfully.

“Look girl we’re up against droids with blasters. You’ll be dead before you could use whatever provincial skills you think you have. Do you know how to fire a blaster?”

“I’ve fought aliens in hand to hand combat on a daily basis, how difficult could firing a blaster be?” She shot back. Apparently that was the wrong response, for instead of looking relieved Panaka only looked furious.

“Do not worry about her Captain,” Qui-Gon interjected coming to Lyyr’s rescue. “I will look after her.”

“See that you do, I have my hands full as it is.” Panaka snapped testily. Qui-Gon nodded in sympathy while steering Lyyr away from the stressed captain.

“I did not realize how useless I’d be,” Lyyr murmured dejectedly. Her anxiety and the pit in her stomach making her feel depressed.

“Do not allow Panaka’s preoccupation to discourage you.” Qui-Gon advised her. “He is focused on his primary objective – keeping the Queen safe. I have the feeling that you are needed even if Panaka does not.”

“I cannot even properly defend myself Qui-Gon, how could I possibly be of any use?” She retorted determined to focus on the negative. He watched her for a moment then smiled. An odd expression to have now of all times and it not only confused Lyyr but irritated her as well. She muttered darkly under her breath.

“Come now, you give yourself too little credit Lyyr,” he admonished her. “Without any training in self-defense you’ve fought in weekly if not daily death matches and have managed to survive relatively unscathed.” She looked at him sharply and his smile only widened.

“I’ve asked Anakin,” was his explanation.

“He loves to tell stories, exaggerating everything beyond reasonable belief.” Lyyr retorted dismissively.

“Perhaps,” was the only reply the Jedi made. That made Lyyr wonder what kind of stories had Anakin been telling and just how big of an audience did he have. Qui-Gon sighed then capturing Lyyr’s wandering attention. She glanced over at him in time to see him remove two lightsabers from his belt. She gave him an extremely puzzled look when he reached for her hand.

“This once belonged to your mother Lyyr and I had hoped that I could give this to you under different circumstances,” he explained with a wry smile placing the smaller of the two alloy cylinders in her palm. “I know that she would want you to have this. Now if you are willing to learn I will teach you what I can in the short time we have.”

Not knowing what to say Lyyr nodded her agreement. Her grip tightened involuntarily around the alloy cylinder then she deliberately ignited the weapon, realizing that she had reached a crossroads in her life. Moreover, that she had placed her feet down a path from which there would be no turning back. Lyyr shouldered the responsibility implied by her acceptance of the lightsaber without a second thought. The sickness in her stomach settled a little as everything felt undeniably right about holding the weapon.
Anakin watched as everyone prepared for the upcoming battle feeling distinctly left out. He knew that he had already helped Padmé and the Jedi just by winning the money for them to fix their spaceship; but he wanted to do more. Unfortunately in the midst of a battle the best thing he could do to help would be to stay safely out of the way. A point Qui-Gon made abundantly clear by telling Anakin exactly what he expected the boy to do. He was to wait in the hangar bay out of sight until it’s been cleared of droids, and then he wasn’t to leave; Anakin had had those instructions drilled into his head. Since he was only a boy Qui-Gon’s rules were perfectly reasonable and it was perfectly reasonable that Anakin was expected to follow them. But Anakin had ambitions greater than his age.

At first he had consoled himself knowing that Lyyr was also expected to stay out of harms way; a thought that ceased to be consolation when he saw Qui-Gon give Lyyr a lightsaber. He could not help the tinge of envy he felt watching both Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan teach Lyyr how to use the weapon. Lyyr had all the luck, she always got to do the cool stuff, Anakin thought sulkily. He tried to keep his sulking to himself but he knew from the occasionally glances she sent him that his sister noticed. He didn’t consider the danger having the weapon now put Lyyr in; he never considered the danger what she did put her in and kept him out of. Anakin sat there and watched the impromptu training session imaging that it was him and not Lyyr wielding the lightsaber.

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Qui-Gon taught Lyyr as much as he could in the time he had. She was by no means an expert but adequate enough that she could manage to deflect blaster bolts. Lyyr knew that the best thing for her to do would be to find some place for her to hunker down and stay safe. It went against her nature to be helpless but she was smart enough to realize that the marginal skill she had acquired was not enough to make her a hero. It only made her just slightly less of a burden to the Jedi.

The Jedi seemed to sense how uncomfortable she was and took as much time as he dared in training her the rudimentary techniques of fighting with a lightsaber. He had her practice these techniques against Obi-Wan and she just barely managed to hold her own. She could tell that Obi-Wan was holding back, almost treating her with kid gloves and that offended her. She knew that being gentle with her in training was not going to do her any favors. Lyyr also knew that trying to explain to him why it wasn’t helpful would get her nowhere. She did her best to learn what she could.

“You’ve made progress,” Qui-Gon encouraged her, “but it still would be best if you found a place you and Anakin can stay out of sight and stay safe. Stick close to Obi-Wan and I until you find such a spot.”

Lyyr had nodded her agreement to his plan acutely aware of Anakin watching her. His natural eagerness to help would be tempered by her example. She will ignore her distaste at relying upon others to protect her in order to keep him safe. A bruise to her ego was worth it if it encouraged Ani to follow her example and stay out of trouble. Lyyr was determined to obey Qui-Gon’s instructions; at least as well as she could.

It was just as well that she was determined to obey; for at the first sign of battle Lyyr did the unthinkable. She froze in terror. Never before had she witnessed a fight on such a large scale or seen so many cut down by blaster fire. The speed and efficiency of the weapons killing power horrified her.

