Wandering Through Mirrors

by andiemaru

Summary

A dangerous and well-kept secret of the Jedi Order is revealed. Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon must act quickly before the repercussions destroy a world unaware of the force. (a.k.a. What if Jedis Roamed the Earth?)

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Notes

Written in 2000.
Part 1

Obi-Wan tripped as he hurried down the darkened corridor. He was trying to keep up with his Master and several other Jedis. As he tripped he muttered a silent oath. He thought no one noticed but the look on his master's face told him his master knew of his anger and was not pleased. That frustrated Obi-Wan even more. His clumsy footing was the latest in a long series of mistakes and fumbles.

He had only been an apprentice for four months when his Master, Qui-Gon Jinn, had been summoned back to Coruscant. Although he had enjoyed their adventures together it was nice to be back on familiar territory. Obi-Wan couldn't wait too tell his friends Brant, Garen Muln, and Reeft, the story of how he had become Qui-Gon's apprentice.

Unfortunately this expectation had set Obi-Wan up for the first disappointment of his visit. All three of his friends were on a field trip to Terrace Spree, a training center on the opposite side of Coruscant, and could not be contacted for several days. Qui-Gon had left Obi-Wan on his own that morning. Without anyone else to talk to Obi-Wan had decided to practice the use of his lightsaber.

Normally he felt comfortable when practicing in the temple. This day, however, he had felt an unexplained tension that permeated through out the temple walls. On top of this he felt very little sense of his master. He and Qui-Gon had only the beginnings of a Master-Padawan link. Obi-Wan could not feel its presence, a presence he had grown to rely on for reassurance. It's unexplained absence had created the distraction of doubt in Obi-Wan's mind. As he practice with a training droid he
managed to split the shoulder seam of his tunic. That completely broke his concentration and caused him to take a nasty laser hit on the cheek.

He was even more frustrated with himself when he left the training area and managed to run into Master Krill. Obi-Wan received a strong tongue lashing from the Master Krill about paying attention to where he was going. While he was being berated Obi-Wan could sense the tension in the Jedi before him. Through the force it felt as though every advanced Jedi Master, Knight, and Padawan was upset and were trying not to show it. Obi-Wan decided he must talk with Qui-Gon right away. Searching him out with the force had been useless while their link was closed. Obi-Wan acted on a hunch and had headed to the Jedi Council chambers.

Obi-Wan believed his day couldn't get much worse when he ran in to Bruck Chun and Aalto in the temple halls.

"Well if it isn't old Oafy Wan." Bruck enjoyed using the nickname Obi-Wan hated the most. "So tell me, how does your garden grow Oafy? Or have the Agri-Crops kicked you out already?"

"I'm not in the Agri-Crops, Bruck." Obi-Wan spoke with his head held high. "I have been accepted as a Padawan,' he paused for effect, "to Master Qui-Gon Jinn."

To Obi-Wan the silence that followed was the sweetest noise he had ever heard. Although a Jedi should not be vindictive, he knew how badly Bruck had always wanted him to fail. He also knew Bruck had hopes of becoming Qui-Gon's Padawan as well. The knowledge that he had bested Bruck in this made him very happy in a spiteful way.

The next sound Obi-Wan heard was laughter from Bruck and Aalto.

"Oh Oafy," Bruck said as he doubled over with laughter. "The air on Bandomere must be thin. You haven't gotten enough oxygen and now you're hallucinating."

"It's true," was all Obi-Wan could say.

Bruck was now laughing so hard that tears were forming in his eyes.

"No it's not," he said. "All Padawan claims must be made official by being entered in the Jedi Council's records. No one has made such a claim for you, Oafy."

Obi-Wan could feel himself shrinking inside his clothes.

"Qui-Gon will enter me now."

"Why do you think we're laughing?" It was Aalto's turn to
speak. "All entries must be made before the Padawan turns thirteen. If it isn't made official before that time the Jedi Council will not accept the claim. Your thirteenth birthday was several weeks ago."

Obi-Wan had nothing left to say. He only knew he wanted to speak with Qui-Gon right away and started for the Council's chambers once again.

"Looks like you are out of luck again, Oafy." Bruck called after him. "But please, give Master Jinn my regards. He's obviously still looking for a worthy apprentice."

Obi-Wan waited outside the Council Chambers until Qui-Gon emerged. When He did, the Master Jedi was in a heated debate with Master Mace Windu.

"The Council is setting themselves up Mace," Qui-Gon insisted. "Surely you see this."

"The Council is firm in their decision," the dark skinned Jedi replied. His tone was as agitated as Qui-Gon's. "To shut it down goes against Jedi law."

"A law that was created years ago," Qui-Gon countered. "Even the Tarakians stop following laws when they become obsolete. And they live to create and follow laws. Besides, if what I have been told around the temple is true..."

"Believe in rumors, the danger is great." Obi-Wan watched as Master Yoda followed the other Jedis from the Chamber. Several other Council Members left the chamber and looked nervously at Qui-Gon and Mace Windu. They hurriedly stepped around the two Jedi and left the area.

"Normally I would agree with you Master," Qui-Gon continued. "But the Portal complicates things. It should never have been left as a temptation to the students."

"No one expected it to be found," Mace Windu countered.

"If a Jedi is tempted by the dark side and knows of the portal..." Obi-Wan could sense the normally checked emotions radiating out from his master's body.

"Power they may seek," Yoda finished for Qui-Gon. "To find power through the Portal, easy it shall not be. We must remain calm Padawan."

Mace Windu agreed. "It would be foolish for someone to follow the path of Padawan Gregor."

"But not unthinkable, especially to an immature student." Qui-Gon said. "It was foolish to keep the location of the portal so poorly hidden. I'm surprised it took so long for a
curious youngster to find it."

"Guarded it shall be." Yoda said. "Destroy it we shall not." He closed his heavy lids and spoke again quietly. "A purpose I foresee."

Qui-Gon sighed. Obi-Wan suddenly felt overwhelmed by frustration and was unsure if it was his or his Master's that he felt more. He was slightly relieved to feel Qui-Gon restore their bond in an effort to find him. Apparently Qui-Gon had been so immersed in the conversation that he had not noticed his Padawan standing nearby. Qui-Gon turned to look at Obi-Wan.

"Your tunic is ripped," was all he said. It was not the greeting Obi-Wan had expected.

"It happened during lightsaber practice," Obi-Wan replied.

"From the look of that burn I'd say he could use the practice," Mace Windu made a reference to Obi-Wan's cheek.

Obi-Wan had wanted to speak to Qui-Gon about being his Padawan but he suddenly felt nervous in front of the Council Members. Although he knew several healing techniques, Obi-Wan could not yet control the force properly to heal his burn quickly. It now seemed to sting more as it was noticed by the other Jedis.

"You should be more considerate of your appearance when addressing members of the Jedi Council," Mace Windu added.

Before Obi-Wan could respond a large blast was heard. The force of the explosion knocked Obi-Wan to the ground. It had come from somewhere deep inside the Temple. Qui-Gon's anger was growing again. Obi-Wan felt as Qui-Gon helped him to his feet in a very rough manner.

"It will be guarded?" Qui-Gon asked Yoda and Mace.

It was soon after that when Obi-Wan found himself tripping behind his Master and the other Jedi as they made their way to the lower levels of the temple. He didn't understand what had happened. What could have caused Qui-Gon, the perfect example of one who has mastered the art of being calm, to become so emotional. Or was this just a side of his master that he had never seen before?

Obi-Wan finally caught up with the Master Jedis in a part of the temple that was off limits to students and Padawans. They were standing outside the remains of a solid metal door that had been blown out with some type of explosive. The blast had injured two Jedi Knights who apparently had been standing outside the door when it blew. Obi-Wan was confused at how someone had gotten past two Jedi Knights to cause the explosion.
A crowd of Jedi Masters, Padawans, and students started gathering at the door. After someone arrived to care for the injured, Obi-Wan watched as Qui-Gon stepped through the remainder of the door and disappeared into the smoke of the room beyond. He was quickly followed by Mace Windu, Yoda, and the rest of the crowd.

As Obi-Wan waited for his turn to enter the room he took a moment to try and calm himself. He closed his eyes and took a deep cleansing breath just as Qui-Gon had taught him. A disturbance in the force slammed against him, nearly knocking him off his feet. The disturbance was not necessarily positive or negative. It was obvious to Obi-Wan, however, that the force was being manipulated in a way that he had never felt before. If anyone else had sensed the same disturbance they did not respond to it openly. The source of it appeared to be coming from the other side of the blown out door. When he finally got the chance to enter the room he felt the disturbance even stronger.

It was difficult to not stare in awe at the room he had just entered. It was large with an arched ceiling towering overhead. The wooden paneled walls were covered with ornate carvings; a tribute to a Jedi tradition that had fallen out of favor many years ago.

Obi-Wan noticed his Master and the Council members standing near the center of the room. They stood looking at a metal plate lying flat in the center of the floor. A colorful tile pattern surrounded the plate and the Jedi Masters stayed back from the area. Qui-Gon moved around the opposite side of the plate. As he did Obi-Wan notice his image blur ever so slightly when the plate was directly between his master and himself. Obi-Wan sensed that the plate was the cause of the disturbance he felt in the Force. He closed his eyes and concentrated on the plate. A slight feeling of nausea crept over him. It was as if the Force was creating a vortex around the plate on the floor.

Obi-Wan could not quite grasp the force well enough to focus clearly on the vortex. As he tried he could only feel the constant spinning of the vortex and he began to feel dizzy. He opened his eyes and turned his attention away from the now invisible vortex to try and calm his stomach. As he did he noticed his master staring at him in a peculiar way.

Qui-Gon's day had started out poorly and proceeded to grow steadily worse. He had been called back to Coruscant by the Jedi Council. Qui-Gon had not been to Coruscant since he had accepted Obi-Wan as his Padawan, and had hoped they would not have to return for some time. He wanted time alone with his new apprentice so they could establish a strong Master-Padawan link. He also wanted Obi-Wan to realize how important it is to
control the force through the practical experience of missions. It would give the boy incentive when sheltered in the Jedi Temple.

They had gotten to Coruscant late the night before. Try as he might, Qui-Gon had not gotten a good night's sleep. He felt as though he was catching a cold. Attempts to heal himself were only able to reduce the illness down to a sinus headache and a slightly runny nose.

He felt the tension in the Temple the next morning while sitting down for breakfast and a much needed cup of tea. There he was told the Portal of Rasme had been discovered by a couple of young students playing in an off-limits section of the temple. Qui-Gon was also told that the Council was already in session to discuss how to handle the situation.

Immediately Qui-Gon had snapped his shields in place without consideration for Obi-Wan's reaction. The Portal of Rasme always triggered his anger. It was dangerous and Qui-Gon felt sure it would only bring trouble to the Jedi Order. Worse yet, in the wrong hands it could be used to introduce new worlds to the Force. Many races were unprepared for such an encounter. The lessons of the past taught that such encounters could easily lead to exploitation, fighting, and destruction. Qui-Gon left his breakfast to address the Council.

