Part 1 - The Forming

Deep in thought, Qui-Gon Jinn stood outside the garden entrance wondering what in Sith he should do about his Padawan's amorous feelings for him. Xanatos had developed a "crush" on him some time ago, which in and of itself was not an uncommon occurrence. Masters are given training and advice on how to deal with that situation. But try as Qui-Gon had, Xanatos' feelings would not be dissuaded, and it had started to cause tension in their relationship. Nothing very drastic, Xanatos was an excellent student, someone to be proud of and Qui-Gon was, but these feeling were starting to disrupt the smooth flow of their training bond.

It wasn't unheard of for a Padawan and Master to be lovers, especially when they were of compatible species and relatively close in age, and Qui-Gon would not be averse to the idea if his feelings for Xanatos went in that direction, but they did not. Yes, the boy was attractive, beautiful in fact. Dark hair, dark eyes, a sultry look that would tempt many, but Qui-Gon did not feel anything more than a slight physical attraction and the love of a teacher for a bright student and certainly not anything close to what he perceived from Xanatos through their bond.

Qui-Gon sighed. Nothing to be done about it. He and Xanatos could talk about it, if the boy were
to bring it up, but he could not force emotions that just weren't there.

Sometimes he wondered if he were even capable of such strong emotions. At thirty, he'd never fallen in love, although there were people he did love deeply, and he'd had his share of lovers, but none touched that part of him that went beyond his heart into his soul.

A fast moving object hit his legs with considerable force and then bounced to the ground, pushing him from his thoughts back to reality. Looking down, he watched a small boy pick himself up off the floor and look up at him.

The Force was very strong in the child. Qui-Gon could feel it resonating against him, and then through him. Enormous blue-green eyes peered up into his and Qui-Gon felt rocked to the bottom of his being.

Once a long time ago, he'd heard it said that when you met the other half of your soul you knew it instantly. And that was certainly true, he recognized what the boy would mean to him in a split second. He would have laughed with the glory of it, if it weren't for the fact that the other half of his soul was -- unless he missed his guess -- a five year old. Just his Sith-cursed luck. He looked down again and groaned silently.

A naughty boy, too. A child this young should not be out of the creche without supervision and the child had to know that, too. Now, he'd have to deal with the immediate situation. Fine. He would worry about the rest in a moment.

He knelt on the floor, trying to be on the same level as the boy, his robes billowing around him. Because he could not do otherwise, he reached out to soothe the fear he saw in the big eyes, smoothing down reddish-gold hair that went in all directions, feeling again the Force resonate between them.

Oh, yes, this was a soul-bond in the making.

"Where do you go in such a hurry, child?" He tried to keep his voice stern but couldn't quite manage it past his surprise and growing delight.

"I'm late, sir." The boy's voice was shaking.

With a Force sense as strong as this child had, Qui-Gon was quite sure the child felt the growing bond, even though he had no idea what it was. "And where were you going with no escort?"

The big eyes dropped to the floor, and Qui-Gon knew the answer before the boy spoke. "The garden, sir."

Still trying to be stern, Qui-Gon almost managed it. "With no permission from anyone to be there?"

The boy sighed deeply. "No sir."

Damn. The child had bought himself a world of trouble. "What is your name?"

"Obi-Wan Kenobi, sir."

He placed two fingers under the small chin and tilted the boy's head up so that their eyes met. "All right, Obi-Wan, why did you go to the garden without permission?"

The small shoulders came up in a shrug and the boy seemed to have to think hard about it. "I wanted to see the Altmonds flowers."
The flowering tree only bloomed once a decade or so, but Qui-Gon knew all the children were taken to the garden to see the flowers. It was a spectacular sight. As a matter of fact, he and Xanatos were supposed to view the flowers today. "Didn't you see them with your class, yesterday or today?"

Nodding, the boy's eyes met his again, and Qui-Gon could see the confusion. "The Force told me I should see the flowers again."

"The Force told you?" Would the boy lie about it? Reaching out, he touched the child's mind briefly, and felt no guile, no ruse. Obi-Wan believed he was supposed to return to the garden, even without permission.

"Yes. Today. Now. I was supposed to come back and see them again."

Qui-Gon realized that their meeting was far from an accident. He couldn't argue with the Force, or allow the child to be punished for following it. He smiled at the boy. "All right, young Obi-Wan, I'll take you back to the dormitory."

Standing, he held out his hand to Obi-Wan. The boy took it, the small hand disappearing inside Qui-Gon's larger one. And then Obi-Wan smiled up at him with such sweetness that Qui-Gon felt his heart expand with wonder of it. He had a nearly irresistible urge to cuddle the boy against his chest, but he did not, instead moving towards the children's corridor, his steps automatically adjusting to take into account Obi-Wan's much smaller stride.

"Sir?" Obi-Wan said as they approached the double doors of the initiates' section.

"Yes." Qui-Gon looked down at him.

"What's your name?"

Damn. He hadn't even realized he hadn't said. Some way to treat your bondmate. "Qui-Gon Jinn."

"Thank you."

He wasn't sure what Obi-Wan was thanking him for, but it warmed his heart anyway. He leaned down and touched the soft hair again. "For what?"

Obi-Wan shrugged again. "It feels good to be near you."

Touched, he wondered just how much the child could perceive of what was happening between them. The bond had started, that much Qui-Gon could feel himself. He dropped to one knee again, looking right at Obi-Wan.

"Do you understand why?"

Obi-Wan reached out, touching Qui-Gon's forehead and then his own. "There is a ..." He stopped and thought about it. "A invisible line... between us. It wasn't there before, but now I feel it."

Nodding, Qui-Gon wasn't sure he could explain it any better. "That's right. And it will grow as you do. How does it feel to you?"

"Good. Safe. I like it."

This time when he rose, he lifted the boy into his arms and held him against his hip, sending a wave of affection down the forming bond. Obi-Wan threw his arms around Qui-Gon's neck, and held on, nestling against him. A wave of unconditional love slid over him, and Qui-Gon couldn't
help but smile, cuddling the boy close, feeling the connection strengthen. Pushing through the
doors, Qui-Gon was met by an severely annoyed Creche Master.

"Oh, good. You've found him. We've been looking for you, young man."

Qui-Gon set Obi-Wan down and the boy's head bowed, expecting to be reprimanded.

Before Master Ryse could speak to Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon stepped in. "Master Ryse, I would speak
to you about the boy."

Master Ryse looked up at him for a moment and then down at the boy. The forming bond would
be apparent to anyone with Force sense. A half-smile touched the other Master's lips. "So, I see.
Obi-Wan run along, I'll speak with you later."

The boy bowed, and then turned back to Qui-Gon and hesitated. Even knowing he should not,
Qui-Gon knelt again and held out his arms. The boy was in them in a second and they held onto
each other, savoring the simple joy of holding each other, then with regret, he let Obi-Wan go.
"Go on."

Obi-Wan hesitated a moment more. "I'll see you again?"

"Soon."

When Obi-Wan was out of sight, Master Ryse laughed. "That one is going to be quite the handful.
I don't envy you the task."

Qui-Gon shook his head, and sighed. "I'm not going to be able to raise him."

A crease appeared across Master Ryse's brow. "Why not?"

"I've already got a Padawan. I can't short-change one for the other. It would not be fair."

"Ah, so he'll be my problem after all."

"Is he such a problem?"

"No. He's very strong in the Force and has a strong personality which I suspect will only grow
more so as he ages. But he is bright and obedient when he isn't being stubborn about something."

Qui-Gon laughed. Glad he would not have to deal with the child right away. "I'll see him as often
as I can. But Xanatos must come first."

"How old is your Padawan?"

"Eighteen."

"Good, then you'll be able to take this one as Padawan when Xanatos makes Knighthood."

"Yes. I must go."

Qui-Gon bowed and left the other Master. He was late now, and no doubt his Padawan would be
annoyed. Patience was not Xanatos' most favored virtue.

As he approached, Xanatos looked up and then a slight frown touched his Padawan's full lips.
"Master? I sense something... a bond?" Xanatos was strong in the Force.

"I seem to have developed a soul-bond -- with a five year old." Qui-Gon couldn't keep the
amusement from his tone. It was rather funny when you thought about it. But Xanatos was not smiling. Realizing that he'd dashed whatever hopes Xanatos had had in that direction, Qui-Gon held back a sigh. Maybe it was time to talk about the situation, but it wasn't number one on his list of things to do today.

"A child?" The words carried an accusation, and the dark eyes flashed with hurt.

If his Padawan wasn't going to control himself, they would have to speak of it in private. "Xanatos. This is not the place for this discussion."

An unhappy sneer crossed Xanatos' face. "I can't believe you would do this to me."

Qui-Gon sighed. "I have done nothing to you. This changes nothing. I am still your Master, and you are still my Padawan." But there was more than that, and he could see Xanatos trying to process the information, and failing.