Lyyr did not see the bolt hurtling towards her until it was too late. Before she could react a blue
lightsaber came out of nowhere to block the well-aimed bolt. Startled out of her momentary paralysis Lyrr’s eyes traced up the arm that held the saber until her gaze locked with Obi-Wan’s.

“You need to pay better attention.”

“I-I’m sorry.”

“Get inside with Anakin.” He commanded urging her forward with a slight shove. She followed in the wake of Qui-Gon, Padmé, and Anakin into the hanger bay, while Obi-Wan remained in the rear of the group. Lyrr was deeply embarrassed by what happened and resolved not to freeze like a startled whomp rat again. When the blaster fire started to fly through the hanger she managed to bury her fear and act. She reached for Anakin and pulled him away from the thick of the fighting even as Qui-Gon instructed them to:

“Find cover, quick!”

Without hesitation Lyrr pulled her brother towards an unused ship. She helped him up the ladder and into the cockpit. She then stood at the base of the ladder and drew her weapon determined not to allow any foe near her brother. The little astrotech droid R2-D2 followed them and got itself installed in the fighter as Anakin’s copilot. Lyrr ignored the droids antics, keeping her eyes peeled for stray blaster fire. She was pleased to notice that her hands remained steady despite her nerves.

The fight in the docking bay finished quicker than she imagined it could. In the wake of this small victory they conferred on how best to proceed to the throne room. They were going to split up and Lyrr was not about to be left behind. She put away her mother’s weapon and joined the back of the nearest group. Neither Jedi appeared to have notice her but Anakin did.

“Hey! Wait for me!” Ani yelled.

“No Ani, stay in that cockpit.” Qui-Gon commanded and Lyrr reinforced that command with a look the boy knew not to argue with.

At that moment the doors at the end of the docking bay opened to reveal an imposing figure dressed in black. The stranger pulled back his hood to reveal a face Lyrr that horrified her. It was not his appearance that frightened her, instead it was the malevolence she felt radiating from him that put a chill down her spine. More importantly that face haunted her worst nightmares the ones from childhood she tried and failed to repress. Even the horrors she had suffered at the hands of Gardulla could not wipe them out. Seeing that face again shocked her to the very core of her being and Lyrr found herself rooted to the spot.

This new adversary had a face that looked more like a mask (which was not uncommon for a Dathomirian Zabrak) with his red skin, black facial tattoos, and the vestigial horns crowning his head. It was still an unsettling sight. Even more unsettling were his eyes, red with yellowish orange irises that lacked any traces of compassion. All of her attention was riveted on the new familiar enemy who could only be the warrior trained in the ways of the Sith that had attack on Tatooine. She managed to take one hesitant step backwards catching the Sith’s attention. The heat of those eyes focusing on her was more than she could withstand.

“We will handle this,” she vaguely heard Qui-Gon announce. The Dathomirian smiled chillingly at her before attacking the Jedi. It held a promise that she did not want to see fulfilled.

Padmé and her group left the Jedi to deal with this new enemy while Lyrr remained frozen by the fear she could no longer control. The sound of heavy blaster fire caught her attention and she turned around to find Anakin using the weapon system in his borrowed N-1 starfighter to destroy a pair of droidekas. He then managed to get himself a free joyride out of the hanger. She closed
her eyes and murmured a silent plea for his continued safety. There wasn’t a damn thing she could do to help him now. Lyrr stood there alone in the docking bay caged by her sense of failure and lingering fear; utterly confused as to what she should do.

“Damn it I can’t just stand here!” She scolded herself in an attempt to rally herself into action. Lyrr took a moment to close her eyes and attempt to regain control over her increasingly wild emotions. When she opened them she followed after the Jedi.

Obi-Wan had been fighting the Sith side by side with Qui-Gon one moment and then he was flying through the air the next. He landed painfully on a bridge a level below then rolled over the edge to dangle precariously off the side. He was trying to regain his footing, and stable ground, when he felt hands on his own. Obi-Wan looked up startled to find Lyrr trying to help pull him back up on the bridge. With a small application of the Force he managed to pull himself up and knock Lyrr off her feet. He reached for his lightsaber first before turning to help her up. She had already regained her footing and was glaring at him.

“What are you doing here?” He shouted, “I thought we told you to find somewhere safe to hide.” He continued in a more modified tone.

“I’m trying to help,” she retorted with equal heat.

“Don’t you understand you’ll only be in the way.”

“I need to be here, I feel this!”

Obi-Wan sighed in aggravation and rolled his eyes before grabbing her roughly by the arm and Force-jumping them both on to the upper bridge where Qui-Gon stilled dueled with the Dathomirian Zabrak. Once they were safely on the bridge he Force-pushed Lyrr away from him, towards safety. He was careful to make sure that she wouldn’t lose her balance and fall of the bridge. Obi-Wan knew that Qui-Gon would never forgive him if anything happened to the girl. He took one quick look to ensure that she was on the bridge and a good distance away from him then he sprinted to catch up to his master and the Sith. Behind him he heard a scream of vexation.

A quick small smile tugged at Obi-Wan’s lips, it pleased him to know that he could frustrate her just as much as she frustrated him.

Obi-Wan skidded to a halt in his headlong rush as a series of electron gates connected blocking the way into the power generators melting pit. He had only managed to make it halfway through the series of shields before they reignited. Qui-Gon took advantage of the pause in the action to meditate while the Sith paced like a caged angry nexus. Occasionally he would scrape the edge of the electron gate with his weapon, impatient to resume his fight with Qui-Gon. Obi-Wan found it just as difficult to wait and had no idea how Qui-Gon managed to be so composed.