Walking in unannounced to a Council session was not a smart thing to do. Walking into an already heated Council debate was far worse. Qui-Gon did both.

"This is no business of yours, Master Jinn." Mace Windu responded to the intrusion first. "I suggest you follow the correct protocol next time you seek an audience with the Council."

"The Portal of Rasme is the business of every Jedi," Qui-Gon reported coolly. "Its discovery has placed it in high priority at breakfast table conversations this morning. While you are here debating how to handle it young students are becoming curious over what everyone is talking about."

"Are you suggesting that curiosity is a bad thing, Master Jinn?" Master Ki-Al-Mundi asked.

"With all due respect," Qui-Gon replied, his shoulders taut. "This is not the time for an intelligent debate over the curiosity of children. The portal must be destroyed."

"How can you so eagerly want destroy such a specific manifestation of the Force?" Windu asked. His anger at Qui-Gon was obvious. "The Portal was Master Rasme's gift to the Jedi. It should be treated with our respect."

"Yes it should. But that is not possible." Qui-Gon's
intimidating gaze traveled to all the council members. "I believe this council refuses to destroy the Portal out of fear. You are all intimidated by what you don't understand. You are not leaving the portal alone out of respect."

Many of the Council members looked at each other.

"So you've come here to make accusations about the Council's motives?" Mace Windu stood to address Qui-Gon with his full height. "Are you sure it's not your own paranoia about the portal that upsets you so much? Maybe it is you who doesn't understand."

Qui-Gon sensed the discomfort of the Council members. Although he and Mace were old friends, they had been known to come to blows in the past.

"I understand that the portal is something which can easily be misused. What of those who seek the darkside?" Qui-Gon threw back. "I was called back to Coruscant because of this."

"Possibility it is," Master Yaddle spoke up. "Certainty it is not. Investigated it must be."

"This is why you were called back to Coruscant, Master Jinn," Ki-Adi- Mundi added. "The Council has reason to believe the darkside has planted a seed here in the Temple. We want you to investigate the possibility."

"Who?"

"If you had waited to be called before the Council, we might have had that information for you." Windu appeared to toss away long years of friendship with his tone. "We would have been able to discuss the situation in a more constructive manner. Now your presence before the Council will no doubt add to the tension already felt here."

The debate had continued in the same manner for quite some time. If Master Jinn had not been so engulfed in his emotions he might have noticed the unusual absence of an important council member's voice. It was not until Master Yoda called for a recess that Qui-Gon realized Yoda had been uncharacteristically silent throughout the debate.

"Enough," the diminutive Jedi said. "Step away, we must. Guarded the portal will be."

Many of the council seemed relieved when the recess was called. Qui-Gon used the opportunity to try and reason with Master Windu as they left the council chambers. In the midst of his frustration he had all but forgotten Obi-Wan. He had trusted his Padawan to stay out of trouble on Coruscant so he reasoned that he could pay less attention to his Padawan's needs. Qui-Gon hadn't meant to shut himself from their newly forming
bond either. The Portal of Rasme was one of the few things that
touched a deep emotional spark in Qui-Gon and the seriousness
of it being used scared Qui-Gon deeply. Obi-Wan did not need to
be affected by his master's fears. Or so Qui-Gon justified to
himself.

He sensed the error of his reasoning when he saw the burn on
Obi-Wan's cheek. Qui-Gon should have used the opportunity to
teach Obi-Wan more about healing techniques. He should have
been there when he had gotten the burn in the first place. He
should have known what had happened so he could counsel Obi-Wan
on how to prevent the same thing from happening again.

Qui-Gon knew a good master is mindful of his apprentice.
Instead he had been ignoring Obi-Wan, caught up in a crisis
that should never have been allowed to happen. It was too early
in their relationship to force such a separation. Qui-Gon could
not let his emotions come between he and Obi-Wan, like they had
with Xantos. Today, Qui-Gon realized, he had allowed that to
happen, even as he saw his apprentice trip and become angry in
a way Qui-Gon didn't understand.

Then he was standing before the Portal of Rasme, looking into
one of the strongest manifestations of the force. A force so
refined, so specialized, that only an advanced Jedi could fully
recognize it.

Obi-Wan could see the portal. Qui-Gon realized Obi-Wan's
awareness and couldn't help looking at him in amazement. In the
few months they had been together his new Padawan had continued
to surprise Qui-Gon. Now was no exception, but unfortunately
not the time for Qui-Gon to act on it.

Mace Windu stood just at the edge of the plate on the floor and
pressed the palms of his hands to the edge of the unseen
vortex. Master Yoda looked at the floor on which he was drawing
imaginary lines with his stick.

"There were two who entered," Mace finally said.

"Can you determine who they were?" Qui-Gon asked.

After a few moments of concentration Master Windu stepped back
from the portal.

"The Force in the Portal is so strong it has overwhelmed the
Force signatures of the two." Master Windu spoke again. "I
cannot determine who they are or where they went."

"Go after them, someone must," Master Yoda spoke without
looking up.

Qui-Gon took a deep breath and felt the ease of resignation
pass through him. His fears, now realized, were no longer a
concern. Now he knew what must be done.
"I'll do it."

Mace Windu looked at his old friend steadily.

"Qui-Gon, I'll admit you were right all along. But are you sure you know what you're saying?" He asked. "We won't be able to help you through the Portal."

"That's exactly why I must go. I am the only one who has prepared for this possibility." Qui-Gon sighed as he spoke. "I guess my paranoia wasn't so bad after all."

Mace Windu stared at him with a sad smile and then watched as Qui-Gon look to Obi-Wan Kenobi. Obi-Wan instinctively moved to Qui-Gon's side.

"Are you sure about taking Obi-Wan?" Mace Windu asked.

Instead of responding Qui-Gon spoke quietly to his Padawan.

"Obi-Wan, I'm about to ask you to do something I do not have time to prepare you for. You sense the Portal?"

Obi-Wan nodded in reply.

"The Portal of Rasme is a way of transporting to another place. Unfortunately it cannot be controlled. If we travel through the Portal there is a good chance that we may never be able to return to Coruscant, or anywhere near here, ever again. You don't have to come with me. If you don't I will completely understand and your training will be continued with another Master."

Obi-Wan could see the seriousness of the situation reflected in his Master's eyes. He matched that seriousness in his reply.

"I understand Master, and I want to go with you."

"Thank you Padawan." Qui-Gon smiled with his words and Obi-Wan sensed relief in his Master.

Qui-Gon turned back to Mace Windu, placed his hand on Obi-Wan's shoulder, and spoke. "My Padawan and I will help each other."

There was a rustling noise next to Qui-Gon. He noticed two boys looking at him angrily. Before he could explore this Mace was speaking again.

"He's very young Qui-Gon," Mace Windu cautioned. "Too many mistakes have already been made today."

"Proceed together they shall." Master Yoda finally looked up from the floor. "As with Master and Padawan it always should be. Be mindful of the Force. Where you need to be, it shall take you. Trust in the Force. Trust in each other."
Master Yoda turned his attention back to the floor. Qui-Gon noticed a slight droop in his former Master's shoulders. His Master's eyes were wide; too unfocused to really be looking at anything.

Qui-Gon turned back to his Padawan.

"Obi-Wan, we're going to step into the Portal. It should allow us to follow the path taken by the two Jedi who entered it earlier."

Qui-Gon looked at Mace Windu who nodded solemnly in reply. Turning his apprentice towards the plate on the floor, Qui-Gon took a deep breath. He was ready to move onto the plate when he sensed a quiet plea from his former Master. It whispered along their former Master-Padawan link so softly that Qui-Gon almost missed it.

/Come back Padawan./

He took one last look at his former Master and stepped onto the plate, Obi-Wan standing in front of him.

Qui-Gon put his hands on Obi-Wan's shoulders. He immediately felt the Force swirling around them. He closed his eyes and tried to center himself on his own living Force. A wind seemed to blow against him from every angle and he tightened his grip on his Padawan. A loud ringing penetrated his hears and he felt as though he was falling. His heart beat at an accelerated pace as if in competition with the ringing in his ears. He called on the Force out of reflex in an attempt to center himself.

That was a mistake. The force soared around him so ferociously that he could no longer protect against it. He felt he was being ripped apart and then he felt the material of Obi-Wan's cloak slipping beneath his fingers. He opened his eyes and grasp at the material only to feel his Padawan being torn away from him. Nearly blind Qui-Gon reached out in front of himself with a yell for Obi-Wan.

Part 2

The swirling stopped abruptly as Qui-Gon's hands landed against something solid. The force of the impact was felt through out his body as it sank in the same direction as his hands, realigning itself to a newfound gravitational Force. As his vision cleared, Qui-Gon realized he was pushing himself off black pavement with shaky limbs. He pushed himself to his knees and nearly collapsed against a wall to his side. His chest hurt with every breath he took. He tried to relax and sat back against the wall. Slowly he became aware of his surroundings.

He was apparently in an alley. The inhabitants of this world
obviously didn't believe in recycling, as there were several bags of what smelled like refuse in large metal containers around him.

Soon Qui-Gon began to sense the living force around him. It was strong and also fast paced. The rhythm of it reminded Qui-Gon of Coruscant but the air was far more polluted with the remnants of fossil fuels. He heard voices and footsteps and other noises he couldn't identify. Looking around one metal refuse container he say people walking past the opening of the alley. A couple of teenaged boys walked past and Qui-Gon immediately thought of his Padawan.

His head still reeled but he concentrated on the Force, calling on it to search for Obi-Wan. Qui-Gon dismissed the thought that Obi-Wan had not come through the Portal and landed in the same place. "Take you where to need to be, the Force will," Master Yoda had said. Surely Obi-Wan had he were needed together.

To his relief, Qui-Gon could sense Obi-Wan's life Force nearby. Qui-Gon could also sense that Obi-Wan was just as disoriented as Qui-Gon felt. Contacting him through their link proved futile. Qui-Gon would have to find Obi-Wan first. He leaned against the building to steady himself as he pulled himself to his feet.

A wave of nausea threatened to overcome the Jedi Master but he called on the Force to control it. It was all he could do to use the Force to locate Obi-Wan and calm his body. He moved slowly to the street at the end of the alley. Across the street he saw a park and above the trees, not too far away, stood a large white obelisk. People were looking at it as they walked by.

Sensing that Obi-Wan was farther away at the opposite end of the park, Qui-Gon made his way out of the alley and followed the flow of pedestrians in front of him. Because of the current strain on his system he felt no warning when a vehicle on the opposite side of the street burst into flames. A vehicle that was directly between the burning one and Qui-Gon, swerved suddenly in reaction to the flames. The last thing Qui-Gon heard were screams as he felt himself being struck by the vehicle, thrown into the air, and colliding with a brick wall.