A deep frown crossed his Padawan's face. "But Master, now there is the child."

"He will not affect anything." Qui-Gon tried to sound reassuring, but he knew that Obi-Wan's presence would continually grow in his mind.

"How can he not? I don't understand how you could want a child for a soul-mate?" Xanatos could whine like no one Qui-Gon had ever met. And the sound was not pleasing in the least.

Several people passed and looked disapprovingly at them. "Keep your voice down, if you want to discuss this now. And I did not *choose* a five-year-old, that I can assure you."

No, the choice was thrust on him as all soul-bonds were.

"And what about the other things that will come with this?"

He didn't like the sound of those words. Just what was Xanatos implying? "What other things? And think before you reply to that."

But Xanatos was beyond thinking clearly, that much was obvious. "What are you going to *do* with that child?" His tone left no doubt what he meant by *do*.

Qui-Gon's breath caught on his rage. No one who followed the way of light would ever *think*, let alone act, on such a thing. The very thought nauseated him. How could Xanatos even imply it?

A soul-bond in and of itself wasn't sexual in nature, any two sentient beings could be soul-mates. The bond was about two souls joining together to eventually become one. It was about love and light and all things good that two beings could be to each other. Although, Qui-Gon conceded, most did end up sexually involved when the species concerned allowed for it. And the fullest bonding came with both a physical and mental joining.

Whatever sexual aspect there might be to the bond, it wouldn't be considered now anyway since it would be years before Obi-Wan would be old enough to contemplate that option. Not until he was adult, with enough experience to know what he was getting into, would the subject even come up.

Closing his eyes, he centered himself, letting the anger at Xanatos' words flow out into the Force. His voice was cold and perfectly flat when he spoke again. "You will go to our quarters and meditate on what you've just said and how you could come to such a wrong conclusion. And we will speak of it later."

Xanatos knelt, his head bowed in apology. "I'm sorry, Master. I didn't mean it. I'm surprised by
the bond... and jealous."

Sighing, he could feel the contrition was sincere, as was Xanatos's struggle with his jealousy and he let the rest of his anger go. "All right. Go to our quarters and meditate on your feelings. I'll be along presently."

"Yes, Master." Xanatos rose and bowed again, then left.

The scene with Xanatos had hurt him and he needed to get his center back before he could talk to the young man again.

Walking through the gardens, Qui-Gon tried to clear his mind and allow the Force to flow through him. Unfortunately, Obi-Wan chose that moment to poke at the bond between them, jarring him. Sending back a quick pulse of reassurance and affection, he couldn't blame the child for his curiosity. He was sure Obi-Wan didn't know what to make of the sudden intrusion in his head. Suddenly Qui-Gon could envision years of childish prodding until his bond-mate grew up. Someone was going to have to teach Obi-Wan some control.

He and Obi-Wan would not talk about the bond for years to come. It had to remain unacknowledged between them. They would both feel it grow over many years before it would be formally recognized and made final. But they would not speak of it. To do so would start the process to lock it into place, their souls becoming one completely and irrevocably.

Finding a quiet spot in one sunny corner, Qui-Gon dropped to his knees and closed his eyes. Only to snap them open again as he felt Master Yoda approach.

Settling himself on the bench next to Qui-Gon, Yoda waited for him to speak.

"You know about the soul-bond, my Master?" It wasn't quite a question, more of a conversation opener.

Yoda nodded. "Know about it, I do."

"Any advice?"

"Wonderful and terrible, both, a soul-bond is."

That much he'd figured out for himself. He sighed. "What shall I do?"

"Do? Nothing there is you can do about it. Chooses you, it does."

Not that he truly wanted to do anything about it anyway, already the child was pushing into his mind and into his heart. If only he would stop poking at the bond -- it wasn't a toy. "Will you speak to the child about the bond?"

"Realize it already, he does?"

"He knows something is there and keeps playing at it." Qui-Gon tried not to wince as the he felt another poke from Obi-Wan, rather like a little mental finger jammed into his brain.

Yoda laughed. "Not easy, this will be."

"It's only been two hours, Master. I wonder how I'll survive a year."

"In a year or two, more control the boy will have learned."

"One hopes."
"Speak to the boy, I will."

"Thank you, my Master. Now I must deal with my Padawan."

His eyes slitted, Yoda seemed almost troubled. "A problem with Xanatos, there is?"

"No. He seems... upset by the bond." Qui-Gon did not want to elaborate on Xanatos' jealousy. He hoped to deal with the matter himself.

Yoda nodded, but said nothing more. Sometimes Qui-Gon had the feeling Yoda didn't care for his apprentice. Of course, his Master had never said a word.

Obi-Wan was in a quandary. He was sure he had to be the only fifteen-year-old virgin left in the whole Jedi Temple. It wasn't that he didn't want to have sex either, he did, in some cases very badly, but no one had thought to inform him if there were going to be any repercussions from it. Would it violate the soul-bond? Would it hurt Qui-Gon? Nothing, no matter how badly it hurt, was worth doing either of those things.

He wasn't sure who, if anyone, he should talk to about the issue, either. Ideally, it should be Qui-Gon, but his Master was the cause of the problem in the first place. He couldn't quite bring himself to go to Qui-Gon. An outside opinion seemed like the best option.

Last night, he'd had another offer of company and this one from his best friend, Bant -- and he'd wanted to take her up on it. Badly. But he just wasn't sure. Padawans were encouraged to explore their sexuality with their year mates and their peers. Unfortunately, Obi-Wan wasn't sure that meant him, too. The soul-bond made everything different.

Not that he would trade if for anything in the world. Aside from a terrible few months when he was twelve -- a time he still had trouble thinking about -- the soul-bond had given him the most perfect feeling of safety and contentment and love since he was five years old.

That eventually he'd end up with Qui-Gon wasn't a problem, either. He loved Qui-Gon as a person as well as a Master. The thought of sleeping with him didn't bother him at all, as a matter of fact, in a general kind of way, he found Qui-Gon fairly attractive. His Master was a good looking man, and Obi-Wan had always thought if nothing else, he'd really know what he was doing. Which would make it fun. No, the problem came in when he wanted to have other partners aside from Qui-Gon.

He sighed. He really had to talk to someone about this. As much as he wanted to have sex, there was no way in the world he'd do anything to hurt his Master. If he were supposed to wait until they were together, then he would. But the idea did not make him happy and it would probably drive him insane with desire.

In desperation, he sought out Master Yoda for advice. If the council member was surprised by the request of his time, he did not show it. Indeed, it was temple policy that any Padawan who had an issue or problem they felt they could not talk about with their master, could go to any other Master, council member or not, and ask advice.

Obi-Wan knelt by a bench as Master Yoda sat down next to him in a private room off the council chamber. Sunlight from the big windows drenched the room, turning the sober grey colors to a pleasant shade of pearl.

He was not sure where to start. How did you ask about something this personal and important.
"This is about the soul-bond," Obi-Wan said, after the silence had stretched out long enough for him to realize that *he* had to start the conversation.

Yoda nodded, sagely, but there was the light of amusement in his eyes. "Questions, you have? A problem?"

Obi-Wan sighed, and ducked his head. How did he put this delicately? "Not a problem exactly. I..."

One of Yoda's ears raised and his mouth curled up just a little. "Yes?"

"I..." He cleared his throat. "I need to know how the soul-bond works?"

Yoda blinked. "Works? Works how?"

Another deep breath and Obi-Wan forced the words out. "If I have sex with someone other than Qui-Gon will it hurt him or break our bond?"

"Exists the bond does. Change that, nothing will."

Well, that was good to know, a relief actually. "But what about Qui-Gon? I mean... I thought by now..." Obi-Wan fought a flush that was trying to crawl across his face.

Yoda's ears rose, and his face became amused. "Thought you would feel more desire for your Master? Not the case, it is?"

"Ah... no. I mean, well..." He could not hold back the blush. "I mean... am I supposed to... wait..." Gods he couldn't get the words out at all. He took a breath, noticing that Yoda was trying not to look anymore amused that he already did. It did occur to Obi-Wan that after eight-hundred or more years, Yoda had probably heard it all. "I mean, I haven't... yet..."

Finally, Yoda took pity on him. "No. With your desires in that regard, you should go. If you wish to wait, an option it is. If you wish to proceed, no harm it will cause."

"What shall I do?"

"Different, everyone is. Decide for yourself, you must. Strengthen the bond will, no matter what you decide. But slowly, time it will take."

"And it is all right, if I... you know..." He took another breath. "Am with other people. I mean, it won't hurt my Master?"

"Hurt him? No. But know it, he will."

For some reason, *that* hadn't been something he'd even considered. "You mean every time?"

Yoda nodded.