The electron gates turned away and Qui-Gon was up in a flash, so quickly that Obi-Wan was not sure he saw the older Jedi move. Obi-Wan rushed down the hallway even as Qui-Gon rushed the Sith in a blinding attack. It was his hope that he could reach his master before the gates came up again but he had no luck. He was forced to watch the fight, unable to help once again. He had seen Qui-Gon defeat a mired of opponents before but the ferocity the Sith attacked was not something one Jedi could withstand on his own for long. Almost as if a undercurrent to his very thoughts the Sith bashed Qui-Gon in the face with his weapon, impatient to resume his fight with Qui-Gon. Obi-Wan found it just as difficult to wait and had no idea how Qui-Gon managed to be so composed.

As Qui-Gon fell Obi-Wan found he was screaming with an emotion beyond his control. It took an intermediate amount of time for the gate to rotate through and release him. As soon as it did he rushed the Sith. While he raised his lightsaber to deflect the Sith’s first blow he heard a voice
much like Qui-Gon’s murmuring in his mind.

“Harness your emotions my young padawan, control them and you will not fail.”

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Lyyr’s anger at Obi-Wan’s audacity knew no bounds and she channeled that into the run she made to try and catch up with the Jedi. She seemed to move at a rate of speed far greater than she could normally achieve. If she had been trained at all in the uses of the Force she would have realized that what she just did was use Force-speed. That’s what made it possible for her to reach the electron gates so quickly. Unfortunately she was compelled to skid to a halt, just as Obi-Wan a few meters in front of her, as the gates came back up to block the hallway again.

It was impossible for her to see what was going on, but when the gates opened and she heard Obi-Wan’s scream she knew that something awful had happened. She felt his anger and pain reverberate through her and there was a sudden searing pain in her gut. Lyyr knew without having to think about it why she suddenly felt like she had been speared. If she had bothered to think at all and if she had any knowledge of the Force she would have realized that she had managed to tap into the Living Force. That was why she felt Obi-Wan’s anger and despair as if it were her own as well as experience the wound killing Qui-Gon.

But coherent thought was the furthest thing away from her mind at present. Her only goal, her only thought was to reach Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon. Once again the electron gates thwarted her in her attempts. She had to stop once again just one gate away from the melting pit. Lyyr bit her lip and scanned the room looking for Qui-Gon hoping that what she knew in her gut was wrong. Her gaze found his body crumpled and forgotten on the floor; her hands clenched involuntarily at the sight, so fiercely, that her nails dug into her palms.

The flicker of dueling lightsabers caught her attention and she reluctantly turned her gaze away from the fallen Jedi. She turned towards the combatants in time to see the Sith Force-push Obi-Wan over the edge of the opening and into the melting pit. He then kicked the Jedi’s discarded weapon into the pit. From where she stood she could see nothing and had no idea what had happened to Obi-Wan. The only hope she had to cling to was the fact that she could still sense his grief.

Then out of nowhere Obi-Wan reappeared calling Qui-Gon’s lightsaber to him as he jumped over the Sith. With one sweep of his of his master’s weapon Obi-Wan cut the Dathomirian Zabrak in half. As if it had been planned to do so the electron gate released her from that state of infernal waiting. She rushed past Obi-Wan to the prone form of her father. Gingerly she picked up his head and placed it in her lap. Qui-Gon’s eyes fluttered open at her touch and briefly they locked gazes. Obi-Wan joined her in vigil at Qui-Gon’s side jostling his focus on her.

“It is too late…It’s…”Qui-Gon mumbled his voice barely audible all of his finite attention focused on the young man.

“No!” Obi-Wan retorted vehemently shaking his head.

“Obi-Wan promise…promise me, you will train the boy.”

“Yes, Master.”

Lyyr could hear the tears in his voice; she clenched her jaw to keep her own tears at bay. She never expected to witness the stoic façade of the young Jedi crumble away. As she witnessed Obi-Wan’s palpable grief it became harder for her to keep her own in check.
“He is the chose one…he will…bring balance…train him!” Then the dying Jedi’s eyes sought out Lyrr’s face once more. “Lyrr…my daughter…”

“Father,” she managed to choke out before her grief closed her throat. He smiled up at her then the light in her eyes faded and he was no more.

Obi-Wan cradled his master to him, weeping quietly and passionately. Lyrr sat there overwhelmed by what happened and uncertain as to how to act. Just as she had been since she joined the Jedi. Making up her mind she hesitantly laid a comforting hand on the young man’s shoulder. When it was not immediately shrugged off she grew boulder and pulled him into a one armed hug, laying her cheek on top of his head. As she settled into the hug she finally felt free to grieve the passing of her father, a man she barely known but felt connected to regardless. They sat that way for some time, Obi-Wan holding Qui-Gon to him and Lyrr holding Obi-Wan, her tears soaking into his hair.
They did not mention their respective breakdowns, just dried their eyes without speaking. Lyyr helped Obi-Wan to lift the body of the fallen Jedi, but after that he refused to accept any help from her. She trailed silently and obediently behind him, loss in the murkiness of her own thoughts. Lyyr did not fully comprehend the enormity of her loss; simply because she did not understand how much Qui-Gon meant to her.

She found herself already missing the man’s soothing presence; it was like a toothache she kept needling at the sensation. There was no reason for her to feel so unsettled by the loss, she barely knew the man.

Obi-Wan’s devastation was far more understandable; even Lyyr, as emotionally constipated as she was could at least recognize if not fathom the depth of his grief. From what she understood of the Jedi Order the relationship between padawan learner and Jedi Master often became one of siblings, or that of a parent and beloved child. For an organization that scorned attachment and lectured about its evils they certainly felt a great deal of love towards each other.