Obi-Wan found himself on his hands and knees. He looked around and appeared to be between a small wooden booth and a large vehicle, capable of carrying several people. Obi-Wan was shaking but he managed to pull himself to his feet. Using the booth as a support he walked to where he could look around the vehicle. There was a large staircase leading up to a white building on the other side of the vehicle. Inside the building Obi-Wan could make out the statue of a large sitting figure. Several people were walking up and down the stair and admiring
the statue. Another vehicle pulled up and several people started to get off of it. Obi-Wan decided to move to a less crowded area.

He took several deep breaths to try and calm his stomach. Obi-Wan looked around for Qui-Gon but saw no sign of him. Using the force he could sense his Master was nearby. Following the direction of the Force Obi-Wan walked into a large park. At the far end he could see a large white Obelisk rising above the tree and reflected in a long narrow pond in the center of the park.

People walked around the park and took no notice of Obi-Wan. They appeared to be too busy taking in the statues around them. Obi-Wan came upon a group of statues surrounded but a shiney black wall. Thirteen life-sized statues, men in uniform and with some sort of blasters, appeared to walk without motion on a bed of green ground cover. In the wall around them were carved the faces of several others that watched the stationary men. None of the living people who walked among the statues spoke very loud. Obi-Wan noticed an older man lean down and talk to a small child and he pointed to one of the statues. The solemn nature of the surroundings was not lost on Obi-Wan.

Unfortunately, the peace was quickly broken when he heard a squealing noise and some screaming coming from the opposite end of the park. A large cloud of black smoke rose up from the trees. Obi-Wan centered himself and tried to sense his Master once again. His task was cut short when several people rushed past him and knocked him to the ground. He tried again but could not feel his Master through the Force.

The confusion around him did not make the situation any better. His stomach seemed to react violently with every movement he made. He started to walk towards the smoke. His movement was further slowed by the many pedestrians that seemed to have the same idea he had.

The Washington D.C. police arrived quickly on the scene of the accident. The firemen and two ambulances were soon to follow. The pedestrian who was struck was quickly loaded into the ambulance as were three women who had driven into a light pole to avoid the car which had caught on fire. Several officials were called to the scene and the police kept busy by controlling the large crowd of onlookers whom quickly gathered.

No one noticed the two figures in long hooded cloaks that moved away from the excitement.

Obi-Wan helplessly observed the chaos around him. It had taken him several minutes to make his way to the source of the smoke. When he arrived he saw his Master lying on a stretcher as it was being loaded into a vehicle. Obi-Wan could not get close
He took one step forward and completely lost his balance. His stomach flared violently as he fell to the ground. Obi-Wan felt himself shake as he braced himself on all fours.

Something gave way in Obi-Wan's composure. He felt as though he couldn't take any more frustration and started fighting against it in his own mind. In an odd sensation his frustration seemed to build into something more. A spark of the Force surged inside him. It felt as though his anger and frustration were one wave flowing towards a second wave that was the Force. He felt energy building inside him as they the waves came together. Before that happened, Obi-Wan felt a nudge against his foot.

"Hey you," he heard a voice say.

Obi-Wan felt his anger dissipate with the shock of someone talking to him. He opened his eyes to see a woman standing in front of him.

"Yeah you!" She said. "Quit broadcasting and get a hold of yourself now." She held out her hand. "Get up."

The woman appeared to be human and was younger than Qui-Gon. She had dark brown hair and eyes that held no amusement in them what so ever. She wore a long tan coat that hung open. Underneath that she had on some sort of black pants suit. She also had on a pair of shoes that had so much material missing, Obi-Wan couldn't imagine them being functional.

"I don't have all day," the woman said as she shook her hand in Obi-Wan's face.

Obi-Wan accepted her help and stood up. A wave of nausea hit him as soon as he got back to his feet.

"Great!" The woman said and grabbed him roughly by the arm. "Come on." She led him quickly to the park and over to a waste receptacle.

Obi-Wan didn't try to control his nausea and emptied the contents of his stomach into the receptacle. As soon as he did he started to think more clearly. He realized how he had almost let his anger take over. The woman must have noticed his shudder because he felt her move a hand to his shoulder. A wave of calm washed over him. He closed his eyes and took a deep
cleansing breath, concentrating on the living force around him. He detected a strong source of the light nearby and he drew on it to help control his body and his mind. The light engulfed his spirit and he felt his anger leave him completely. Only guilt remained.

He felt calm when he looked at the woman again. He quickly realized she was the source of the force he had been drawing on. She looked at him with a curious expression and handed him a small white cloth folded into a square.

"Thank you," he said as he accepted the handkerchief and wiped his face off.

"What's your name Padawan?" The woman asked. Her face was still impassive but the tone of her voice had softened.

"Obi-Wan Kenobi."

"And where is your Master, Obi-Wan Kenobi?" She asked.

Obi-Wan thought for a moment.

"Be mindful of the Force," he heard Master Yoda's words echoing through his memory. "Where you need to be, it shall take you."

"I don't know." Obi-Wan said at last. He then spoke on impulse. "Are you a Jedi?"

There was a brief moment of surprise in the woman's expression. However, instead of reacting she just stared at him and continued to breathe eveny.

"Please," Obi-Wan found the courage to speak again. "You have to help me find my Master, Qui-Gon Jinn. I believe he was injured. I say him lying on a stretcher and being loaded into a large vehicle. I don't think he was conscious."

"Where?" She asked and Obi-Wan pointed towards the vehicle that was no longer burning.

"The vehicle he was being loaded into, did it have flashing lights on it?"

Obi-Wan nodded. "And a siren."

The woman reached into an inner coat pocket and pulled out a rectangular device. After pressing several buttons she held it up to her ear and mouth.

"Chi, its Maury. Call me back as soon as possible. It's urgent."

She looked at the device and pressed more buttons. After a pause she was communicating through it once again. She looked over to the smoldering vehicle as she spoke.
"Hey Harry, it me." She said and then paused. "No, just and engine fire that got out of control. I don't think it is anything we need to worry about. At least not until DCPD forensics has a look. Listen, something has come up. Mind if I skip out for the rest of the day?" She paused again. "Will you shut down my computer for me?" She paused again and Obi-Wan saw a slight smile at the corners of her lips.

"Thanks Harry," she said. "I owe you one."

She closed the communicator up and turned back to Obi-Wan, taking a deep Breath as she addressed him again.

"Your Master was taken to the nearest hospital, Washington General. My brother, Malachi, is a doctor there. He'll find your Master and take good care of him." She paused and Obi-Wan noticed the first real change in here demeanor.

"How are you feeling?" She asked with apparent concern.

"Better" Obi-Wan replied.

She jerked her head to the nearest road.

"My car is just over there." She said. "Come on. We'll get you something to settle your stomach and then we'll talk about your Master."

Malachi Lee unconsciously swiped at his pager when it vibrated on his hip.

"Maury," he mumbled to himself as he finished up some emergency room paperwork. "You'll just have to wait."

The Emergency Room at Washington General was an unexpected mad house. Usually on bright and sunny days people weren't as eager to come in with injuries. Most realized their injuries weren't that bad, and preferred to quickly throw on a Band-Aid or take an aspirin and continue playing outside. Today was an exception.

"Dr. Lee, exam three." A heavyset nurse came up to Malachi. "Little boy with a gash on his forehead. Possible eye injury."

"How's he doing?" Malachi asked.

"Kids fine, but his mother is a mess. Yelling at everything that moves. Sounds like she's right up your alley." Joanne smiled a wide grin. "But don't worry Malachi, I'll protect you."

Malachi snorted and grinned in return. He then looked at the full ER waiting room.
"What happened Joanne?" He asked as he picked up the boy's chart.

"I heard a car bomb went off downtown. Someone probably tried to off the President."

"Republicans must be getting restless with the election coming up," another nurse added as she hurried past them into an exam room. "They think they'll have a better chance running against the Vice President."

"A car bomb isn't republican style. They're all packin." Joanne called after her. "Democrats are more likely to blow someone up and make a big show out of it."

"Let's just keep all weapons out of the hands of all politicians, shall we?" Malachi spoke as he walked towards room three. "Maybe we'll make the world a safer place."

"Amen to that!" Joanne agreed as she followed him.

The boys cut was not serious and his eye was not injured. Malachi was quickly able to dispel the mother's fears, which is why he was given the case to begin with. The entire ER staff wondered how Dr. Lee could make even the most distraught patients relax. But rather than question it, Joanne used it to an advantage. She never questioned Malachi and made sure that the patients that needed the most comfort, children especially, got a chance at what she referred to as 'Dr. Lee's Special bedside manner.' Of course she was the first one to give him trouble about it whenever she could.

Malachi was just finishing up the last of the boy's stitches when he felt it, a life Force. Everyone had them but this was different. Malachi briefly thought of his sister but dismissed the thought. He could still feel her presence, even across town. This was someone new, someone strong with the Force, and someone in pain.

"Dylan, you're going to be fine." He reassured his patient and then turned to the boy's mother. "Joanne will give you some forms that will tell you how to take care of his cut. I'll write a prescription for some antibiotics just to be on the safe side but you want to make sure you keep it clean. His pediatrician will take the stitches out in a couple of weeks."

"Thank you Doctor," the mother said. "Could you please tell me..."

Malachi felt the new life Force quickly growing weaker and he stood up.

"Mrs. Keisler," he spoke as he backed toward the exam room door. "I think Joanne can answer all of your questions."
Ignoring Joanne's stunned expression he left the room and followed the Force signature he felt across the hall. He stood outside the door to exam room one and saw the man lying on the exam table. The man was unconscious but Malachi could feel the Force radiating from him.

As if in slow motion Malachi entered the exam room and watched as the ER staff stripped the clothes from the man's body. They were traditional Jedi robes. Malachi had never seen anyone alive wear them before. His grandfather had opted to wear clothes more suitable for farming in Northern Missouri. His funeral had been the one and only chance Malachi and Maureen had to see him so adorned, before he was cremated.

While he had rarely seen the uniform Malachi knew it intimately. He watched and checked off the name and purpose of each piece as it was removed from the Jedi's body. The outer cape. The inner tunic. The belt and the boots. The belt...

"What do you think this thing is?" Malachi heard a nurse say as he held up the Jedi's lightsaber.

"Who knows," someone else said. "I've given up trying to figure out what people carry on the street."

The lightsaber was tossed on a cart to Malachi's left but Malachi continued to focus on the man on the table. He vaguely heard the discussion around him. Someone mentioned something about x-rays, hemorrhaging, and shock.

Without even questioning himself, Malachi moved to the Jedi's head. The man's skin was cold but Malachi could feel his Life Force though his fingertips. There were broken ribs, a punctured lung filling with blood, and a mild concussion.

The Force called to Malachi and he responded. This was what he was meant to do. He could not completely heal the wound but he could control the damage. He focused on directing all the man's torn blood vessels close and function normally. Slowly the internal bleeding subsided; the lung functioned as it was supposed to Malachi turned his focus to the remaining injuries.