Well, that certainly put a damper on things, didn't it? But if Master Yoda said it was all right, then it was. And it didn't bother him enough to not go out and try it. Tonight in fact.

Obi-Wan stood and bowed. "Thank you for your time, Master Yoda."

"Eased your mind, I have?"

"Very much so." Obi-Wan bowed again and left, feeling much better.
As the years went by, Obi-Wan's bond with Qui-Gon grew stronger. His attraction for his Master also grew as he became aware of Qui-Gon on more and more levels. It wasn't long after his talk with Master Yoda, that Obi-Wan began to sense when Qui-Gon slept with someone else, which was a lot less than *he* had sex, but still he couldn't help the stab of jealousy he felt each time. He meditated on it every time it happened, but could not quite dispel the feelings. And each time, Obi-Wan felt a little more jealous and it took more power to suppress the emotions.

By the time he was twenty-one, his desire for Qui-Gon had become profound and he knew his Master's desire for him was no less intense. Every now and then, he would catch Qui-Gon looking at him with that desire smoldering in his dark-blue eyes, and Qui-Gon would say nothing, only nod or bow slightly, an acknowledgment to something that would one day be. And the time was coming soon, that much Obi-Wan could tell.

Late one night, Obi-Wan was lying in bed, trying not to think about where his Master was, although he did know. He could feel the excitement, the desire that pulsated through their bond as his Master made love with someone else. Shielding himself tightly, lest Qui-Gon learn of his jealousy, he pulled himself out of bed, and started to pace, trying to think about nothing at all.

For one second the world went black....

...And then, Obi-Wan's awareness swept into Qui-Gon's mind, suddenly feeling what Qui-Gon felt as he was made love to. He could perceive his Master's pleasure at being penetrated, the spiraling desire, and the pressure of building orgasm. The pleasure and the desire could have been his own. Should have been his!

Then through the lover's link between them, Obi-Wan slid into Qui-Gon's lover's mind, feeling the pleasure of being inside Qui-Gon's body. He saw Qui-Gon on his hands and knees, thighs spread wide and knees braced slightly forward. His head was thrown back, long, damp hair sticking to his shoulders and back. Obi-Wan had never seen a more sensual, more beautifully sexual or alluring sight.

The other Master, moved in and out of Qui-Gon, picking up speed. The dark hands gripped the pale hips holding them in place.

A long low moan came from Qui-Gon's lips and Obi-Wan *felt* both men starting to climax.

Obi-Wan felt their pleasure intensely, and gasped, desire and rage mixing for one second as he felt someone else take his Master, take what should be *his*.

*It will be yours, soon. Leave now!* The voice in his head was sharp with disapproval, snapping him back into his own head.

The image faded, leaving him stricken, sweating and aroused. Qui-Gon had known he was there. How had it happened? He had no idea. It must be something to do with the final transition of the soul-bond. But he'd never felt anything like that before.

Always before, he'd had the impression of his Master's feelings -- like feeling them from a step away. For one second tonight, he'd actually felt the passion, as if it were his own. And in a way, it was. He wanted Qui-Gon like that, to possess him like that, to feel the heat and tightness of his body, to feel the yielding as Qui-Gon surrendered to their passion. Obi-Wan shuddered as the most intense desire he'd ever known swept through him. That he would one day have Qui-Gon,
he knew. But seeing it made him want it now.

Taking a deep breath, Obi-Wan knelt on a mat to meditate. He needed to resolve his anger and his desire. It took a bit of time, but finally he released his jealousy to the Force and felt calm again.

Reaching out again, this time he concentrated on Qui-Gon as he had before when he'd seen the first vision.

Qui-Gon's lover, whom Obi-Wan still could not put a name to, was lying in bed, still naked, watching Qui-Gon dress. This time Obi-Wan didn't breathe as he felt Qui-Gon lean over and kiss the man. "I had a good time tonight, dinner was wonderful, thank you."

His friend smiled, a little sadly. "I did too, my friend. Last time, I think."

Nodding, Qui-Gon put a hand on his friend's face. "Yes, I think so."

"I shall miss that."

"I as well." Qui-Gon turned towards the door. "Good night."

The scene faded and Obi-Wan took a breath and then another, trying to calm himself. What was happening? He didn't understand why the images were so strong where he'd only had impressions before. Before he could come up with an answer, he felt Qui-Gon returning.

His Master came through the door of their shared common room, his robes were haphazardly arranged, and his hair hung unbound and messy. His eyes immediately sought out Obi-Wan. But Obi-Wan could not meet his eyes. With a sigh he approached, kneeling at his Master's feet.

He bowed his head, feeling contrite and awkward. "Forgive my intrusion, Master. I don't know how it happened."

"The first time or the second?"

Damn. Chagrin warred with embarrassment. He should have known that Qui-Gon would perceive him the second time, but he'd been unable to help himself. "You knew I was there?"

A small frown touched Qui-Gon's mouth. "Yes. Both times. And I was not pleased that you went into my lover's mind either. That was a breach of his privacy. Do you know how it happened?"

Obi-Wan sighed, even more embarrassed, and lowered his eyes. "I know what I did the second time, but I don't know why it worked."

"All right. Why don't you meditate on the wisdom of spying, while I take a shower." Qui-Gon's tone held a note of rebuke, but nothing too severe for which Obi-Wan was more than grateful that he was getting off so lightly.

He bowed his head. "Yes, Master."

Qui-Gon was gone long enough for him to think about what he'd done and why. The first time couldn't be called his fault, and the second time had been more to see if he could do it again but he knew he should not have intruded on Qui-Gon's privacy.

The 'fresher door opened and Obi-Wan stood. Returning with his long hair still unbound and damp about his shoulders, Qui-Gon donned a sleeping robe, and was tying it tightly around his
waist. Obi-Wan had the worst urge to bury his fingers in the silken mass, but resisted, knowing it was not be welcomed, not yet, but one day...

"Come, my Padawan, sit with me." Qui-Gon sat on the couch, his body against the arm, and his arms open.

Obi-Wan didn't hesitate, moving to nestle in next to him, his back against Qui-Gon's chest, resting his head on his Master's shoulder, strong arms banding his chest. In all the world, there was nothing that made him feel safer than being held against Qui-Gon's big body, feeling the love his Master bore him. Even as a child, he'd known he was safe within Qui-Gon's embrace. It was a place he sought when troubled, always finding shelter and a warm welcome.

"Now tell me what you saw and felt."

Obi-Wan sighed, and tried to pull away, embarrassed again by his lapse and more so by the desire he still felt sharply. Talking about it was the last thing he wanted to do right now.

"No, stay."

He subsided back against Qui-Gon, feeling the heat crawl across his face as he spoke. "I saw you with your friend... lover..."

"Friend." Qui-Gon rubbed his face against Obi-Wan's neck.

Trying to be reassuring, Obi-Wan decided with a small smile. "I saw him... fucking you."

A gust of air came from his Master, warmly tickling his neck. "I would not have used that term. What did you feel?"

Obi-Wan realized Qui-Gon had felt what he felt. "I was angry. Jealous, I expect."

"Yes, and..."

He forced the reluctant words out, knowing they had to be said. There were no secrets between a soul-bonded pair. The bond did not allow it and even if it did, Qui-Gon would not. "And I felt like he had taken something that was mine."

"I am not quite yours yet." There was amusement in Qui-Gon's tone, but Obi-Wan remembered his Master's goodbye to his friend.

"But you will be." He knew Qui-Gon's feelings, just as Qui-Gon knew his.

"Eventually. Sooner than I thought."

"Are we finally going to talk about it?" Obi-Wan hoped so. They never spoken much about the bond. It was a given between them. They both knew it was there and would always be there.

Qui-Gon sighed. "I suspect that what happened tonight means it's already started without us, even without taking that final step."

Of course, that's why he was able to see and feel the incident so clearly. From what Obi-Wan had read, once the final stage of the bonding started he would be able to see into Qui-Gon's mind unless he was directly shielded against it, not just through Qui-Gon's perceptions which he had always been able to do, but with his own perceptions. "Yes. I think you're right."

"I am rather reluctant to finalize it," Qui-Gon admitted, tightening his arms around Obi-Wan's
chest and breathing against his neck. "You are still so young. I had hoped to put this off until your
Knighthood."

The sensation caused pleasant shudders. "Maybe you want to hold out that long, but I sure don't.
Not to mention that my Knighthood is at least four years away. I'll never make it that long." And
the thought of Qui-Gon sleeping with anyone else infuriated him.

"It's probably not that long until your trials. You are nearly ready."

Pleasure at the thought of his trials coming sooner was seriously tempered by the fact that Qui-
Gon wanted to wait even longer to finish their bonding. Obi-Wan sighed deeply, remembering
what had happened today. "I don't think we're going to be given that chance to wait much
longer."

This time Qui-Gon sighed, too. "No. I expect you are right about that."