Lyyr did not look forward to telling Anakin about Qui-Gon’s death. She knew how much the boy hero-worshipped the Jedi Master. To some extent she had as well. Discovering that he was her father was the best thing that could have happen to her. If only she hadn’t been so full hardly stubborn and just told him that.

“You didn’t need to tell me Lyyr, I knew.” She heard like a whisper on a breeze. Lyyr whipped her head around and searched the docking bay; trying to determine the source of that voice. She finally stopped looking about to stare rather accusatorially at the limp body in Obi-Wan’s arms.

“Lyyr did you hear me?” Obi-Wan demanded, shifting the weight of the body in his arms.

“I could have sworn...” she murmured not paying any attention to Obi-Wan.

“Lyyr what’s the matter?”

“Nothing,” she snapped.

“Could you please go to the door and see if there is a comlink?” He repeated his earlier question as calmly and patiently as he could under the circumstances. She set off towards the nearest door and retrieved its comlink.

“Hold it up for me if you will.”

“Why not use the Force?” She asked without thinking. Obi-Wan glared at her before rolling his eyes and replying.

“Because I am exhausted Lyyr; please just hold the comlink for me.”

Her only response was to shrug before doing what he asked of her.

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“Lyyr! Lyyr! Did you hear what I did?” Anakin greeted her enthusiastically as they entered the throne room. The boy followed closely on the heel of his words rushing forward and flinging himself at Lyyr. Somehow she managed to catch him, gathering him up in her arms and holding him close to her.
“What did you do Ani?”

That simple question unlocked a torrent of words. Lyyr listed with patient fascination and Obi-Wan watched her as she listened. She managed to attend to the boy’s tale with all the appearance of rapt fascination; yet, Obi-Wan knew that her heart wasn’t entirely in it. How could it be after what had just happened? Still she made all the appropriate responses of shock and awe, gasping in all the right places. Anakin had no clue that she was not as engrossed in his story as he thought she should be.

Obi-Wan could understand why Anakin assumed she would be enthralled, it was a remarkable story. The boy managed to not only pilot an N:1 starfighter into the main hanger of a Federation battleship; but also blow it up from the inside and single-handedly save the day. It was bewildering that Anakin, a mere boy, deactivated the entire droid army when trained pilots could not manage it. Whether or not the boy was the Chosen One could still be debated, what Obi-Wan could not deny was that the boy had phenomenal luck.

“He has helped save our planet,” Padmé or rather Queen Amidala interjected when Anakin paused to take a breath. “For that we are grateful.”

“I am proud of you Anakin,” Lyyr told him honestly reaching out and ruffling his hair.

“Your Majesty,” Lyyr greeted Padmé even going so far as to bow. Obi-Wan fought hard not to stare at her in slack-jawed amazement. He had never seen her show such respect to anyone before and he did not know what to make of her sudden civility.

“Please, Lyyr, call me Padmé,” the young Queen corrected her.

“Oh of course, wouldn’t dream of using anything else but your name.” Lyyr responded cheekily, rising from her bow with a smug grin to match. “It’s just I’ve wanted to do that for a while and figured now was my chance.”

“How could you have possibly known?” Panaka demanded.

“Just because I’m a slave from some backwater settlement on an Outer Rim planet doesn’t mean I don’t use my eyes Panaka.” She shot back not bothering to hide the scorn she felt. “You couldn’t have kept everyone from noticing that there was always one handmaiden mysteriously absent whenever the Queen was present.”

Obi-Wan stifled a chuckle at the look on Panaka’s face. Padmé did not bother to be so discreet. She laughed openly at her security captain’s confusion and clasped Lyyr warmly on the shoulder. The queen’s mirth sounded somewhat forced and Obi-Wan recognized it for what it was; hysteria. An understandable reaction to what they have just accomplished. It was not every day that a small band of revolutionists were able to overtake a droid army. He could not fault Padmé for seeking a release for her stress and he had to applaud Lyyr; her prickly response provided Padmé with an outlet. From the satisfied glint in Lyyr’s eyes he realized that she had been deliberately rude to Panaka hoping to get that result.

“Master Kenobi,” Padmé continued regaining her composure quickly. “We have already informed the Senate about the blockades end. They are sending a delegation to take charge of the Viceroy. I’ve been told that members of the Jedi Council are joining them.”

Obi-Wan bowed in acknowledgement of her news.

“Where is Master Qui-Gon?” Anakin asked. Everyone carefully avoided the boy’s gaze at that question. They knew what had happened to the Jedi Master; no one wanted to be the one to break the news to the boy. In the short time he spent with Qui-Gon he had come to hero worship the Jedi. Obi-Wan took a deep breath to steady himself figuring that it fell to him to tell Anakin about
Qui-Gon’s death. Once again he bargained without Lyyr.

“Anakin,” she said walking over and taking the boy’s hand in her own, “come take a walk with me I want to show you something.”

Obi-Wan watched as she led the boy out of the throne room. He wanted to follow them, he felt that he ought to and help Lyyr talk to Anakin; but his mandate was clear. The Queen still needed his help sorting out the mess left behind by the Federation. Besides there was no one better equipped to tell Anakin than Lyyr.

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Lyyr led Anakin to a secluded balcony that overlooked one of the palaces many water gardens. It was a private location; no one would be able to approach them without Lyyr noticing. But, more importantly the sounds of the nearby water falls provided a soothing background for the news she had to deliver. She observed the garden lost in the wonder and beauty of seeing the waterfalls and ponds but also searching for a way to tell Anakin the bad news.