"...Lee, Dr. Lee." Broke into Malachi's concentration. "Hey Malachi!" The words finally caused him to look up from the Jedi.

"You okay?" His co-worker, Dr. Chadwick, asked.

Malachi ran his fingers through his dark hair and nodded his head.

"Yeah, sorry." He replied.

"You know this guy?" Dr. Chadwick asked.
Malachi made a split second decision.

"I was never here," he said with a wave of his hand. The three ER attendants turned back to their patient. Dr. Chadwick heard a noise and saw Malachi looking into the room from outside the exam room door. After a moment Malachi turned away.

"Must have changed his mind," Dr. Chadwick muttered and went back to the task at hand.

In the doctor's lounge Malachi felt his hands tremble as he dialed his sister's phone number.

Maureen Lee felt the disturbance in the Force the moment she pulled up outside the Mall. In a world with very few Force sensitives it was easy to detect a Life Force pattern change. Instead of dwelling on it Maury decided to focus on her job. Her grandfather had always emphasized patience and she knew the source of the disturbance would reveal itself, given time.

She got out of her car and walked towards a group of DC police. After four years in the FBI's anti-terrorism unit she knew the local police well enough not to have to flash her badge when she entered the scene of a crime. It was a courtesy that Maury appreciated. Very few policing agencies like the FBI. It was distrust founded in jealousy, lack of communication, and politics. Maury, however, felt very little of that tension in the field. She was well respected by the local police because of what they called her "good instincts."

"How do you always stay so calm?" Her old partner Kenny had asked. "You and your brother both."

"Kenny," she laughed in response. "If you only knew."

Maury also believed in communication and did nothing to cause problems with other agencies. When someone is being held hostage at gunpoint there is no place for political games.

Captain Benton waved to her when he saw her, and she smiled in response.

"Sorry to waste you're trip Agent Lee," he said. "Appears to be a simple car fire. So much for German engineering, huh?"

"Was anyone hurt?"

"In the fire, no. No crispy critters this time." The Captain reasoned. "But there were several people on the street when the flames got going. Another vehicle hit a pedestrian and a second accident sent some tourists to the nearest hospital. I don't know how bad anybody was."

They noticed several people with official looking badges were

"None taken Captain." Maury offered a soft smile in comfort. "This close to the Mall you're going to get every agency out to inspect. Besides, it's been a slow week."

"I know," Captain Benton straightened his tie as he spoke. "Why do you think I got pulled out from behind my desk in the first place? Here goes nothing."

"Go get 'em Captain," Maury called as he headed towards the new comers.

She watched the firemen in action for a few minutes and allowed herself to become aware of changes in the Force. There was a distinct signature of anger present and Maury felt the hair on the back of her neck stand up.

She turned to try and pinpoint the source of the sensation. It was nearby. Through her line of work and her good 'instincts' she was very good at picking out people carrying negative energy. She followed the direction of the Force to a young man sitting on the ground just outside the mall.

The one item that confused her was his clothing. The traditional Jedi robes contradicted the negative feelings he projected. Things continued not to make sense after she approached him either. His anger was quickly brought in check when she talked to him. After he had gotten sick she realized he was calling on the Force to calm himself. It had taken him sometime, indicative of one not in complete control of the Force. His appearance confirmed Maury's suspicion that he was just a Padawan, the short braid behind his ear, the ripped shoulder of his tunic, the burn on his cheek.

Maury remembered her Grandmother telling her the story of how she had first met Grandpa. He had been in much the same condition, sick to his stomach and wandering helplessly on a country road in Missouri. Grandpa had later referred to his condition as 'Vortex-Lag' in a play of words on earthly Jet Lag. Maury also remembered her Grandfather lovingly holding her Grandmother's hand.

"Where who I be, Anna, if you hadn't picked me up on that road?" He asked her so many times in Maury's memories.

Maury couldn't turn away from Obi-Wan just like her grandmother hadn't turned away from her grandfather. Besides, there was a question as to why Obi- Wan was there in the first place. Other than introducing herself, she didn't speak as she drove him to a McDonald's and sat him down in a booth in the back. At that
time of day it would be easy to talk without anyone overhearing them.

"Try this," she said as she placed a vanilla milkshake in front of him. "Its sweet but ice cream usually settles my stomach when I'm sick. Hopefully it will work for you."

She placed her cell phone on the table in front of her and took of her coat. She realized Obi-Wan probably got a glimpse of her 9-mm under her suit coat but she didn't care. He had lightsaber. The weapons weren't equal but were both effective.

Obi-Wan sipped the drink tentatively at first and then spoke.

"You never answered my question."

Maury sighed before she responded.

"You're right. I sure didn't." She said. "Tell you what, Obi-Wan. I'll answer your questions truthfully if you promise to answer mine. Do we have a deal?"

When he nodded she continued.

"My Grandfather was a Jedi Knight. He came to Earth, this planet, several years ago. He trained Malachi, my twin brother, and myself in the Jedi arts."

"Then you are a Jedi."

Maury grimaced a little.

"Not really. Grandfather believed he had trained us well with the resources he had available. Unfortunately around here those resources are limited. Chi and I simply are who we are. We just happen to be Force sensitives, using it to enhance our abilities, not dominate them."

"Are there others like you?" Obi-Wan asked, sipping on his shake with more interest.

"There are Force Sensitives here but very few people can control the gifts they have. The Living Force is present but midichlorines are few. Earth simply lacks a natural deposit of them. Those who do have a natural concentration usually don't have a strong enough one to do anything with it. If there is anyone else here who is Force sensitive and trained in the Jedi Arts, we haven't found them."

Maury thought a moment before she continued.

"Obi-Wan, I have to warn you. It is the general nature of people here to fear things they don't understand. Force Sensitives are usually referred to as psychics. They are often ridiculed and have been persecuted in the past. Grandpa always taught my brother and I discretion. You have to be discreet as
She watched Obi-Wan's reaction with interest. He slumped a little and started scraping the wax off the cup in front of him.

"What about Qui-Gon?" He didn't look at her as he spoke.

"I left a message for my brother. When he calls me back I'll explain the situation and he'll find your Master." She tried to reassure him. "I'm sure he'll be fine."

There was something else bugging the kid. Maury recognized guilt in his posture.

"You haven't been with him long, have you?" She asked.

Obi-Wan shook his head, again without looking up. Maury decided to try another approach.

"Do you always get angry?"

Her question was answered with wide eyes.

"You were projecting pretty strongly." She continued, not wanting to scare him. "It's easy to do if you haven't had a lot of practice in control. How old are you, Obi-Wan?"

Obi-Wan looked away again.

"I turned thirteen a few weeks ago." He said, a flush spreading across his cheeks. "I shouldn't have gotten so angry. Master Qui-Gon would not be happy with me if he knew."

"Obi-Wan, were you in a fight? Is that why you're here?"

"I don't know why we're here," he tried to explain. "I had an accident while I was practicing today."

He went on to describe the events that had led up to He and Qui-Gon coming through the Portal. Maury sat quietly and listened as Obi-Wan told her all the frustrating details. She remembered her own frustrations while training with her grandfather at night and on weekends and trying to be a normal kid the rest of the time. When Obi-Wan finished he started playing with the cup again and Maury could tell he was holding something back.

"We'll Obi-Wan," she smiled softly. "You have officially been hit with what is known as a bad day. They'll be more of them, so you might as well learn to live with it." She motioned for him to move closer across the table. "But there are a few things we can do to remedy the situation."

She placed her hand over the burn on his cheek and concentrated on it, calling on the living Force to heal the tissue there.
"Healing techniques are Chi's department," she explained. "But I can handle the easy stuff. As for your tunic, we can go shopping for a new shirt. I doubt you are as clumsy as you make yourself out to be, Obi-Wan. You're probably just going through a growth spurt. That's something else you are going to have to get used to, I'm afraid."

Obi-Wan thought for a moment.

"I guess I hadn't thought of it that way," he finally said. "Thanks."

"Someone once told me that when you feel out of control, sometimes doing a simple thing, one that you know how to do, can help you regain your control and our composure."

"Your grandfather?" Obi-Wan asked.

Maury smiled a genuinely friendly smile.

"Actually it was my grandmother."

The cell phone rang and Maury picked it up quickly, already knowing it was Malachi on the other end.

"Hello."

"You'll never believe who got brought into the E.R."

"I'm hoping it is a Jedi Master named Qui-Gon Jinn," Maury replied. Obi-Wan looked at her in anticipation and there was a pause on the phone.

"Do I want to know how you know this?"

"I'm sitting across from his Padawan Learner," Maury said. "How is he?"

"He's unconscious so I can't verify his identity. He has long sandy brown hair and a beard and mustache. He's a big man and I guess he's in his late forty's." Chi spoke as he watched Qui-Gon being taken to X-Ray.

Maury relayed the description to Obi-Wan who confirmed it was his Master.

"That's Master Jinn," she said into the phone.

"He's got some broken ribs and is still unconscious. He apparently got hit by a car but I think he's going to be okay."

Malachi paused for second time before speaking again. "Any idea why they're here?"
"All Obi-Wan knows is that they had to follow someone through a portal. He and Qui-Gon got separated before Qui-Gon could fully brief him." Maury could mentally feel her brother's apprehension.

"A portal, huh?"

"Grandpa always said this could happen," she responded.

"Yeah, I know." Chi replied. At the mention of his grandfather a sense of responsibility kicked in place in his brain. "Listen, my shift doesn't end until six. I'll keep an eye on Master Jinn and see if I can get him out of here quietly."

A wave of frustration hit Maury as her brother spoke.

"You okay?" She asked.

Chi leaned his head against the wall he was standing by and sighed. "I'll tell you about it later. Okay Maureen?"

"Yeah. Call me if you need me."

"Hey Maury," he caught her before she hung up. "He's gonna need some clothes and a new pair of shoes."

"We'll take care of it. Later."

Chi hung up and made his way to the front desk.

"No, it was a cylinder, about a foot long and make of stainless steel." One nurse was talking to Joanne.

"What's that used for?" Joanne asked.

"I have no idea," the nurse replied. "But it disappeared. I could have sworn I put it with that John Doe's clothing. The one that got hit by the car."

"Well, give me a minute and I'll help you look for it." Joanne returned and looked at Malichi. "Hey Dr. Lee! You got a prescription ready for that Jerome kid?"

Back at McDonald's Maureen slid out of the booth to put her coat on.

"Your Master is fine," she assured Obi-Wan. "He's unconscious and a little banged up but Malachi is looking out for him. He'll be there when Qui-Gon wakes up."

Maury could see the relief in Obi-Wan's face.

"Now," she continued with a smile, "we have to go shopping."

As he regained consciousness, Qui-Gon felt a wave of nausea
flow through him that he couldn't control. Suddenly there was a pair of strong hands helping him to his side and supporting his head. He didn't have the strength to fight and gave into the nausea. After the spell subsided he felt one of the hands moving to the back of his neck, cool fingers positioning themselves along his vertebrae. A reassuring Force flowed over Qui-Gon.