He didn't like the sound of that. "You don't want to complete the bond with me?"

A kiss was pressed into his hair. "Of course I do. I've been looking forward to it for years."

Which reminded Obi-Wan of something he'd always wanted to ask. "What did you think of
having a child as young as I was turn up as your soul-mate?"

Turning slightly, he met the blue eyes, seeing Qui-Gon's smile at the question. "I was amused to
find that my soul-mate was a five-year-old, I must say. It seemed just my luck to find my greatest
joy and then realize I'd have to wait years to claim him completely."

A smile touched his mouth at the amusement in Qui-Gon's voice, but the words invoked another
memory. And this one was not nearly so pleasant to remember. "Then why didn't you want to
take me as your Padawan as soon as you could? As it was, you almost let me go to the Agri-
corps." Obi-Wan didn't bother to hide the hurt in his voice. It had taken a lot of meditation to
forgive Qui-Gon for those few months. He had never felt so alone or so hurt as during the time
that Qui-Gon wouldn't talk to him and tried to close off their bond.

Qui-Gon was so silent, that he shifted to the side so he could look at his Master. With a deep sigh,
Qui-Gon shook his head. "I am so dreadfully sorry about that. At the time, I suppose I hoped that
if I denied the bond, it would go away."

"You didn't want me?" Even though it was in the past, a breath caught in Obi-Wan's chest and he
felt rejected beyond measure.

As he tried to get up, Qui-Gon held him tightly, speaking quietly, but firmly. "I wasn't thinking
clearly. I was in pain myself. My previous Padawan had just turned to the dark side, and I lacked
the faith that I could teach again."

To make a bad situation worse, he'd been rejected by everyone else as well. "But no one else
wanted me as Padawan."

"It was not that you were unwanted, Obi-Wan. All the other Masters knew of the soul-bond,
knew that you could not be bonded to them, even for the weakest training bond. Do you really
think that someone with your potential would have gone unselected for any other reason?"

Actually, he had wondered about that for years. No one had bothered to tell him, of course they
couldn't, especially with Qui-Gon trying to deny the bond.
Qui-Gon sighed. "That is why Yoda required that I go with you to Bandomeer. He knew I would be unable to deny the bond once I was in contact with you for any length of time."

It still hurt more than he could put into words. Obi-Wan was silent, considering that bit of information. "But you couldn't deny me, could you? Not in the long run."

Another wordless pulse of love and contrition came down through their bond and Obi-Wan felt a little better.

"No. I could not deny you. When you were going to allow yourself to be blown up, some part of me realized that I could not live without the other half of my soul."

Obi-Wan nodded. He didn't like to think about what might have happened. But he'd been more than ready to die, at that point. That his death might buy time for others to live was more to the good. At least it would have given it purpose. More than he felt about his life at the time.

Qui-Gon's breath caught on what sounded like a sob, and Obi-Wan was pulled closer to the broad chest, Qui-Gon's face rested on his shoulder. "I'm so sorry, my love." The brittle tone of the words nearly broke Obi-Wan's heart.

And he realized, "You heard my thoughts just now?"

"Yes," came the husky reply. "I never knew how badly I hurt you and I should have."

"I didn't want you to know. And it is over now." He put his hands on the strong arms banding his chest, and squeezed gently. "I had a lot of trouble understanding the rejection. The bond had always been strong between us. I'd always felt so safe and loved."

Qui-Gon nodded, breathing out sharply. "You were -- even then, I loved you dearly. It was myself that I had problems with. I am so sorry."

"Will you tell me about the rest of what happened with Xanatos?"

"Yes." Qui-Gon sighed and was quiet for a moment, seeming to gather his thoughts. "Xanatos was eighteen when I met you for the first time, and he recognized the bond immediately. I should have realized then that there was a problem. His reaction was all out of proportion. He was very jealous and I could do nothing to relieve his fears."

Unfortunately, that made all too much sense. How could anyone know Qui-Gon and not love him? Obi-Wan felt a wave of pity for Xanatos.

Qui-Gon kissed the juncture between Obi-Wan's neck and shoulder. "What compassion you have."

Snuggling back into the sweet caress, Obi-Wan smiled. "I've been so lucky, Master. Since I was five years old, I have always known you were there -- that you always would be there for me."

Obi-Wan took a breath and went on. "It had to hurt horribly to love someone and know that there was no hope of them returning your affection."

He could feel Qui-Gon shake his head. "I should have paid closer attention. I should have found a way to ease his hurt."

How like his Master to take all the blame himself. "There was nothing you could have done. After you met me there was no more hope for Xanatos, and he needed to deal with that."

"Obi-Wan, there was no hope *before* that. I did not return his feelings and had no reason to
believe I ever would."

To know the man you loved would never return your feelings must surely be a special kind of
agony. "And he knew it?"

"I believe so. We never discussed it. And while jealousy might have been a factor, I think that
there were many things that made him turn. But when things went so wrong with Xanatos, I could
not face another Padawan. I never expected you to be so diligent, so determined in making me see
things differently."

Obi-Wan laughed. "I'm nothing, if not determined."

"There is that." Qui-Gon sighed loudly. "How much can you sense of my thoughts?"

Glad for the subject change, Obi-Wan thought about it for a moment. "I can nearly always feel
impressions of your emotions, but I can't quite hear your thoughts, unless you let me."

"And this evening?"

"When I *saw* you? For the first time, I actually *felt* your passion. I'd almost gotten used to
knowing when you were with someone else, but feeling it is not something I would want to do
again."

"You will not, I promise you that." Qui-Gon sounded grave and sure.

"Then this is it?" The excitement Obi-Wan felt was clear in his voice. He wanted this, wanted
Qui-Gon to be his, wanted to belong to his Master.

"Yes."

Obi-Wan felt Qui-Gon's lips in his hair again, and wanted to turn around and feel those lips on his
so badly. "What happens now?"

"Tomorrow, we formally acknowledge the bond."

"In front of the council?"

Obi-Wan could feel Qui-Gon nod. "And then there is the process to finalize the bond."

He had a good idea of what it was, but he just wanted to make sure "And how do we do that?"

"It's just what you think it is. We'll make love."

"Tonight?" There was no keeping the eagerness out of his voice. He'd only been waiting for this
for what seemed like years.

"If you would like." There was a smile in Qui-Gon's tone and an anticipation in his mind that
matched Obi-Wan's own.

Their position had shifted while they talked, and now Obi-Wan turned over so that he was lying in
Qui-Gon's arms, facing him. He smiled at his Master, letting the gleam enter his eyes.

After what happened tonight, he wanted to kiss Qui-Gon so badly. The image of a naked sexual
Qui-Gon had shattered him, making him want as he never had before. And it seriously annoyed
him that he'd had to see someone else have *his* Master. He could live with knowing that his
Master had had other partners, he did too, but to see it was to make it too real. He needed
something to let him know that Qui-Gon belonged to him. "I want to kiss you so badly, I ache
A slow smile touched Qui-Gon's lips. "We can not have that, now can we?"

Obi-Wan leaned forward, touching his lips gently to Qui-Gon's, taking no liberties, just the softest touch of silken flesh on flesh and then he pulled back before passion could spark and ignite. Qui-Gon followed him, one large hand reaching up, pressing Obi-Wan back into the kiss, opening his mouth with a moist tongue, exploring the recesses of his mouth, and then inviting Obi-Wan back to do the same. An invitation he could not refuse, pressing back into Qui-Gon's mouth, tasting him completely.

Finally releasing his mouth, Qui-Gon panted. "If you are going to steal a kiss, then by the Force, steal a real one."

Shaking his head, Obi-Wan stroked a finger across the beard, smiling happily. "Yes, my Master. May I steal more than a kiss?" And then laughed out loud at Qui-Gon's anticipatory look.

"You, my beloved, are an imp." Qui-Gon leaned forward and captured his mouth in another deep kiss. Obi-Wan buried his hands in Qui-Gon's hair, letting the silky strands slip through his fingers.

When Qui-Gon pulled back, his blue eyes danced with pleasure and no small amount of desire. Obi-Wan's heart squeezed tight at the look.

"Shall we move this to a more appropriate location?"

"Your bed, I think. It's bigger." Excitement shot through Obi-Wan, he'd been waiting for this moment and now that it had finally arrived, he was shaking. Fear, excitement, anticipation all raced through his body and mind, but he rose from the sofa, and held out his hand to Qui-Gon.

Qui-Gon pulled him into his arms and held him close. He rested his head against Qui-Gon's shoulder realizing, not for the first time, how much shorter he was than his Master. It wouldn't matter once they were lying down, and he wanted to get that way as soon as possible. But he needed a moment to center himself. Taking a deep breath, he reached out into the Force and found the calm he was looking for.

Pulling out of Qui-Gon's arms, he held out his hand.