“Have you ever seen so much water in one place,” Lyyr murmured mostly to herself. She did not intend for that to be a conversation starter, in fact she wasn’t even aware of having spoken aloud until Anakin replied.

“No I haven’t,” the boy remarked in the same tone of voice as Lyyr. “It seems awfully wasteful of them, doesn’t it?” Came the casual observation, it had a maturity beyond his years. Lyyr smiled wanly at that.

“It does,” she agreed.

“Lyyr what is the matter?” He asked tugging at her sleeve. “There is something wrong with Master Qui-Gon isn’t there?”

“Yes Anakin,” she began breathing out a heavy sigh. She really did not know how to tell him. “You know what happens to water on Tatooine, right?”

“It evaporates. Are you telling me that Qui-Gon evaporated?” He asked his eyebrows hunched and his expression beyond perplexed.

“Well no not exactly,” she temporized; then knelt down in front of him so she could look him directly in the eye. “Here’s the thing Ani, I’m not really sure how to tell you this so I’m just going to say it okay?” He nodded his understanding at that Lyyr took one more deep breath before plunging on.

“Master Qui-Gon is dead Anakin.”

“Dead,” he repeated and she could see the tears begin to form in the back of his eyes. “I think I liked it better when you were trying to tell me that he had evaporated.” Ani continued surprising a weak chuckle out of Lyyr.

“You know Ani, in a certain way he has done just that.”

“What do you mean?” He asked around a few sniffles. Absentmindedly Lyyr pulled a cloth out of her sleeve-pocket to dry Anakin’s eyes.

“Well part of him did evaporate.”

“Which part?”
“I’m not sure, some people call it a soul others a spirit. Qui-Gon probably would have said that the part of him connecting to the Force, which I suppose is the same as a spirit. That’s what evaporated when he died.”

“Where did it go?”

“To become one with the Force,” Lyyr replied knowing that that was the right answer but unsure of how she knew it.

“Oh. So does that mean that Qui-Gon is still alive?”

“In a way he is, do you understand this?”

Anakin began to nod his head yes then stopped; “No, I don’t understand it.”

“That’s alright sweetheart in time you will.”

“Okay.” He agreed trusting her word.

He began to wipe angrily at his eyes to stop the tears that had started to form from falling. She pulled his hands away from his face to stop him. Then next she knew, Anakin had flung his arms around her neck pulling her into a tight embrace. She held him close to her and after a few moments she felt his shoulders shake and she heard the muffled sobs. She held him as he wept. Over his shoulder she saw movement down the hallway but ignored it. She didn’t let Anakin go until she felt him start to pull away.

“I’m sorry Lyyr for getting your shoulder all wet. It was stupid of me to cry like that.”

“I don’t think it was.”

“But I thought Jedi’s weren’t allowed to give into emotion.”

Again movement in the hallway caught Lyyr’s eye, she glanced quickly at whoever was out there, identified the person, then returned her attention to Anakin.

“True, but you’re not a Jedi yet.” She reminded him looking him directly in the eye. “Besides, sometimes I think they have it all wrong. It’s harmful to keep your emotions in check all the time. There are some emotions, such as grief and love that have the power to heal you. You have to let them run their course.”

“I don’t know Lyyr…” he responded sounding skeptical.

“That’s okay sweetheart, you don’t have to know, at least not yet.” She hugged him again and gave him a kiss on the cheek for good measure.

“Pardon me,” a voice spoke from the doorway. Lyyr looked over to find one of the Queen’s handmaidens waiting for their attention. “The delegation from the Senate has arrived Mistress Lyyr, I am meant to take you to where their transport has landed.”

“Oh very well, come along Ani let’s go meet these delegates.” She declared motioning to the handmaiden to lead the way. As they stepped out into the hallway Lyyr looked about for Obi-Wan but didn’t see any trace of him. This was the second time she had caught the Jedi eavesdropping on her private conversations. She was going to have a long chat with him about that.

The handmaiden led her and Anakin to the palace’s main courtyard where a ship had landed and various official looking politicians were disembarking. Lyyr deliberately hung back as Obi-Wan
and Anakin stepped forward to greet the newly elected Supreme Chancellor Palpatine. Something about the man did not sit well with Lyyr and she was hesitant about bringing herself to his attention. Besides her part in all that had occurred was small, insignificant at best, all she did was place Anakin in that starfighter’s cockpit. He did the rest. Surely, such a contribution was unworthy of any one’s notice.

She did not want to step forward to greet Chancellor Palpatine but she had no such reservations when it came to the Jedi Council. Lyyr bowed right alongside Anakin and Obi-Wan in acknowledgment of the Jedi Master’s arrival. She recalled the deal she had struck with the council and she didn’t want them forgetting; especially since she had made her decision. It did not faze her when the Jedi ignored her for the first few hours they were on Naboo, she had made herself seen and she knew that eventually they would get to her.

When she was, eventually, summoned to appear before Master Yoda she was ready. What she wasn’t ready for was finding Obi-Wan speaking with Yoda in the hall that the Queen set aside for the Council’s use. She waited in the back of the room, huddling in the shadows trying to remain inconspicuous. Lyyr’s attention was glued on the scene playing out in front of her. Obi-Wan knelt in the center of the room while the aged Master paced back and forth in front of him.

“Confer on you the level of Jedi Knight the council does. But agree with your taking this boy as your padawan learner, I do not.”

“Qui-Gon believed in him,” Obi-Wan retorted.

“The Chosen One the boy may be; nevertheless, grave danger I fear in his training.”