"Master Jinn," a voice spoke. "Can you hear me?"

Qui-Gon looked up to see a young man standing over him. As he became more awake the pain in his body became more pronounced. His side and his head hurt, and there was an oddly cool sensation on the back of his hand. As if sensing his pain, the young man moved his fingers along the base of Qui-Gon's skull and closed his eyes in concentration. The pain was relieved.

"That should make you feel better," Malachi said as he eased Qui-Gon back in the bed.

"Where am I?" Qui-Gon asked, still having trouble focusing.

"You're in a hospital," Chi replied and gave a nervous glance around the room. When he spoke again he used a hushed tone. "You're on a planet called Earth. The nausea you feel is your body's reaction to traveling through the Portal of Rasme. It should go away soon."

Malachi raised Qui-Gon's bed as he continued.

"You are also suffering from four broken ribs, a bruised pelvis and a mild concussion." Malachi continued. "But you're going to be okay."

"Obi-Wan," Qui-Gon spoke as he felt his strength slipping away.

"He's fine. He's with my sister Maureen." Malachi moved closer to Qui-Gon. Even in his current condition Qui-Gon could sense the seriousness of what Malachi was about to say next.

"Master Jinn, you have to listen to me. They don't know about the Jedi Order here. They don't know about the Force. Anything you do with the Force will be looked at with suspicion. Do you understand?"

Qui-Gon looked at Malachi and nodded.

"Get some rest. I'll come back when you wake up."

Qui-Gon needed no help in falling asleep.

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Part III

Qui-Gon woke to the feeling of a tugging sensation on the back
of his hand, and the sound of nearby voices.

"Sir?" One voice asked. "Can you hear me, sir?"

Qui-Gon opened his eyes to find a man, different than the one who had been with him earlier, attaching a new bag to the tube in his hand.

"Sir," the man spoke again. "I'm Dr. Chadwick. You're in Washington General Hospital. Can you tell me your name?"

"Jinn," Qui-Gon rasped out.

"Mr. Jinn, do you remember what happened to you?"

Qui-Gon thought a moment, trying to make sense of what had happened to him. The warning from his previous visitor was foremost in his mind.

"I hit a building." He finally replied.

Dr. Chadwick smiled and Qui-Gon heard someone else in the room chuckle.

"It is probably more appropriate to say you were hit by a car and then thrown into a building." Dr. Chadwick spoke as he put a strange looking device in his ears. "I need to listen to your chest. I want you to sit up and take as deep of breath that you can."

Qui-Gon did as he was told. With each breath he became more aware of his surroundings. The cold of the device against his chest helped to awaken his senses as well. The stethoscope was moved to his back and after a few minutes Dr. Chadwick was shaking his head and taking it out of his ears.

"Mr. Jinn," he said, wrapping his fingers around Qui-Gon's wrist and looking at his watch. "You are one lucky man. With the impact you took you're lucky you didn't puncture a lung."

Another man in the room, wearing a blue uniform, stepped closer to Qui-Gon's bed.

"Mr. Jinn, I'm officer Ramone. The man who hit you was swerving to avoid a car fire. You'll be happy to know he was properly insured."

Dr. Chadwick shined a bright light in Qui-Gon's eyes as Officer Ramone continued to speak.

"Mr. Jinn, I'd like to ask you a few questions for our records."

"You don't need to ask him any questions."

Qui-Gon recognized the man who had been with him earlier as he
walked into the room. The police officer closed the notepad he was holding.

"I don't need to ask you any questions." Officer Ramone said.

"You can contact me if you need to." Malachi spoke as Qui-Gon recognized the Force control the young man had.

The Officer repeated what Malachi had said and Malachi turned his attention to Dr. Chadwick. Again Malachi's words were mimicked.

"I normally keep people with possible head injuries overnight. However, I'll make an exception in your case. You're free to leave once this IV is done."

Qui-Gon watched as the men left the room. Malachi held his hand out and finally made a proper greeting.

"Master Jinn," he said. "I'm Malachi Lee."

"You're a healer." Qui-Gon spoke as he shook hands.

"We call ourselves doctors here." Malachi responded with a smile.

"You've taken me by surprise, Dr. Lee. I wasn't expecting to find any trained Force sensitives this far from..." Qui-Gon paused as he considered this unexpected turn of events.

"From Coruscant." Malachi finished for Qui-Gon. "Yes, I understand. My grandfather was a Jedi. He came here through the Portal of Rasme over fifty years ago our time." He looked at Qui-Gon steadily as he continued. "I have a twin sister named Maureen. She has been trained as well."

Qui-Gon took in what he was being told and asked, "Your grandfather, what was his name?"

"Noipreen Delco."

A faint recognition showed in Qui-Gon's eyes.

"I know that name." He spoke with some astonishment. "He was an earlier apprentice to my Master."

Chi turned his attention to the floor and rocked on his heels.

"That would be Master Yoda," was his reply. Qui-Gon could see that Malachi was not frowning, but he was not smiling either. It was the same look Yoda had when discussing the same man. Qui-Gon unconsciously rubbed his stomach as he thought. Seeing this, Malachi responded immediately and started unhooking the IV.

"The bathroom is right over there," Malachi spoke as he worked.
"Once I unhook this you will be able to move about more freely. One of your ribs nicked your left lung but I managed to keep the injury from getting worse. You'll have to take it easy, however. I can only do so much. If it gets re-injured we may have to operate."

"I'll take it easy then." As a test Qui-Gon tried to send out some reassurance through the Force but immediately felt the other man's shields. They were so tight Qui-Gon could almost see his attempt at reassurance bouncing off Malachi.

Malachi picked up a bundle of clothing he had brought into the room earlier and handed it to Qui-Gon.

"It's standard procedure to cut off any clothing that gets in our way when working with a patient." Malachi said. "I'm sorry but you lost most of yours. You can put these scrubs on for now. Maury and your Padawan are out shopping for you as we speak."

Qui-Gon speculatively eyed the blue scrubs Malachi had handed him.

"Oh," Malachi said as he reached into an inner pocket of his lab coat and pulled out Qui-Gon's lightsaber. Handing it to Qui-Gon he continued. "I held on to this for safekeeping. The rest of your things are in my car. Get dressed and I'll take you home."

"Thank you."

Maureen threw a package of T-shirts into a shopping cart as Obi-Wan exited a dressing room, carrying a pair of jeans.

"They fit okay?" She asked.

Obi-Wan nodded in reply.

"How tall is Master Jinn?" She asked, watching Obi-Wan intently.

Obi-Wan frowned slightly before he answered.

"He's very tall." As he spoke he pointed to the '5" mark on the measuring tape outside the dressing room. Then he frowned again and became interested in the pattern on the carpeting below his feet.

"Are you always this quiet?" Maureen asked.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I seem to be the only one asking questions here." Maureen started looking through stacks of jeans. "You're going to have to start asking more questions when you're on missions
or you won't learn anything about the cultures you're working with. Or did you sleep through that lesson back on Coruscant?"

Again Obi-Wan didn't meet her gaze.

"Obi-Wan, will you please tell me what's wrong?" She lowered her shields enough for Obi-Wan to gain a sense of her sincerity. "I'd like to help, if you'll let me."

Obi-Wan looked at her with a sad expression.

"Your brother is bringing Master Jinn to your house?" It was more of a statement than a question.

"Yes." A frown creased Maureen's brow as she replied. "Is there a reason why you don't want to see him?"

Obi-Wan ran his hand over the stack of clothes in front of him.

"I want to see him." His voice was a little shaky. "It's just that I got angry today. Really angry."

"Yes. Getting angry isn't always a bad thing, Obi-Wan." Maureen tried to explain. "It is how you deal with that anger that matters."

"Master Jinn lost his last apprentice to the darkside of the Force. He almost didn't take me as his Padawan because of Xanatos." Obi-Wan sighed and then continued. "He didn't want me at first. No one did. Everyone said I have too much of a temper."

Maureen thought for a moment and started flipping through shirts on a rack in front of her.

"About two years about I got shot while on duty. My partner Kenny and I were following up a lead on a possible air plane bombing. What we didn't know was that our suspect was having a fight with his girlfriend when we knocked on his door. Law officers hate domestic disputes because you never know what can happen.

"Anyway, we knocked on the door and the suspect let us in. About that time the girlfriend jumps into the room and emptied ten rounds from a 9mm gun. It's a weapon that fires projectiles called bullets. It's the same type of gun I carry for my job.

"I woke up in intensive care four days later. Chi was there with me. I had taken two bullets to the chest." She paused a moment before continuing. "Kenny wasn't so lucky. He died before the ambulance got to the scene. He and I had been partners ever since I had graduated from the Bureau's Academy. He had three kids, all under the age of twelve. After Chi told me Kenny had died I got really angry. Kenny was a good friend, partner, father, and husband. To me it didn't seem fair that he..."
was the one who got killed."

Maureen threw a shirt into the cart and started moving toward the shoe section. Obi-Wan followed.

"What did you do?" He asked.

"I closed down and felt sorry for myself. I didn't leave my apartment. I didn't exercise. I wouldn't talk to anyone, not even Chi. I was horrible to myself but I was worse to everyone else. And then Chi had enough of my self pity and decided to do something about it."

"What did he do?" Obi-Wan urged her to finish the story.

"He took me downstairs. We live above a warehouse that is used as a Parks and Recreation Center. They have different classes there, including martial arts training which Chi and I help teach. Anyway, he took me downstairs, handed me my lightsaber and told me to do my damnedest."

"You have a lightsaber?" Obi-Wan's eyes were bright with surprise and Maureen chuckled a bit at his reaction.

"Yes, we both have lightsabers. Grandpa didn't leave Coruscant without bringing some supplies with him" She smiled at Obi-Wan and leaned on the cart to finish her story. "Knowing the dangers of my anger, Chi still challenged me to fight him. It was a brave move on his part because he really sucks with his lightsaber. Up to Jedi standards, I'm sure we both do, but he hadn't beaten me for close to twelve years."

"What happened?"

"I gave him everything I had. I put every ounce of anger and frustration into my fighting. I felt all-powerful and I could feel the draw of the darkside. That's when my overconfidence got the better of me. I tripped and Chi gave me a second-degree burn on my shoulder. I still have a scar."

Obi-Wan looked away and Maureen could tell he was considering all that she had told him.

"Chi and I have a unique perspective on evil." She continued. "Through our work we've both seen the damage caused by anger and hatred. Nobody wins with the darkside. But I needed someone to show me that, to teach me how to control my anger. That's why the Jedi have the Master-Padawan system. It is important that you learn from those who have more experience than you do. I don't know your Master, but I do believe that he will want to help you. You have to tell him what you're feeling. You need to keep those lines of communication open or you'll both lose."

Obi-Wan nodded distantly. He was still considering what he had been told and what he was going to tell Qui-Gon.
"Now," Maureen said in an ice breaking tone as she looked at the bottom of a pair of boots. "How big are your Master's feet?"