"I want you. So badly." He leaned up and pressed his mouth lightly to his Master's as they stood by Qui-Gon's big bed.

"And so you shall have me," Qui-Gon said as the kiss ended. "But first things first."

Qui-Gon stripped him bare in a few short moves, and he had less to do since his Master only wore a light sleep robe.

For a moment, he looked at Qui-Gon, appreciating the raw-boned beauty of the large body -- hard planed, solidly muscled, big hands and big feet. Big elsewhere too, Obi-Wan noted with amusement. That would come in handy later. A flash of raw need cut through him -- very handy later.

With a deep groan, Qui-Gon laid him down against the soft bedding. Obi-Wan stretched out, letting Qui-Gon look his fill. For a long moment, his Master just looked at him, blue eyes alight with love and passion. "You are so beautiful, Obi-Wan."

Obi-Wan could feel the corresponding desire through their bond and it thrilled him. Qui-Gon
settled gently on top of him, holding him tightly and kissing him over and over, long deep kisses that stole his breath and made him ache with desire. As much as he wanted to melt into Qui-Gon's touch, he had to move. This could not be a one-sided joining.

Rolling both of them over until he was on top of Qui-Gon, he luxuriated in the feel of the big body under his. Leaning forward, he pressed his mouth to the flesh of Qui-Gon's chest, his tongue sliding out to taste the salty skin. "Mmm. I knew you would taste good."

Qui-Gon's chest rumbled in a chuckle. "I am most pleased that you think so."

The chuckle turned to a gasp as Obi-Wan ran his tongue over one of Qui-Gon's flat nipples, biting down very gently. Repeating the move on the other side brought a similar reaction and sent Obi-Wan's excitement spiraling. He loved giving pleasure, and giving it to Qui-Gon was doubly wonderful.

Moving downward, he nuzzled the flat, muscled stomach, sticking his tongue into Qui-Gon's belly button and drawing another laugh. Nosing through the coarse hair, he inhaled deeply, relishing the musky scent. His hands stroked along the long thighs, and he moved his mouth to the inside of one, licking slowly.

Qui-Gon groaned, spreading his legs apart so that Obi-Wan could lie between them. Levering himself into a comfortable position, he took the tip of Qui-Gon's cock into his mouth and sucked lightly. Arching his back, Qui-Gon moaned. "Obi-Wan!"

He didn't want it to end now, so he released Qui-Gon and moved back up to kiss him again. This time when Qui-Gon rolled on top of him, Obi-Wan let him stay there.

Qui-Gon moved slowly down his body, pleasuring him in a way he hadn't been before. Although he was far from inexperienced, he had never been touched with such love and affection included in the lust and desire before.

With Qui-Gon's mouth and hands stroking and licking him everywhere, Obi-Wan lost track of anything other than the pleasure. His mind simply stopped functioning and he went with the bliss, riding high with each movement, allowing himself to float along in a hazy mist of perfection. Finally, Qui-Gon turned him onto his belly, and he spread his legs eagerly. Yes, he wanted this, wanted Qui-Gon inside him.

"Lower your shields," Qui-Gon said softly, stroking over Obi-Wan's back.

Even though they were already bonded, they had both resisted touching each other deeply through the bond. The merging would be total. Letting his shield go, he reached out for Qui-Gon and found welcome and shelter in Qui-Gon's mind as he had in his arms.

//I love you. But you knew that.//

The mental chuckle was similar to the physical one. //Yes. I did get that impression, my beloved. And I love you. Are you ready for this?//

//More than ready. I crave it and you.//

Qui-Gon held out his hand and a vial of oil immediately came to him, but he put it down on the table by the bed. Large hands stroked down his back to his buttocks, and then a hot mouth followed, licking slowly, taking time to explore all of his skin. Obi-Wan shuddered, and groaned under the assault.

The cheeks of his buttocks were parted and a talented tongue made quick forays into the crease,
before settling on the ring of muscle, and laving over it. His mind spiraled out of control, spinning around and around in the same rhythm as the tongue tormenting him. He couldn’t catch his breath, and his heart beat hard and fast against the wall of his chest. As Qui-Gon’s tongue pressed inward, Obi-Wan felt Qui-Gon's pleasure at his response as if it were his own. The dual sensation broke him, and he could not hold back the scream of rapture as he was filled mind and body with the purest radiant pleasure.

The world exploded in a flash of pure white energy. Ecstasy burst over and through him, washing away all that came before in the wave of perfect bliss. He came, hard and hot into the sheets, Qui-Gon's mind filling his, merging as he went down, down, down into the depths of orgasm.

When he surfaced again, Qui-Gon was in his mind and lying over his body. //By the Force, I did not expect that!//

//Nor did I.// Pleasure and desire flowed from Qui-Gon.

//And I thought I had more control that to come like that.// His tone was tinged faintly with embarrassment that Obi-Wan could not help. It had been years since he had responded so quickly, especially with so little direct stimulation.

Qui-Gon laughed. //I'm honored that I could bring you such pleasure.//

//Like none I have ever known.// Reaching down, he ran a hand over Qui-Gon's still-hard cock. //We should take care of that, shouldn't we?//

He could feel Qui-Gon's mental shrug. //Only if you wish it. It will wait.//

It might, but Obi-Wan was not about to. //No. It won't. I'd like you to finish what you've started.//

Another mental grin. //I thought I had.//

Obi-Wan held up his hand and the oil moved to him. He handed it back to Qui-Gon. //I want you.//

//Obi-Wan, it will wait.//

//I won't.//

With a deep sigh that Obi-Wan recognized as both exasperation and love, Qui-Gon opened the little vial of oil, and the scent of wild flowers filled the room. Slick fingers stroked down the crease of his buttocks, and moved over the entrance to his body, slipping in a little then pulling back. The teasing went on and on. Each time, he tried to cant his hips, and invite the teasing finger into himself, and after what almost seemed like too long, he was rewarded with it sliding deep. A groan tore from his lips. He moved with the fingers that were stretching him, moaning and whimpering until they were removed, replaced by something much bigger and hotter.

As the thick, long cock pushed into him, his arousal doubled and then tripled until he was rock hard again. And how he wanted this, wanted to feel Qui-Gon inside him, moving hard, and slow, taking his mind away.

In a very short time, his mind splintered into a million bits of energy and he called out. Dimly, he felt Qui-Gon continuing to move on him, and then shudder, calling out himself. Their minds, bodies and hearts merged perfectly into the bond.

He was Qui-Gon's and Qui-Gon was his.
There was nothing more after that, save the perfect knowledge of their perfect love.

Part 3 - The Tearing

Watching Obi-Wan doing anything had become a favorite leisure activity for Qui-Gon. He suspected he would never grow bored with the task and could do it for hours at a time. Oh Sith, he had it bad. Qui-Gon smiled to himself at his own flights of fancy.

Obi-Wan looked up suddenly from the communications console in their shared cabin. He smiled knowingly at Qui-Gon.

Qui-Gon nodded and returned the smile.

"I'm surprised we drew such a routine mission. Witnessing a wedding doesn't require much skill or effort." Obi-Wan sat down next to him on the comfortable couch.

Qui-Gon shifted, lying back and inviting Obi-Wan to lie against him. "We were requested. Do you remember the last time we were there?"

Unaccountably, Obi-Wan blushed as he nodded. "Too well."

"What?" Qui-Gon could remember nothing happening that would cause the embarrassment.

He and Obi-Wan had negotiated a peace settlement between the two warring factions on the planet of Amaranth. King Jordan had agreed to step down in favor of his daughter, Jayell, who would marry the opposing king, Dalliaho. The coming marriage would seal the agreement. When the two wed, they would rule the planet together. The two young people liked and respected each other and had only waited until Jayell had come of age for the wedding to take place. "I remember nothing amiss on that mission."

Obi-Wan shook his head, moving to sit with his back against Qui-Gon's chest. "No. It was what happened after -- the night before we left."

"Ah." Qui-Gon did remember that. In a rare moment of indulgence, he'd accepted an offer of company that night and so had his Padawan. "That was most pleasant, wasn't it?"

"Jayell was incredible. And I had almost no experience. She taught me a lot that night."

"Then why the blush?" It seemed out of place, Obi-Wan was far from inexperienced and they had both enjoyed their alliances.

Obi-Wan sighed. "It was the first time I perceived you when you were..." Obi-Wan trailed off. "When you were..."

"Having sex, enjoying myself?"

"Yes." The tips of Obi-Wan's ears flushed red.

Qui-Gon laughed, finding the blush sweet beyond measure. He tightened his arms and kissed the back of Obi-Wan's neck. "We should talk about it."

"Why? I couldn't tell who you were with or anything." After a pause. "Who were you with?"
"Jordan."

"The King?" Surprise rose in Obi-Wan's tone.

Qui-Gon shrugged. He remembered that night quite fondly. "And why not? He's an attractive man."