“Master Yoda, I gave Qui-Gon my word,” Obi-Wan persisted stubbornly. “I will train Anakin, without the Council’s approval if I must.”

“Qui-Gon’s defiance I sense in you need that you do not. Agree with you the Council does. Your apprentice Skywalker will be.” Yoda agreed with reluctance. Obi-Wan stood up and bowed, he turned to leave but Yoda motioned for him to stay.

“Step forward Lyyr, you may.” Yoda called to her. Sheepishly Lyyr moved towards the center of the room, she knelt before the venerable Jedi Master unconsciously mimicking the pose she saw Obi-Wan take.

“Yes, Master Yoda.”

“Made a decision have you, hum?”

“Yes I have. If you’ll have me I would like to become a Jedi like my parents before me.”

“Train you will, Jedi you shall become.”
Farewells

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Burning, his body was burning and he half expected to feel the heat of the fire while the flames danced across his flesh leaving it blackened and charred. Naturally he felt nothing; he was beyond such mundane considerations. Still he expected some sort of sensation and the lack of it took him off guard. Apparently there was much about death that he needed to get use too.

One would expect that watching his own funeral, to actually see his body on the burial pyre, would unnerve or at least alarm him. It was unnatural yet he found it oddly comforting. This moment was proof that all he had believed in was true. He dedicated his life to the ways of the Force and was relieved to find that now he had become one with it. His devotion to the Living Force had not failed him and he felt a certain smug satisfaction at that. He may be dead but he was still human and not above a little gloating.

Those who had doubted him accused him of being a Gray Jedi as if it was some sort of affliction. They had called him a maverick. Disapproving whispers about his independent nature had always followed him, many proclaiming it would bring him to an unfortunate end. As he watched the flames consume his flesh it occurred to him that those how gainsaid him would view his death as vindication for their whispers. But he did not see it that way; instead he only saw how bull-headed and short sighted his fellow Jedi had become. They were so focused on tradition too consumed by their own self-righteousness that they failed to see what went on beneath their very noses.

As luck would have it being a maverick placed him in a unique position to help the Jedi. The only problem would be getting someone to acknowledge him. He just needed to find the right person. Master Yoda was a good option; out of all the Jedi he was the most in tune with all aspects of the Force. He also had the most flexible mind. Yet there was also a chance that Lyyr could sense him. After all who was more capable of sensing Qui-Gon than his own daughter? Trained or not Qui-Gon was certain that he could capture her attention. She had already heard him speaking to her in the docking bay; with just a little more effort he could become visible to her as well. Afterwards it was just a matter of convincing her that she had not gone insane.

Apparently a Jedi’s work was never done, even in the afterlife.

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She had just started to feel safe enough to open up and throw aside her suspicions, then the rug had been pulled out from underneath her. Qui-Gon was the reason Lyyr felt comfortable enough to lower her façade. She had done her best to appear indifferent towards the man but that was not the case; he had wormed his way into her affections. In the past few days she had decided to try and trust the Jedi, but with Qui-Gon’s death she found herself once again wrestling with uncertainty. Instinctively she felt it was safe to trust the Jedi, yet life had taught her to be cautious of whom she trusted. Truthfully, at this point she was just being stubborn out of habit. The fact that deep in her gut she felt safe to trust the Jedi was all the reassurance Lyyr needed. That still did stop her from hiding in the shadows and worrying herself into a knot.

She became aware of whispering somewhere behind her. A slight turn of her head brought Anakin and Obi-Wan into her line of sight. She eavesdropped shamelessly as Anakin asked the young man what was going to happen now. Although she heard the Jedi Knights answer she did not pay any attention to it.
Moving her head had brought the burial pyre further into her immediate line of sight and the flames mesmerized her. She stared at them or rather stared through them. So enchanted by the flames was Lyrr that she began to see shapes within the flickering light. She imagined that a shimmering form stood on the other side of the pyre looking down on the burning body, for a moment she thought it was Qui-Gon.

Blinking rapidly Lyrr scolded herself for her stupid sentimentality. That wasn’t possible; it was just a manifestation of her guilt. When she looked again the apparition was gone. Instead of feeling relieved she felt a pain of longing. Thankfully before she could dwell on that she was distracted by the sound of Master Yoda talking to Windu. Again Lyrr shamelessly eavesdropped on another conversation.

“There is no doubt,” Windu remarked, “they mysterious warrior was a Sith.”

“Always two there are, no more, no less. A master and an apprentice,” Master Yoda acknowledged sounding resigned to the fact.

“But which was destroyed, the master or the apprentice?” Windu asked. There appeared to be no answer to that question at least none that Yoda was willing to give.

Lyrr turned further towards the two masters watching them for a moment then turned to look out at the stars. She sat there with her back to the pyre staring into the vast expanses of the galaxy. Eventually the pyre burned down to nothing but embers.

Queen Amidala and her routine were among the first to leave, followed shortly by the Chancellor. Lyrr moved herself further into the shadows cast by the pillar as people left. She did not want to draw anyone’s attention to herself. The Jedi Council’s representatives were the next to leave. They left without a backward glance and Lyrr envied their ability to let go with so little hesitation. When Obi-Wan and Anakin finally left she was not surprised that neither one of them noticed her. Lyrr did not leave her perch until she was certain that everyone had gone.

She walked directly to the pyre. There was one last thing she had to settle before she could bring herself to say goodbye. She stood there examining the last burning embers in the ashes of what was left of a great man. Slowly the tears she had kept locked up since her breakdown began to crawl down her cheeks.