Obi-Wan looked at her and wrinkled up his nose.

It was the books that Qui-Gon first noticed when he entered the twin's apartment. The walls were filled with shelves of them stacked every way imaginable. Malachi tossed his keys onto a table and started turning on lights.

"Here we are," he said moving down a hallway. "The guest bedroom is right in here and the bathroom is the next door down. Clean towels are under the sink."

Qui-Gon only half heard what Malachi was saying as he took in his surroundings. He was drawn to a grouping of pictures on one wall. Qui-Gon could easily recognize Malachi's sister because of the resemblance. In one picture the twins were hugging an elderly couple from behind. The older man's face brushed at Qui-Gon's memory.

"This is your grandfather," he said.

"That's right." Malachi confirmed and pointed as he spoke. "That's he and grandma at their 40th wedding anniversary. This one is of our parents. They were killed in a plane accident when Maury and I were very little. Our grandparents raised us. And no, mom was not Force sensitive." Malachi added the last in answer to Qui-Gon's unspoken question.

"I take it your grandfather is no longer living?" Qui-Gon asked.

"No." Malachi smiled a sad smile. "They both died when we were in college. Grandma got sick and died first. Grandpa took her death very hard and died a year later. It's been just Maury and me ever since."

"Hello," Maury called from the kitchen as she and Obi-Wan entered through a back door. They dumped a number of bags on the kitchen table. "You home?"

Qui-Gon and Malachi walked into the kitchen in response. The room brightened visibly when Obi-Wan saw Qui-Gon.

"Master," he said, breathing a sigh of relief.

"I'm happy to see you too, Padawan." Qui-Gon replied as he put his arm around Obi-Wan and hugged his shoulders, a genuine smile on his face. "And you must be Maureen." He extended his hand to Malachi's sister.

"Please, call me Maury." She replied and introduced Obi-Wan to
her brother. After introductions the twins fixed a light meal and filled the two Jedi's in on different aspects of the United States and Earth in general. After dinner Qui-Gon felt he had a better understanding of his surroundings and he talked about why he and Obi-Wan had traveled there.

"The Portal of Rasme was created over a century ago. It was created by a Jedi who believed the Force could be utilized to travel without the aid of a vehicle." Even though he was addressing the twins as well as Obi-Wan, he directed his attention towards his Padawan. "Master Rasme studied the Force and meditated constantly to achieve this goal. He was so in touch with the Force when he passed into it, that he was able to direct his life force to become the portal, the very manifestation of the Force he had been looking for all his life."

"That doesn't sound bad." Obi-Wan said. "What did Master Rasme do wrong?"

"Nothing," Qui-Gon answered in a voice Obi-Wan recognized as his Master's teaching voice. "For all purposes Master Rasme intended the portal to be his last gift to the Jedi."

"But even though something is created with good intent doesn't mean it will be used with good intentions." Obi-Wan sounded as though he were thinking out loud.

"Very good Padawan." Qui-Gon knew a lesson had been learned. "At first the portal was use with good intentions. The outcome, however, was difficult to control. You didn't always end up where you thought you would. To compensate for this Rasme had left a key of some sort to help control the portal. Then a disturbed Padawan by the name of Putain Grigor found the portal's temptation to be too great. He stole the key, entered the portal and never returned."

"But others have traveled through the portal knowing they didn't have the key to control it," Obi-Wan pointed out. "Why?"

"I don't know Padawan." Qui-Gon looked at the twin as he spoke. "At least not this time."

Obi-Wan noticed the exchange of looks between the three. Quietly Maureen fiddled with the pendant on her necklace. Her brother was sitting with his arms crossed and not meeting anyone's gaze.

"Apparently there was a rebellion within the Jedi Order." Maureen looked to Qui-Gon who nodded for her to continue. "It was peaceful but it caused a lot of hard feelings. Those who had opposed the council decided they could no longer abide by the council's rules so they left through the portal."

"The council gave them little choice in the matter." Qui-Gon
added. At this Malachi looked at Qui-Gon.

"You are obviously not a council member, Master Jinn." As he spoke Malachi's feet twitched nervously on the coffee table where they rested.

"Was your grandfather one of the rebels?" Obi-Wan asked as he tried to put the pieces together.

"No. But Grandpa didn't agree with the council's decision to force the rebels to leave." Malachi continued the story. "He had recently passed his trials when his Master, Master Yoda, took a council seat. They argued over the council's decision. Before they had a chance to resolve their differences Grandpa left Coruscant through the portal. It was his way of protesting."

Qui-Gon watched as Maureen shivered involuntarily and Malachi continued his defensive posture.

"Master Yoda saw that they portal was sealed so that it could never be used in that way again." Qui-Gon tried to reassure the twins. "He rarely speaks of your grandfather. I know he is very sorry that they never had the chance to overcome their differences."

"Well, we can't change the past." Maureen sighed as she spoke and turned the conversation to the present. "If someone took the risk of entering the Portal of Rasme, without any guaranteed way of returning, they probably believe they can find the key to control the portal. That has to be their motive. So what does this key look like?"

Qui-Gon shook his head.

"The time lines between our worlds are different. All this happened before I came to Coruscant. The portal is rarely spoken of. Students aren't even told about it until they study Rasme's teaching in the later years of their education."

"How many students are we talking about?" Maureen asked.

"At least fifty. Then there are all the Jedi who have been knighted. We number in the thousands."

"So much for narrowing down the field on who came here before you." Maureen commented with a sigh. "I'll admit, I'm not sure where to start with this one."

"Grandpa might have a clue." Malachi got up and pulled a large book out of a bookshelf. "He kept a journal for most of his life. Maybe he had an idea about this key." He handed the well-worn book to Qui-Gon as he continued. "Most of it contains writings on things grandpa didn't want to forget. Things he tried to teach us about the Jedi and his life before he left.
Coruscant. If he did have an idea on the key it would be in here."

"I'll look it over." Qui-Gon agreed.

Obi-Wan noticed he was starting to miss parts of the conversation. The next thing he realized was his Master encouraging him to go to bed for the night.

Qui-Gon was reading the journal when Obi-Wan woke up. He sat in a chair by a window in the quest room. Framed in sunlight Qui-Gon looked as intimidating as ever.

"Is something bothering you Padawan?" Qui-Gon asked without looking up from his reading.

Obi-Wan knew there was no need to pretend he was sleeping so he sat up.

"I didn't mean to rip my tunic Master. Or burn my cheek, or trip in the hall at Coruscant." As he spoke Obi-Wan looked at his hands in his lap. "I just wasn't having a good day."

Qui-Gon had a crease across his forehead when he closed the journal. He moved to the edge of the bed and tugged on Obi-Wan's braid, a signal for his Padawan to look at him.

"I know you didn't do these things intentionally Padawan." Qui-Gon spoke with sincerity. "I was concerned, but things being as they are, I haven't had the chance to tell you."

"You shut me out."

Qui-Gon sighed in response.

"Yes I did Obi-Wan, and I need to apologize for that. I guess I wasn't having a good day either. This business with the portal has a lot to do with council politics, and always manages to bring out my anger. Yesterday you showed up a bad time for both Master Windu and myself. Please don't take his comments personally. As for our link, I closed it so that you could enjoy your day off and not be distracted by my emotions. It has been a while since I've had a Padawan, Obi-Wan. It's going to take me some time to get used to having one again."

"But I am your Padawan? The council knows this?"

"Of course," Qui-Gon said, the crease on his forehead was back. "Master Windu and Master Yoda were extremely pleased. Frankly the rest of the council members had given up on me ever taking a Padawan again. Nothing against you Obi-Wan, but I think they paid more attention because it was I who was taking a Padawan."

Obi-Wan relayed his conversation with Bruck along with the other problems he had with Bruck and his friends in the past.
When he finished Qui-Gon was leaning back against one of the posts of the bed.

"No one's opinion matters but your own Obi-Wan." He spoke quietly. "Before you became my Padawan you were, in a sense, in competition with the other students at the creche. The Jedi aren't supposed to promote this sort of competition but I know it exists between students trying to be chosen as Padawans. Now you don't have to compete that way anymore. The only one you are competing against is yourself. And you may find yourself to be a fierce competitor, the only one who can really hold yourself back."

"I imagine guilt can be part of that." Obi-Wan spoke but didn't look away from his Master.

"Go on."

Obi-Wan told Qui-Gon of the events and his emotions that led up to his meeting with Maureen. Qui-Gon never flinched at what he was being told. He simply sat quietly and listened.

"I wasn't sure I should tell you all this," Obi-Wan finished. "I was afraid because of Xanatos."

The corner of Qui-Gon's mouth curved up into a sad smile.

"Do you know, Obi-Wan, that I can never remember having this conversation with Xanatos? Maybe if I had, if Xanatos had been brave enough to be honest with me, I wouldn't have been so blind to his faults. But then again, he would have been a much different person.

"Padawan, I am not pleased that you became angry." His blue eyes seem to look into Obi-Wan's soul as he spoke. "But I would be more upset if I found out you were trying to face your anger without asking for my help or listening to me. You do have an aggressive temper."

Obi-Wan straightened his shoulders quickly but Qui-Gon raised a hand and continued.

"And so have many other Jedi's. We have all been exposed to the dark power of the Force, on more than one occasion. That's why everyone must be a Padawan before they become a Jedi Knight. My job as your Master is to teach you and help you through the rough times. What you felt yesterday won't be the last of it. The more you learn about the light of the Force, the more you will learn about the darkside."

"The more we control, the more we need to learn control," Obi-Wan repeated a basic temple lesson.

"Exactly."
"I guess it's a good thing I met Maury when I did." Obi-Wan said with a smile. "What do you think?"

Qui-Gon thought a moment but was reluctant to return Obi-Wan's enthusiasm.

"I think," he said after a moment, "that it is a good thing we met both Maureen and Malachi before anyone else did."

Maureen walked into the kitchen drying her hair with a towel. She reached towards her brother as he poured a cup of coffee.

"Gimme, gimme, gimme." She tried her best to sound desperate.

Malachi handed her the cup and she sank into a kitchen chair as she took a large gulp.

"That's better," she said with a smile on her face.

"You're pathetic." Malachi shook his head at her.

"Thank you Mr. Pot-Calling-the-Kettle-Black!" Maureen replied as she continued to grip the cup with both hands, savoring the aroma. "Do you think they have coffee on Coruscant?"

"Grandpa never mentioned it," Malachi said as he sat down opposite her. "I made a full pot, just in case."

"Then I hope they don't so I can drink Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan's share." She took another drink and then set the cup down so she could look at her brother clearly. "So, are you going to tell me what's bothering you or do I have to guess?"

"I don't know." Malachi frowned and thumbed the edge of his cup.

"Then let's begin with that little stunt you pulled last night."

Knowing his sister wouldn't stop questioning him until he told her the truth Malachi gave in to her inquiry.

"Qui-Gon was Master Yoda's Padawan." Malachi finished his coffee and moved to the sink to rinse the cup out.