"I suppose so, but he was... old... and huge."

Again, Qui-Gon chuckled. "He was only a few years older than I am. And I rather enjoyed his large size." He had found the novelty of looking up to kiss someone delightful, and had laughed a lot that night. "Part of the reason we are returning is that he expressed a wish to dance with me at the wedding."

"He'll lead." Obi-Wan seemed to find that very amusing.

As a general rule, the taller of two beings led when they danced the type of dances that required a lead. "I am quite sure that I will be able to manage a dance without embarrassing myself. I *can* follow."

"I wager you haven't done it much."

Qui-Gon wasn't sure why that amused his Padawan so much. "No, that is true. You know, we've never discussed our past lovers. Should we?"

Stiffening in his embrace, Obi-Wan looked over his shoulder at him. "Why?"

"I admit to a certain curiosity about your past. Is it a problem?" There was something he *really* wanted to know and would not search through his beloved's mind to find the answer. He'd much rather Obi-Wan told him.

Obi-Wan took a deep breath, and Qui-Gon could feel a feather-light touch in his mind. "I sense there is something you'd like to know. There is nothing I won't tell you, my Master."

Unaccountably, it was harder to ask than he'd thought. But he braced himself, and plunged on. "A few nights ago, I saw you kiss Bruck Chun."

Obi-Wan turned around to look over his shoulder, trepidation coming through the bond. "It was a friendly kiss, honestly."

"I know that. I wasn't jealous, just a bit curious as to why you were so friendly with someone who had been so cruel to you."

The smile lit Obi-Wan's face. "Bruck and I were lovers for a long time."

That was a surprise. "As I remember, he used to call you Oafy-Wan? I think there must be a good story there."

"Well, yes." Obi-Wan chuckled. Obviously a fond memory. "When I met Bruck again after we were both Padawans, I think I was seventeen or so, he apologized for what he'd done. On his knees no less."

"And you forgave him."

"Of course, how could I not? He was very contrite. He said that he had so feared not being chosen..."
as Padawan that he would have done anything to make that happen. But in doing what he did, he realized that he'd violated everything a Jedi stood for and didn't feel he deserved being a Padawan anymore and had accepted his fate. It's ironic that he was chosen only a day before he was to leave the Temple. Master Cashton came to take a Padawan and wanted the one closest to their thirteenth birthday."

"And how did you go from forgiving him to being his lover?"

Smiling, Obi-Wan turned again, settling back against Qui-Gon's chest. "Well, after he apologized, we went to have dinner. Which he insisted on. And we talked about what happened then and what was happening in our lives. One thing led to another..." Obi-Wan shrugged. "He had become quite beautiful in the five years since I had seen him. And he said the same of me."

"You were always beautiful, my Obi-Wan." He stroked a hand gently through the short spikes of Obi-Wan's hair, loving the spiky feel. "And why did not I know about this?"

Obi-Wan leaned into his touch, nearly purring. "You were off on that mission to Monotovine, you were gone for two months."

He remembered. It had taken a while for things to normalize once he'd returned home. "You and he did not see a lot of each other, did you?" Or he would have known about it.

"Perhaps a couple of times a year. He and his Master travel as much as we do. I did write to him to tell him that we wouldn't be continuing that part of our relationship."

Qui-Gon nodded. He had said the same to his lovers. "And was he broken-hearted when you told him?"

"No. He'd known about the soul-bond and so had Bant, my other lover. Neither was hurt by my ending that part of our relationship. Truthfully, I think Bant is in love with her Master, but she has never said and Bruck is waiting for his Knighthood to speak to another. And what of your lovers?"

"Friends, only. And as yours did, they knew about the soul-bond and were glad for me."

Obi-Wan reached up and pulled him down for a long kiss. "Enough talk about past lovers, I think it is time to pay attention to your present lover."

Nodding solemnly, he rolled Obi-Wan onto his back and settled on top of him. "Do you think there is enough room here?"

"How much do we need?" Obi-Wan pressed his hips forward, wrapping his legs around Qui-Gon's hips.

Not that much, Qui-Gon decided, leaning down to kiss his beloved again.

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The mission should have been routine. Unfortunately, Princess Jayell and Obi-Wan went for a walk outside the palace grounds and a kidnapping attempt was made by one of the factions who did not want the wedding to take place. Obi-Wan tried to defend the Princess only to find himself taken instead.

It happened so quickly, Qui-Gon didn't even realize what was happening until he felt Obi-Wan's fear and then his unconsciousness. At a distance and with Obi-Wan unconscious, he could only sense his bondmate's presence, not where he was.
Pushing all of his fears aside, he questioned the Princess at length. Princess Jayell had been nearly hysterical by the time she'd returned to the palace. She hadn't recognized any of the men who had taken Obi-Wan and wasn't sure why they had taken Obi-Wan instead of her. Qui-Gon wasn't quite sure how Obi-Wan had been taken either. The young man should have been able to deal with all three men, even without a lightsaber.

Jayell's father and the young King sent out most of the guard to look for clues. Qui-Gon went with them, but found nothing. Frustrated, he came back to the palace to question the princess again. Half-way through the interview, he felt Obi-Wan come to consciousness.

//Qui-Gon?/
//Where are you, beloved?/

//Don't know. Damp. A basement. It's dark. No windows. Qui-Gon, it was Xanatos who took me.//

Qui-Gon tried to reign in his shock and rage. //To what purpose?/
//I don't know.//
//Can you get out?/

//I'm trussed up quite securely, and with Force-resistant bonds. You can't track me?/
//No. If you knew where you were, I could go there, but I can not perceive more than you can.//

//Damn. That would be helpful. They are coming back now.//

Through the bond he could feel Obi-Wan's fury as Xanatos and the two other kidnappers started to beat him. No one asked him for information or said anything at all as they methodically pummeled Obi-Wan. There was no reasoning with them, Qui-Gon had known that from the moment Xanatos' name had been uttered.

The pain was bearable, but just. And concentrating, Qui-Gon was able to shelter Obi-Wan from some of it, lending the young man as much of his strength as he could force through the bond.

While Qui-Gon could not see what was happening, his concentration was focused totally on shielding Obi-Wan. He could perceive what Obi-Wan was feeling. And when the two men started to strip Obi-Wan, he was quick to realize what they intended and knew he'd only be able to partially shield his beloved from the horror of what was to come.

//Obi-Wan, concentrate on me.// The more Obi-Wan could focus on him, the less he would feel of what was being done to him.

//I know what they are going to do. You won't be able to do anything about it.// Through the bond, he could feel Obi-Wan's fear grow.

//Padawan, concentrate on me.// Qui-Gon ordered sternly, hoping the teacher's tone would help him focus. He threw out as much energy as he could. //Do as I say.//

Qui-Gon could feel Obi-Wan's concentration turn inward toward him. //It still hurts.//

//I know, my beloved. I can not shield completely you at this distance. It will not change how I feel about you. I promise you that. They only touch your body, not anything else.// Qui-Gon could not keep his own rage at what was being done to Obi-Wan out of his words, but he could support
his Padawan through this and he would see as little mental damage done as possible.

//I know that. I am somewhat distanced from what they are doing. But I can still feel it.//

//Would that I could distance you more.//

Qui-Gon heard a mental groan, and tried to draw more power from the Force to protect his beloved. //Concentrate.//

//I'm trying. The pain is distracting.//

Then, inexplicably there was a third presence in Obi-Wan's mind. And with a gasp, Qui-Gon recognized it. Xanatos. Malevolent glee came from his former student as he too could perceive Qui-Gon through the bond. There were no words exchanged as he tried to force Xanatos back out of Obi-Wan's mind.

As he tried to protect Obi-Wan from the physical and mental trauma of what he was suffering, he'd left their bond unprotected. Xanatos saw it and reached out for it, gripping it with a strength Qui-Gon would not have believed possible. And he pulled, hard, maliciously trying to break the connection. Because it was new, and unprotected, it gave, tearing from its roots.

The energy released, white hot and flowing like molten lava, killing Xanatos instantly. The pain of the torn bond was brilliant, burning with pure energy. Whether from tracing the pain or from his ex-student's mind, Qui-Gon immediately knew where Obi-Wan was, and tried to gasp out the location to Jordan and Jayell as he sank down into the most amazing pain he'd ever felt. And knew no more.

Waking in pain, he could not reach out to the Force, since it was Force-based pain he was feeling. He took a breath and then another. When he could finally open his eyes again, he was surprised to find himself in the Palace infirmary with no knowledge of how he got there.

"Be at peace, my friend." Jordan's low voice was filled with deep concern.

He had but one thought, one care. "Obi-Wan?"

Jordan's hand touched his arm. "Your bondmate has been found. He is on his way back here."

Qui-Gon tried to sit up, but the hand on his arm stopped him. "You should lie flat for a while. The healer could find nothing wrong with you."