“I was afraid of knowing you,” she admitted with a soft murmur. “I knew I would lose you, just like I’ve lost everyone I cared for,” she paused then a lump forming in her throat. Lyrr did not admit to sentiment as a rule; she knew intimately how one’s personal attachments could be wielded as a weapon by others. “I did not want to be hurt. I’m so sorry I couldn’t get past that.”

Lyrr fell silent then lost in her thoughts. Faintly she became aware of a presence standing behind her. She turned around to find herself face to face with Obi-Wan. She stared at the Jedi Knight for a long moment before returning her attention to the pyre.

“I thought I was alone.” She said over her shoulder. Obi-Wan came to stand beside her before saying anything.

“I sensed you hiding in the shadows of that pillar. I came back to make sure you were alright.”

“I’m fine.” She quipped not bothering to look at him. In fact she was actively trying to ignore his presence at her side. He didn’t bother to respond to that allowing his silence to speak for him. Lyrr never had any objections to silence and was more than willing to wait him out.

“I am sorry Lyrr,” he eventually murmured.
“For what,” she inquired genuinely surprised by the Jedi Knight’s confession.

“He was more of a father to me than he ever could be to you.”

“There is no need for you to apologize for that Obi-Wan.”

“There isn’t?”

“No, there isn’t,” she reassured him. As far as Lyyr was concerned Obi-Wan had absolutely nothing to apologize for; if anyone was at fault it was herself. “I only regret that I did not tell him how much it meant to me to find out that I have a father.”

“I thought you didn’t believe them,” Obi-Wan murmured half-accusatorially.

“I did not want to, at first, but I have known that they were right all along.” Lyyr admitted. He did not reply to that and silence fell between them once more.

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Lyyr deliberately avoided the celebration of Naboo’s fiercely won peace. As she explained to Amidala and Jar Jar, then again to Anakin and Obi-Wan, she had done nothing of great importance during any of the battle. They did not consider it reason enough for her to not participate; reluctantly Lyyr concede that they had a point but she still refused to attend. She did not want to make a spectacle out of herself and knew that if she went she would not be allowed to blend in with the crowd.

Instead of participating she wandered one of the palace’s many water gardens paying scant attention to a holonet broadcasting of the celebration on a datapad she had borrowed from Padmé. Watching on the datapad was rather redundant since she could clearly hear the music and the crowds cheering from where she stood.

She would be leaving as soon as the parade was over and Lyyr was set on experiencing some of the beauty of this planet before having to live as a padawan in the Jedi Temple. Moving into the Temple was a transition she was not entirely looking forward to. The Council did not feel like discussing with Lyyr how her apprenticeship would work or who her mentor would be. Lyyr could live with uncertainty, she did not know if she could adjust to living with the Jedi.

Lost in her thoughts she sat on the edge of one of the many fountains, tracing a pattern into the water with her fingertips.

Am I really going to be a Jedi, she thought with bemusement unable to account for the changes in her life. Could an insolent guttersnipe, to stubborn to lie down and know when she was beaten, really amount to anything more? Do I even have the right to claim such a life?

“Of course you do,” a familiar voice on the breeze chided her, answering her unspoken doubts. “Are you not the daughter of two Jedi? Who better than you to become one. Embrace your parent’s legacy Lyyr, it is your destiny.”

My parents, she thought an image of Qui-Gon appearing in her mind accompanied by the image of a woman that she could only assume was Veira Dysar, her mother. She did not know her parents, but in time she would come to and if nothing else living with the Jedi would help her to accomplish that much. It seemed a small comfort in the midst of her general unease but it warmed her and brought a smile to her lips.

Perhaps I am not as alone as I think I am.
“I have a good feeling about this,” she murmured aloud. Lyyr swore that she felt Qui-Gon’s delighted chuckle at that confession.

FIN

Chapter End Notes

There is going to be an epilogue to act as a bridge between this story and the next which takes place during AOFC. I'm just experiencing a little trouble in hashing it out. Hopefully whatever block I have will lift soon and I can finish it.
Exhaustion plagued her and she could not honestly remember the last time she felt so bone tired after such little physical exertion. Master Windu had warned her that using the Force took just as much of a toll as doing anything else. At first she hadn’t been prepared to believe him, but now she took him at his word.

With limbs feeling as if they were made out of some dense alloy instead of flesh Lyyr dragged herself into her quarters. She then draped herself full length across the dilapidated couch she had inherited. It was a crap piece of furniture when compared to others expectations, but it was an unheard of luxury item for Lyyr. With a sigh she settled herself further into the embrace of the worn cushions. If she never had to lift anything ever again it would be too soon. A groan of pain escaped her as she shut her eyes to block out the artificial light.

Mace had warned her that over exerting her connection to the Force could result in a migraine. She was feeling those effects now. Lyyr had heard his warning but had promptly ignored it. Using the Force was like exercising any muscle; it had to be tested, pushed to its limits and beyond in order to grow stronger. That’s what Lyyr was attempting to do; strengthen her connection to the Force. She gladly accepted the consequences as proof that she was succeeding in her goals.

She pushed herself constantly and well past the point where more prudent individuals would have advised her to stop. This meant she often went unsupervised in her exploration of her Force powers; and it failed to worry her; after all the majority of her life was spent in the pursuit of dangerous pastimes without responsible supervision. Still she was not naive to think her solo practicing went unnoticed; even though she often did not have an instructor she knew that they could sense her mucking around. To say that she was accustomed to being thrown into the deep end and left to sink or swim would be an understatement. Lyyr had never known any other kind of life.

Besides after spending the first few months of her apprenticeship reading all she could about the collective theory on the Force and the various powers it gifted individuals with she thought she knew all she needed to about theory. Moreover, the hundreds of years of dry theory she had read provided all the supervision she required. Besides, her goal was to get herself out of remedial training.