"So?"

"So, every time I think about Master Yoda it bother's me," Malachi continued. "He's the reason Grandpa left Coruscant. Doesn't that bother you?"

Maureen grabbed an orange from a bowl on the table and started to calmly peel it. "Nope," was her only reply.

"Well, it bothered Grandpa," Malachi flared at her.
"No, it didn't." Maureen was still calm. "It may have bothered Jedi Knight Noipreen Delco, but it did not bother our grandfather."

"What's the difference?" Malachi asked in exasperation.

"Grandma," she said as she started eating. "And mom and us. Grandpa said that he thought he would never feel anything as painful as fighting with his Master and leaving Coruscant without reconciling with Master Yoda. That was until Grandma died." Maureen looked seriously at her brother. "You know that. You were there after Grandma's funeral when he told us."

When Malachi didn't meet her eyes she continued.

"Look, I understand that this bothers you. It would bother me too if I took the time to dwell on it, but I don't. And unless I've missed my guess, Grandpa's fight with Master Yoda isn't what's bothering you."

Malachi fumbled with his mug and Maureen waited for him to speak.

"I used the Force on Dan Chadwick yesterday. Twice." He spoke quietly. "I've never done that to one of my coworkers before."

"You've used it on patients to calm them down. Right?"

"This is different." Malachi paced a little as he spoke. "I wasn't helping Dan. I was wiping his memory so he didn't know I was there."

"But you were helping Master Jinn," Maureen pointed out. "Don't forget that."

"How can I forget it?" He threw his arms wide as he spoke. "I was helping a Jedi. All my life I've known one Jedi, Grandpa. And suddenly one shows up in the ER. I've been a plain old doctor for years and now I have to start depending on the Force. At least Master Jinn is human so I could help him." He stopped and groaned a moment. "What in the hell are we gonna do if those other two aren't human?"

"Hang on a minute," Maureen held her hand up to derail her brother's train of thought. "One issue at a time here. Since when do you have to stop being a plain old doctor?"

"Since they're here!" He pointed out into the apartment and lowered his voice.

"I don't see that at all." She sat back in her chair, scrunching up her face. "Master Jinn and Obi-Wan are here to stop whoever came here before them. And let's not worry about what species they are until we know exactly who we're dealing with." She looked sternly at her brother before she continued.
"The fact that the Jedi Council sent Master Jinn and Obi-Wan here indicates to me that they aren't happy with the situation either. They don't want others doing the same thing."

"Okay," Malachi returned her seriousness, "that may not be what the Council wants, but what about those other two? We don't know what they want."

"We'll find them."

Malachi paced a little more.

"You know," he started. "It never bothered me that Grandpa wasn't from Earth. It just didn't. And I didn't question the Force or how to use it. I guess I thought I'd never have to. When I saw Master Jinn, when I felt his presence, I realized that I had to really use the Force. That I'm not a normal doctor."

"Chi, you never were a normal doctor!"

"What's that supposed to mean?" He asked.

"How many doctors do you know are licensed chiropractors? Practice acupuncture? Hell, you've got a whole shelf full of books on herbal medicine and aromatherapy. Does Dan Chadwick know any of those things?" She shook her head and continued. "You didn't learn about alternative medicines because of the Force. You did it because you really like to help people. And you aren't closed minded enough to believe drugs are the only way to heal. Don't let this situation try to change you into something you're not. Just be yourself."

Chi thought for a moment and looked at her with a smile forming at the corner of his mouth.

"I guess you do have a point." He said "Since when did you become the wise one?"

"I didn't." Maureen replied as she started working on her orange again. "I actually paid attention to the speech you gave me after Kenny was killed."

Malachi smiled and nodded. He grabbed a wadded up paper towel that was lying nearby and flung it at Maureen.

"Brat!" She spoke as she returned the favor with a piece of orange peel. It was only then that they noticed their exchange was being observed by Qui-Gon.

"Good morning," Chi chuckled as he spoke.
For the first time since meeting them, Qui-Gon had the chance to really look at the twins. The fact that they were brother and sister was apparent in their physical appearance. They both had dark brown hair; cut just below the chin on Maureen and slightly longer on Malachi. Their eyes were the same shade of brown. Even though Malachi sported a full, closely cropped beard and mustache, Qui-Gon could see they had the same shaped face, down to their slightly crooked noses. They were both shorter than Qui-Gon but they would be considered tall by any standards, and they were both physically fit.

It was the little things they did that proved them to be twins. They both tilted their heads to the left when they smiled. They unconsciously used the same hand gestures and had the same posture. There was also the ease in which they communicated with each other that made it clear they were bonded. It would have been obvious even if the Force didn't flow through them as freely as it did.

Qui-Gon stopped making comparisons at Malachi's greeting.

"Good morning," he replied and entered the kitchen. "I didn't want to intrude." He was smiling now that some of the tension had left the atmosphere.

"Well, the clothes seem to fit," Maury commented. Qui-Gon stood before them wearing a dark blue T-shirt beneath a long sleeved denim shirt and blue jeans. Maury looked beneath the table. "Any of the shoes fit?"

Qui-Gon rocked on his heals in a new pair of tennis shoes.

"Yes," Qui-Gon replied. "You and Obi-Wan succeeded."

Malachi looked at the tennis shoes and then at his sister.

"Not exactly standard Jedi issue there Maury." He commented.

"Give me a break!" She returned to her brother with a challenging look.

Malachi laughed at her and turned to their guest.

"You'll have to excuse Maury, Master Jinn. Mornings aren't her best time of day. Can I offer you something to drink while I fix breakfast? We have a drink called coffee or I can make you a cup of tea."

"Tea would be fine." Qui-Gon moved slowly to take a seat.

"How's the side?" Maureen asked as she held her coffee cup out for her brother to refill.
"Sore," Qui-Gon said as he tried to mentally shake the stiffness that had settled in over night. "But it will pass."

"Good. Take it easy and everything should be okay." Malachi spoke as he placed a cup of hot water and tea bag in front of Qui-Gon. He then raised an eyebrow at Maureen as he refilled her cup.

"I don't want it to go to waste." She explained with mock innocence.

Qui-Gon missed the exchange as he looked at the tea bag in front of him speculatively and then slowly lowered it into his cup.

"I haven't had the chance to properly thank you for all you have done for my Padawan and myself," Qui-Gon said.

"Not a problem. The Force takes you where you need to be." Maureen took a drink of coffee as she spoke. When she looked back at Qui-Gon, he was staring at her.

"I'm sorry." She suddenly became concerned and Malachi turned his attention to Qui-Gon as well. "Did I say something wrong? I meant no disrespect." Qui-Gon shook his head.

"It's all right," he said and smiled to reassure the twins. "I'm just not used to hearing Jedi lessons spoken from someone not taught at the temple. I am sorry that you have had this thrust upon you."

Malachi shrugged and turned back to frying a pancake.

"Grandpa always taught us to be prepared." He flipped the pancake as he spoke. "He believed he wasn't the first Jedi to come to Earth through the portal. He said it would be foolish to think he would be the last."

"Your Grandfather was a very wise man. I can tell as much from reading his Journal."

"Thank you, Master Jinn," Malachi smiled as he replied. "That means a lot."

Maureen quietly tugged on her necklace and smiled as well. Her smile turned into a laugh as Obi-Wan entered the room wearing jeans and a Bruce Lee T-shirt.

"Obi-Wan," Maureen said, "that shirt is absolutely you." She then turned to head off any questions Qui-Gon may have had. "He was a popular martial artist here. Kids Obi-Wan's age get a kick out of wearing shirts with all sorts of stuff on them. He'll blend in just fine."

Qui-Gon was about to comment when a telephone started ringing in the next room.
"Great," Maureen stood up to retrieve her cell phone.

"So much for taking the day off," Malachi said as she left the kitchen. "Good morning Obi-Wan. Sit down and I'll serve you some pancakes. They're my specialty."

"Good morning Malachi, Master." Obi-Wan said as he sat down.

Malachi froze as Obi-Wan's words.

"Oh, you might want to refrain from using the term master when you're here," he said. "People here have a hard time with underage kids calling adult males master. It might make someone suspicious."

"We understand," Qui-Gon assured him. "Obi-Wan go ahead and use my name for the time being."

Malachi set a plate of pancakes in front of his guests and was about to join them at the table when his head snapped in the direction of his sister. Qui-Gon rose from his seat and followed Malachi into the next room. Obi-Wan was at his heels.

Maureen was listening to the phone. She didn't speak but pointed at a closet door. Malachi nodded and moved in the closet's direction. Maureen opened a closed compartment on a bookshelf to reveal a safe. The two Jedis watched as she twisted the controls of a primitive lock and opened the safe. She pulled out her handgun and checked the clip.

"It's a type of blaster," Obi-Wan explained to Qui-Gon in a hushed tone. "It fires projectiles."

"I understand Harry." Maureen said into the phone. "I'll be there as soon as I can." As she hung up Malachi pulled a heavy black vest from the closet and threw it to her.

"What?" He asked.

"Hijacking," she answered as she pulled the bullet-proof vest into place. "Tour bus downtown. DC Police are sending a car." She turned her attention to the two Jedis. "Bus hijackings are common only in the movies here."

"You think it may be the other Jedi?" Qui-Gon questioned her.

Maureen shook her head.

"I won't make any assumptions until we get there, but there is a chance." She buttoned a shirt over her vest as the sound of a police siren could be heard just outside the apartment. "You can come with me but you have to promise me you stay out of the way and do exactly what I tell you." Turning to her twin, "You got your bag?"
"Yeah," Malachi responded as he a black leather bag into a backpack.

"All right." Maureen placed her 9mm in her shoulder holster and walked up to Qui-Gon. "I'm going to have to ask you to give your lightsabers to Malachi. He'll keep them in his backpack and he'll stay with you."

Obi-Wan looked wide-eyed to his Master for guidance.

Qui-Gon's blue eyes locked with Maureen's brown. "No," was Qui-Gon's firm answer.

"Master Jinn," Maureen unconsciously rolled her shoulders before squaring them. "This world is decades away from lightsaber technology."

"But what about the other Jedi?" Obi-Wan asked.

Qui-Gon's eyes never left Maureen, even as she looked away to answer Obi-Wan's question.

"We don't know if this is them." She said. "But I can assure you that the first person that pulls a lightsaber in a public situation like this, will have half the United States Military down their throats in a very short time." She looked back to Qui-Gon. "I'd rather they not be going after either of you."

"I'll stay with you or I will give them back to you if we have to separate." Malachi added.

"Please Master Jinn," Maureen requested. "At least until we know what we're up against here."

As she spoke the siren could be heard stopping just outside the building. Qui-Gon unhooked his lightsaber and handed it to Malachi, instructing Obi-Wan to do the same. Malachi put them in the backpack when someone started pounding on the door. He quickly turned off the stove and followed his sister.

"Coming," Maureen called and opened the door up to reveal a uniformed officer.

"Agent Lee?" The officer asked.