"The bond between Obi-Wan and me has been torn. It causes great pain." Qui-Gon was surprised at how calm his voice sounded, not at all like a man dying of the pain of a torn bond.

Jordan nodded. "What can we do to fix it?"

"I don't know." He took a breath, trying to focus, but could not manage it. "I've never heard of it happening before."

Before he could say more, Obi-Wan was brought in and the pain in his body and mind increased exponentially. He couldn't even look at his beloved across the room. Obi-Wan started to scream.

"I must leave. I'm causing him more pain." Qui-Gon sat up, and then slowly lowered himself off the table he'd been lying on. Swaying badly, Qui-Gon forced himself to his feet. Jordan's hands helped him to steady himself. "I must be away from here."

With Jordan's help, he was able to get to his own rooms. Contacting the council, he informed them
of the events and was told to send Obi-Wan back to Coruscant for treatment once he was stable. Qui-Gon decided he would let his love heal without him for the moment.

If they were apart, Obi-Wan would be able to heal from his other wounds much faster and he would need that strength when they were forced to tackle the torn soul-bond.

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Part 4 - The Healing

With his hair unbound, hanging dirty around his shoulders, and dressed in old, loose clothes, Qui-Gon moved slowly through the vast temple gardens, concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other without falling on his face. He knew he was the antithesis of the clean and neat Jedi Master, but he could not find it in his heart to care. And he knew that no one who saw him would fault him for his appearance. At the moment, he wanted nothing more than to find a spot that was out of the way of the regular path of traffic so he could attempt to meditate and possibly find a moment's respite from the unrelenting pain.

He was in agony. Soul-destroying, sanity-taking, gut-wrenching pain. The likes of which he'd never experienced before and wasn't sure he'd survive this time to hope never to feel again.

In his life, he'd experienced many levels and kinds of pain, had thought in fact there could be no secrets or mysteries left in any aspect; after all, how much worse did it get than being beaten with Tallorian pain sticks, or three days of agonizing stomach cramps from Regliian food poisoning? At forty-six, there should be no surprises left when it came to pain, but oh, how wrong he had been. The pain of a torn soul-bond eclipsed anything else he'd ever felt to the point of making it insignificant.

Taking a deep breath, with a shaking hand, he pushed his loose hair back off his sweat soaked face. He dropped to his knees, trying to clear his mind, hoping that the light breeze and sweet smell might help him concentrate. No luck. He could not move past the pain, even to touch the Force.

His breath caught on a sigh that sounded too much like a sob. He could not give into the despair that threatened to destroy him. Obi-Wan needed him. And was also in the same pain as he was, coupled with his other injuries.

Just thinking about what had been done to his beloved made him sick with rage. And that it had been Xanatos who caused it, put Qui-Gon into a special kind of Sith-hell. Even with Xanatos dead, and his two co-conspirators caught and executed, Qui-Gon was hard pressed to let his anger go. It was only the amount of pain that he was in and the need to focus all his energy on dealing with it that finally allowed him to release his rage.

A warm, soothing presence washed over him, and he looked up to see Master Yoda settle onto the bench near where he knelt. Reaching out with a clawed hand, Yoda, stroked over his disheveled hair. At any other time Qui-Gon would have leaned into the touch, and sent a pulse of deep affection back to his Master. Now, he could not even respond.

"Sick, you are," Yoda said, distress evident in his gravelly voice.

It didn't take Force sense to see that, but Qui-Gon nodded. "The torn bond."

"Discussed the situation the council has. Heal the bonding you must."
"How?"

Yoda's look said he should know the answer. "Believe the council does, that recreated the bond must be. Repeat the first act of bonding, you must."

That meant he would have to penetrate Obi-Wan. No. He could not do that. Qui-Gon shook his head. "He has already been assaulted once, and you want me to do it to him again? I do not think I can do that." Not to mention the thought of trying to coax a physical response out of his pain-riddled body sickened him even more.

"Assault it will not be, as well you know. Qui-Gon, if you try you don't, die of the bond sickness you both will."

It wasn't that Qui-Gon didn't understand that. "My Master, I doubt I have enough control to force an arousal needed to heal the bond."

"Energy I can give you, use it you must." Another wave of concern, this one laced with sheer Force energy washed over Qui-Gon. Yoda had somehow filtered the energy so that it brought only strength rather than more pain.

The indignity of this conversation and the appalling idea of what Yoda was suggesting were too much for him, he felt tears flood his eyes. Again Yoda's hand touched his hair, petting him and this time he did lean into his Master's knee and weep. "Sshhhh. Qui-Gon. All right it will be."

Taking a shuddering breath, Qui-Gon shook his head. "I am to assault my beloved, and heal our bonding in fear and pain, when we've been working to build in love."

"Save you both, this will. No choice, you have."

"I understand." Qui-Gon wiped his face, pushing away the sweat now mixed with tears.

"Now. Obi-Wan is awake and nearly recovered physically."

"Until I touch him again."

"Ease the pain, your touch will." Another influx of energy from Yoda gave him the strength to rise.

Climbing slowly to his feet, Qui-Gon stumbled out of the garden, Yoda followed him all of the way to Obi-Wan's room, lending his strength and compassion. Still nearly blind from the pain, with each step closer to Obi-Wan the agony increased exponentially until he was gasping for breath, and clinging to the wall outside the room where his beloved lay.

Yoda fed him more energy, and he pushed through the door, dimly aware that his Master remained outside.

Coming into the brightly lit room, he moved to stand next to the bed. Obi-Wan looked awful, probably not far from the way he looked. Under a light sheet, his pale skin showed yellow and purple marks from the ordeal earlier in the week. A fine coating of sweat gleamed on Obi-Wan's body, and tremors racked his thin frame. He'd lost weight in the last week, too much.

"Damn, finally." Obi-Wan said, closing his eyes for a moment, exhaling sharply. "Master Yoda told me you needed to heal the bond. That will stop the pain."

"Obi-Wan, did he tell you how it has to be done?"
"No. But it does not take a genius to figure it out." He rolled slowly onto his stomach and spread his thighs as far as the narrow bed would allow. "Just do it."

"I don't want to hurt you."

He looked back over his shoulder, a ghost of the old grin on his face. "And I'm not in pain now?"

"You've just had a serious assault. I do not want to add to that."

"Look, I don't care about anything except the pain stopping. We can worry about the niceties of this later. Just get it over with. Please Qui-Gon. It hurts."

Fighting back a sob, Qui-Gon removed his sweat soaked tunic. He didn't want it to be this way. A joining this way would do nothing to heal the hurts that the attack had caused and he wasn't sure it wouldn't do more damage than it healed. Another sob caught in his throat as he moved his hand over Obi-Wan's pale back, feeling him shudder.

"No. Touching me hurts worse. Just join us. Now. I can't bear much more of this."

His loose cotton trousers came off, and he climbed onto the high bed, drawing off the sheet and pulling Obi-Wan back against him. He stroked himself several times trying to coax a response, but the pain was overwhelming him.

"Qui-Gon please."

"I'm trying. Dammit. I am in the same pain you are, and that is not the most conducive thing for arousal."

A dry bitter laugh came from Obi-Wan. "I'm sorry. I know. I wish it was different, too."

A pulse of love somehow got through the pain, and it was enough for Qui-Gon. He pushed forward, burying himself in Obi-Wan's heat. The moment their flesh joined, the roaring in his head and body started to subside. The relief from pain was so profound Qui-Gon nearly passed out from it.

But it wasn't enough. To heal the bond, they would both need to climax, the energy released would bring the torn ends together again. Qui-Gon sat back on his knees, pulling Obi-Wan against his chest, and slowly moved his hand down the flat stomach to caress over the quiescent genitals.

"Qui-Gon?" Obi-Wan's voice held confusion, obviously he didn't realize what else was needed.

"We must complete the act." He could feel Obi-Wan's discomfort at the abrupt invasion of his body. Finally able to touch the Force again, Qui-Gon used it to ease the constriction and lubricate the passage.

"I don't know if I can." But even as Obi-Wan said it, his body was responding to Qui-Gon's touch, coming alive slowly, much more slowly that he would have under any other circumstances.

Qui-Gon moved his hand up and down in a firm rhythm, no teasing, no finesse, orgasm the only goal. Obi-Wan's head leaned back onto his shoulder, eyes closed tight against what was happening, his mouth open and panting.

Shuddering once, Obi-Wan came warm and wet over his hand. Leaning his beloved forward a bit, he moved in and out rapidly, and then as a muted wave of pleasure washed over him, he breathed out sharply and came.
Collapsing on top of Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon held the shaking body beneath his tightly. The release of pain and the roiling emotions of the reforming bond were just too much for either of them to process. Obi-Wan was crying.