They hadn’t really put her in with the babies but they might as well have. The private tutoring with Master Yoda embarrassed her and it did not help to endear her to her fellow initiates. There were all sorts of whispers that followed her through the hallway; accusations that she was not proper Jedi material and expressions of doubt about whether or not she should have been accepted as a padawan learner.

She heard the whispers, for they weren’t all that subtle when murmuring them, and she did her best to ignore them. This certainly wasn’t the first time someone decided to speak disparagingly about her behind her back, Lyyr was used to that. But if she was honest with herself, at least, she’d admit that it upset her. It bothered her more than the hard work she had been doing.

Lyyr did not mind working herself into exhaustion then getting up and doing the same again; that was all she knew. Moreover, the fact that she could wake up the next day and work all over again was something to celebrate, to be grateful for. On Tatooine if one could not work then one should not be allowed to live.

Rumors circulated constantly. They were mostly speculation about how she bribed her way into a spot at the Temple. Never mind the fact that Jedi were supposedly above such things as bribery.
Lyyr wasn’t stupid. She knew that her presence was resented by many. She was too old to be an initiative in the Temple; in fact the Council should have never accepted her. She had been stuck into a sort of limbo with remedial training and waiting to see if any Jedi Master would step forward to take her on as a padawan. Yoda told her not to worry a Jedi Master would be found for her.

Anakin’s acceptance into their ranks came under just as much scrutiny but the prophecy provided a handy explanation for his presence. There was no readymade explanation to excuse away her. The identity of her mother had become public knowledge and fodder for even more disparaging remarks. Many believed that Yoda and Mace were treating her as some sort of experiment, to see if they could fix in the daughter what had been wrong with the mother. For after all, only a subpar Jedi would have allowed herself to become pregnant then try and actually raise the child. The gossips conveniently forgot the fact that there was a special dispensation that allowed Jedi to have children if there was dire need. Master Mundi was married to five wives and had several children for Force’s sake!

Honestly, it was the fact that they were Jedi that made their rejection and hostility towards her hurt so much. Lyyr was just thankful that her time as a slave had hardened her to such hostility and kept her from showing any outward signs of how badly she was affected by their bigotry. Living as a slave had also taught her how to keep a tight rein on her emotions. She never cracked where others could witness it.

Back on Naboo after having told Yoda that she accepted their offer to train her, Lyyr felt as if she had finally found the place to which she belonged. That was naively foolish of her. She should have realized that the Jedi weren’t any different. They talked a good talk but at the end of the day they were just as full as petty prejudices as the rest of the galaxy.

Lyyr snorted sardonically. *To think Jedi are meant to be above such petty concerns.* Apparently there were not as adapt at emotional detachment as they liked to believe. At least she was supported by the Council. That made having to swallow the ignorance of her fellow initiates and the Jedi Knights who should have known better easier. The Council thought she belonged there; in fact Master Yoda was uncharacteristically aggressive in his insistence.

Overhearing some of the disparaging remarks made against her mother only increased the gratitude she felt towards Yoda for declaring that no one but those in the Council knew her father’s identity. The only ones outside of the Jedi Council who knew were herself, Obi-wan and Anakin; the fewer people who knew the truth about Veira and Qui-Gon’s relationship the better. Lyyr could learn to cope with being universally disliked and she could cope with the loneliness. At least publicly, in her more private moments she was willing to admit how pained she was by feeling rejected. What she could not learn to cope with was hearing them tear apart her father.

With an explosive sigh Lyyr threw an arm over her eyes trying to block out what little light from the setting sun filtered in through her windows. None of this ghastly introspection was helping to ease her developing migraine. Warily she raised a hand and with a judicial application of the Force dimmed the artificial lights and closed her curtains more firmly. She did not feel capable of standing up and doing those things manual.

“Lazy child.” a familiar voice chided her. She ignored it, choosing to think that it was her conscious berating her for her selfishly petty use of her powers. Why her conscious decided it should sound like her dead father Lyyr couldn’t fathom, she had only just recently truly started to pay any attention to it all.

“You silly girl, you should have made the tea Vokara left for you as soon as you got in. She concocted that nasty brew for a reason, to help soothe your mind since you mulishly insist on over working it.” Her conscious continued to scold her in Qui-Gon’s voice.
She continued to ignore it, right up until the point when she felt ghostly hands remove her arm from her forehead and replace it with a wet cloth. Her eyes flew open then and she found herself staring into a pair of ghostly blue eyes that were crinkled with amusement.

“Wha”— She yelped, she actually yelped, trying to backpedal off of the couch even though there was nowhere for her to go. The ghostly form flickered in and out of focus as he laughed – he had the audacity to actually laugh at her confusion.

“You sir are dead!” She accused him unintelligently.

“Oh my dear girl, I assure you I am alive as I can be.” Qui-Gon managed to explain between his chuckles. It was the man’s typically cryptic response that calmed her.

“Lyyr did you honestly think death would keep me away from you once I found you again?”

“For Force’s sake! Now I bloody have a father,” for some reason that remark made the man laugh even harder. She frowned up at him. “I need to sleep; this is clearly a case of sleep deprivation.”

At that she closed her eyes tightly and turned to face the back of the couch. She drifted off then comforted by her father’s chuckles and the occasional soothing touch of a ghostly hand rubbing her back. For the first time in her life Lyyr felt safe to sleep while someone else watched over her. Before she finally succumbed to slumber she felt herself smile.

I don’t have to do this alone. She thought for the second time since Naboo and this time she believed it.

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