Turning them on their sides, he held his weeping lover against to his chest, stroking the damp hair. Qui-Gon was crying too, but trying hard to suppress his sobs as he held onto Obi-Wan, hoping to give his beloved what comfort he could. "Sshhhh. It will be all right now."

Obi-Wan nodded, still clinging to him, sobbing. "I can't stop crying."

"Nor I." Although Qui-Gon did try, taking several deep breath before tears overwhelmed him again. He gave in, allowing the painful emotions of the last week to be purged in the rush of his tears.

After a time, they quieted. With the bond healed, Qui-Gon rejoiced in the feel of his lover's mind against his. //I've missed you, my beloved.//

//Me, too.//

Obi-Wan lifted his face for a kiss, and Qui-Gon was only too happy to oblige him, taking his time and rediscovering all the moist recesses of Obi-Wan's sweet mouth. //Mmm, missed that, too.//

"Tell me about it." Obi-Wan grinned exhaustedly at him, twining a hand into Qui-Gon's hair. "Missed a quite a number of other things, too. This has been the longest week of my life. I can't believe how badly that hurt."

Qui-Gon held him closer, nuzzling his mouth into the sweaty neck. Almost of its own volition, his tongue slid out to lap at the moisture.

Obi-Wan groaned a little, lifting his chin to allow him further access. "Feels so good to be near you again."

With regret he stopped what he'd been doing, Obi-Wan needed rest. And there was time enough for everything later on. "I'm sorry about the way we had to heal the bond."

"It was not my preferred way of doing it either, but I do understand the necessity of it." A light hit Obi-Wan's eyes. "You could make it up to me when I get out of here."

At the very first chance he had. "And I will. I promise. You need to rest."

A hand caressed his cheek, fingers trailing gently into his beard. "Stay with me?"

"Will you get any rest that way?" Qui-Gon was doubtful, but loathed leaving Obi-Wan alone. He wanted nothing more than to lie with Obi-Wan and hold him closely, reveling in his returning health and strength.

"Right now, I need you beside me more than I need rest." There was too much truth in those words for both of them.

"No funny stuff," Qui-Gon warned, with mock severity.

"Who, me?" Blinking up at him with those wide blue-green eyes, Obi-Wan was the picture of innocence.

"I am serious, Obi-Wan."
Cuddling closer, Obi-Wan sighed. All joking gone from his voice. "I need to be close to you right now."

Qui-Gon understood and sent a wave of tenderness toward his beloved. "Of course." Pressing a kiss to the still damp forehead, Qui-Gon closed his eyes, luxuriating in the feel of Obi-Wan in his arms. "Go to sleep."

Dutifully, Obi-Wan closed his eyes. After a moment, Qui-Gon heard Obi-Wan's breathing even out, and he allowed himself to slide into sleep.

Three days later, Qui-Gon came wearily into their shared quarters. Obi-Wan should be back from the infirmary tonight and he was looking forward to having his bondmate home. As he came into his bedroom, he was startled to find fat blue candles scattered around the room, lighting it with a warm glow, some kind of incense burning, giving the air a spicy scent, and sprawled in the middle of his bed, wearing a thin sleeping robe, was his bondmate, his beloved Obi-Wan.

Smiling at the care and trouble his Padawan had gone to, even if Obi-Wan didn't have the energy to pull the rest of it off, Qui-Gon sat down on the bed, stroking a hand over the soft material covering his beloved. He hadn't seen this article of clothing before -- he would have remembered it. "Obi-Wan?" he said quietly. If Obi-Wan were completely asleep, he did not want to wake him.

Heavy lids lifted on blue-green eyes that smiled at him with such love and devotion, it brought tears to Qui-Gon's eyes.

"Hmm? Oh, Master. I didn't mean to fall asleep."

"You're still not completely recovered from your ordeal. It's natural..."

Obi-Wan cut him off with a firm kiss. Considering a struggle, Qui-Gon changed his mind after Obi-Wan's talented tongue pushed into his mouth, exploring the depths with an attention to detail he'd always admired in his Padawan.

"I'm quite fine. And you promised me."

He didn't need to ask what he'd promised. It was plain what Obi-Wan wanted. And his bond mate was not the only one who did. But he had to keep Obi-Wan's best interests the top priority. "It does not have to be tonight, beloved. We have our whole lives."

Obi-Wan shook his head. "Tonight."

It always amazed him that a man as obedient as Obi-Wan was most of the time, could turn around and be so defiant when he chose. Qui-Gon sighed, just another of the many things he loved about Obi-Wan. And he knew when to give up gracefully. "Let me take a shower and I will join you here in a couple of minutes."

The shower eased his tension and relaxed the tenseness out of his muscles. It also gave him some time to consider what his bondmate thought he wanted for tonight. Qui-Gon was not sure that making love would be the best thing. Obi-Wan was only barely recovered from the trauma on Amaranth, and there had to be some residual backlash from the violation, no matter how much Obi-Wan meditated on it.

Stepping out of the steamy room, Qui-Gon's breath caught. Obi-Wan lay sprawled on the bed in all his naked splendor. The sight never failed to move him. Glorious! Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes and reached out for Obi-Wan's mind instead. //Beloved?//
//I want you Qui-Gon.//

//And I, you.// He could feel a slight trepidation in Obi-Wan's mind that he could not hide. "I think we need to talk about what happened."

//It's over. I've dealt with it.//

Qui-Gon shook his head. "I do not think you have. I can feel your unease."

With a huge sigh, Obi-Wan sat up, wrapping his arms around his drawn up knees. "I *am* fine." Closing his eyes for a moment, Obi-Wan sighed again. Then opened them, pinning Qui-Gon with his blue green stare. "It hurt me. You could feel that yourself. But you sheltered me and so I was able to distance myself from it."

"But not enough."

"No. It still bothers me. It would have been much worse if you had not been there. I was far enough away from it that I could perceive that it was an act to instill fear and pain, having nothing to do with sex, but..."

"It still hurt. And was deeply personal."

Obi-Wan nodded. "Yes."

"There are people, healers or not, who you could talk to about it." Qui-Gon wasn't sure how much he should push Obi-Wan to see someone. It might not be necessary.

"I've meditated on it and..." He dropped his eyes again. "I think that having you make love to me will help put the last of the ghosts to rest."

"Or it might make them rise up worse than they were."

"No. I don't think so. I won't allow what happened to take you away from me, to make me cringe from your touch. An act of love has to win over an act of hate." A half-smile touched Obi-Wan's mouth.

Qui-Gon liked the way Obi-Wan put that, but... "I'm still not sure this is wise."

Obi-Wan reached out and trailed his fingers along the top edge of Qui-Gon's beard and down his cheek. "It's what I want, what I need."

Taking Obi-Wan's hand from his face, he pressed a kiss to the palm, but shook his head. "I would never do anything to hurt you, beloved, and I fear that this might."

"Everyone reacts differently to this, and I think I know what I need. I've meditated on what happened and I know that there was nothing I could have done to prevent it." His eyes bore into Qui-Gon's and a light touch drifted over his mind. "And there was nothing you could do either."

A wave of guilt washed over Qui-Gon and he acknowledged that *he* felt culpable, felt somehow responsible for Xanatos' actions. It wasn't a rational feeling, not in the slightest. Just as Obi-Wan could not have helped what happened, neither could he. But some part of him believed that he *should* have done something, found some way to protect Obi-Wan. "Do you know me so well?"

"How could I not?" A pulse of love, deep and strong came with the words. A smile quirked on Obi-Wan's lips. "I usually don't get an argument from you when I'm lying next to you, naked. I
knew there had to be something more wrong here."

Running a hand along Obi-Wan's bare thigh, Qui-Gon sighed. "I do want you, beloved and I am worried."

"And I am all right. Not perfect yet, but better." Obi-Wan slid his hand onto Qui-Gon's cheek and pulled him down for a kiss.

Pulling back, he met the blue-green eyes, seeing that Obi-Wan had accepted what had happened, but he knew that *he* had not and that was where his reluctance came from.

Qui-Gon closed his eyes, taking a deep breath, he reached out to center himself and try to release the guilt. He would need to meditate on this more and perhaps he was the one who needed to speak to someone, but right now, he had a promise to keep.

He kissed Obi-Wan slowly, his tongue explored the familiar moist depths of Obi-Wan's mouth. "Go easy tonight, all right?" He just wanted to hold his beloved against him.

Obi-Wan's eyes were clouded with desire when he pulled back from the kiss, but he smiled in agreement. "Yes. All right."

//Beloved.// Qui-Gon whispered through their bond.

He could feel Obi-Wan's deep pleasure radiating back towards him. //Have I ever told you how much I adore having you call me that?//

Kissing him again, Qui-Gon held him close. //It's only what you are.//

"As you are, Qui-Gon." A perfect wave of love came from Obi-Wan.

End.
July 1999

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