"Yeah, let's go," she answered not wanting to waste time. When the officer hesitated after seeing Malachi, Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan head towards the door Maureen raised her hand and added, "We don't have time for this. They're coming with us."

The officer turned and headed down to his car, aided by a slight brush of the Force.

The ride to the location of the bus was short and uneventful. Malachi quietly explained why cars moved out of the way of the
police car they were riding in and why they were effectively locked into the back seat of the car. Soon they came upon a police blockade. Maureen was out of the door the moment the car stopped. Malachi and the Jedi's quickly moved to an area where onlookers were gathering.

"I'm here." Maureen took a deep breath as she alerted her boss to her presence.

"Good," Harry Eatinger said and held up a hand, concentrating only on the FBI agents around him. "Harris, Tyler, see what you can do about moving this crowd back. Johnson, pass the word that we are going to make a switch."

He finally concentrated on Maureen by grabbing her upper arm and heading towards the bus.

"Thanks for coming Maury." He said. "This one's weird."

"Who are we dealing with?" She was speaking to her boss but neither of them looked at anything but the bus standing by itself in the foreground.

"That the problem. We don't know."

"You mean the kidnappers won't identify themselves?" She asked, "I mean we have yet to speak to anyone we can identify as having taken over the bus."

Maureen stopped and looked at Harry as he continued.

"At approximately 8:15 am. tour shuttle number four left Arlington National Cemetery to make it's usual stops around the mall. It made routine stops at the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Smithsonian, Air and Space Museum and the White House. It was on it's way to the Jefferson Memorial when it just stopped." Harry nodded to the bus before continuing. "Someone on board has a cell phone because they called 911. We've had the line patched through and I've got Bill Faber trying to talk with them now.

"And?"

"And the phone just keeps getting handed off from one hysterical tourist to the next."

As they continued their approach Maureen noticed Agent Faber had one hand knotted in his own hair as he talked into a hands free microphone. Sweat marks were starting to show around the bulletproof vest he wore. Maureen tried to project a feeling of calm to him as she listened to her boss.

"Kidnappers don't usually allow their hostages to make a lot of noise like that," Maureen thought out loud.
"Hell," Harry snorted in reply. "We're not even sure how many people are on board. Thirty seven got on at Arlington but with all the stops they have made, who knows."

They finally got close enough to Faber to hear his half of the conversation.

"Ma'am, if you could just calm down and give the phone to who ever is in charge. I know you are scared ma'am, but ma'am..." Faber started to pace as he spoke.

"Do we know what's being used to hold the bus?" Maureen asked.

"We assume someone has a gun, but there could be a bomb. We can't get the hostages to agree on anything. We don't even have a consistent count of the number of kidnappers. We do have sharpshooters in place but they haven't been able to identify anyone through their scopes."

Maureen could help but let her chin drop in disbelief as she looked at Harry once more.

"Welcome to hell Maury," Harry said with a grim smirk. "You ready?"

Maureen nodded as her boss signaled they were about to move her into position. She used the Force to brush against Faber's shoulder. It got his attention because he turned around and made an excuse into the phone so he could make his exit.

Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan, Malachi stood at the back of a crowd of onlookers and watched as Maureen walked towards the bus alone with her hands open and held out to the sides for the hijackers to see her clearly.

"This is what Maury does best." Malachi watched his sister intently as he spoke. "She's a damn good listener in these situations."

On his right hand Malachi started thumbing a simple ring he wore. Qui-Gon observed the similarity to the way Maureen played with her necklace.

"Negotiations skills are very important," Qui-Gon offered. "Especially in our line of work."

"Mast...Qui-Gon," Obi-Wan grimaced a little in using his Master's real name. "Something doesn't feel right."

"I agree," Qui-Gon said as he continued to watch the bus.

Malachi glanced at Qui-Gon and nodded before returning his attention to his sister. He started thumbing his ring more quickly.
Maureen lowered her shields to take in the Force around her. There was an unnatural darkness centered around the bus and she let out an involuntary gasp at the chill that swept over her. She collected herself quickly and focused on being calm as she waited for the phone to ring.

The crowd pushed in around Qui-Gon and he felt slightly annoyed at the distraction. He still needed to heal and found it difficult to maintain his calm.

"George?" A voice said next to him. "George, dude, it's got to be you, man."

Realizing he was being addressed Qui-Gon turned to see a man close to his own age with long graying hair drawn into a braid. He wore a bandanna around his neck and a white T-shirt with a picture of a skull and a red and blue circle on the front.

"It's me George," the man pointed to himself. "Arnie, from Chicago."

"I'm sorry, you must be mistaken." Qui-Gon assured the man and turned his attention back to Maureen who was obviously talking to someone through her headset.

"No man," Arnie was persistent. "It's me."

Qui-Gon looked at Arnie and considered what he could do to quietly make Arnie less of a distraction.

"Hey man," Malachi interrupted to help Qui-Gon out. "Jerry Garcia lives."

"Oh you know it!" Arnie beamed. "Long live the Dead."

"Hey, did you see Rosie over there?" Malachi asked Arnie and pointed to the opposite end of the crowd. Arnie's eyes went wide as he spoke.

"No, is she here?"

"Yeah man," Malachi continued. "I think I saw her over there by those buildings."

"Really," Arnie was quite interested and started moving in that direction. "Thanks bro."

After he left, Qui-Gon turned to Malachi.

"The Dead?" He asked.

Malachi was focusing on his sister but let out a slight smile.

"They're a music group. I'll tell you about it later."
"I see," Qui-Gon sighed as he spoke, but his voice did not give his frustration away. He tried to center himself and remembered Obi-Wan. He was considerably surprised to find that Obi-Wan was no longer standing on the other side of Malachi.

"Obi-Wan?" He called. Malachi turned to look for the missing boy as well.

"There he is." Scanning the area Qui-Gon saw his Padawan exiting the crowd and running behind a building. Qui-Gon started pushing his way through the crowd to follow him.

"Qui-Gon wait!" Malachi called as he nervously looked back at his sister and then to the Jedi Master. He glanced once more at his sister and then started after Qui-Gon. With his back turned he didn't see Maureen hold her hands out in a stopping motion as the bus jerked forward and started driving in her direction.

Part 5

Obi-Wan noticed the back of the Jedi cloak as the figure wearing it pushed their way through the front of the crowd. He looked nervously at Qui-Gon and Malachi who were busy talking to a stranger. The figure in the cloak moved away from the crowd and headed towards a nearby alley. Not wanting the Jedi to get away, Obi-Wan followed, making his way quickly through the crowd.

When Obi-Wan entered the alley the Jedi in front of him stopped. Obi-Wan stopped in response, his anticipation made it impossible to speak. For several moments only the bottom of the Jedi's cloak moved as it swayed slightly in the breeze. Then the Jedi jerked to life and sprinted towards the end of the alley.

As the Jedi ran a mass of golden hair and a padawan braid fell out from the hood. Obi-Wan didn't let his surprise stop his pursuit. He still could not see the Jedi's face clearly but he suspected it was one of the older padawans.

Obi-Wan chased the other padawan through a maze of back alleys and side streets. Finally, the padawan ducked around yet another corner. When Obi-Wan followed he found himself blocked by a tall fence. The other padawan had obviously used the Force to help them climb the fence because he or she was already over it and well across the construction site on the other side. Obi-Wan quickly climbed the fence and jumped to the other side. He landed on the other side with his ankle twisted and he briefly fell to the ground. He got up and limped after the other padawan.

He was halfway across the construction site when he noticed the other padawan had again stopped in front of him. Obi-Wan slowed
down to accommodate the pain in his ankle and felt frustrated at his clumsiness. The Jedi just stood still; their back turned to Obi-Wan. As he approached Obi-Wan grew angry with the other Jedi. It was their fault he had fallen. It was their fault that he had come to this world in the first place.

In an easy manner the golden-haired padawan walked away from Obi-Wan.

"Of all the arrogance," Obi-Wan gritted through his teeth. His limp became more pronounced and his frustration grew. Not seeing a large rock in front of him, Obi-Wan tripped and landed in the dirt. The Jedi didn't look back. Obi-Wan slammed his palm against the ground and cursed. A bitter grimace crossed his face. The other padawan came to another fence and smoothly climbed it.

The padawan's profile revealed nothing to Obi-Wan. The padawan was female was definitely older than Obi-Wan. She was in an age group that didn't have much contact with Obi-Wan's group. Obi-Wan's shoulders trembled as he watched her walk away. He would have to tell Qui-Gon he had lost her.

Thinking of his Master, Obi-Wan took a deep breath to center himself. Some of his frustration left as he exhaled. A tendril of guilt plagued him once again as he pushed himself to his feet. He turned back to where he had entered the lot to find his Master and Malachi on the other side of the fence. Qui-Gon was doubled over and Malachi was gently lowering him to the ground.

Maureen rubbed her temples as she studied the smashed car in front of her. It was the car she had been standing in front of just moments before, when the bus had started rolling toward her. The bus hadn't been going very fast, but it moved fast enough to total the front end of a car that had been it's only blockade.

The pounding in her head seemed to alter Maureen's perception of what was happening. FBI agents were rushing around her as dazed passengers started filing off the bus. She felt someone brutally shove her to the ground. Distantly she heard Harry's voice telling her to lie still. As she lay there the oddest sensation washed over her. It was as if she had been swimming in the deep end of a swimming pool. The strange pressure was dissipating around her and she slowly cut through the fog of her senses.

"All clear," someone yelled from the bus. Harry dragged her to her feet.

"What the hell were you doing standing there like that Maury?" He asked as he turned her around to look at her, his hand firmly gripping her upper arm.
"I'm not sure what happened," Maureen stammered in reply.

"I'll tell you what happened," Harry continued. "When that bus started rolling you moved out of its way. Not very quickly, I might add. Then you just froze as it collided with Agent Wilkin's Taurus. And you just stood there when we stormed the bus. You know better than that Agent Lee. We're you trying to get yourself shot?"

The use of her last name shook the final cobwebs away from Maureen's mind.

"What we got?" Harry asked an agent who was just leaving the bus.

"We've got nothing sir," he said. "No guns, no kidnappers, nothing."

"You're kidding me?" Disbelief colored Harry's words.

"I just heard one of the passengers say there was no kidnapper and he was demanding to know what's going on."

Maureen carefully considered all that she had heard. Somehow she knew this turn of events was connected to the pressure she felt when she started trying to negotiate with those on board the bus. As was her norm, Maureen tried to send out a calming effect to those she was talking to over the phone. This time when she used the Force, however, it did not have the desired effect. She felt a strong sensation of darkness and quickly became engulfed in a feeling of pressure. The pressure had slowed her responses and she had been sluggish to move away from the bus. When the bus had collided with the car she felt something snap within the Force around her.

"I guess it's a good thing they didn't find any guns. Right Agent Lee?" Harry asked sarcastically and then roughly released her arm.

Maureen followed Harry as he walked towards the bus. Paramedics were working with the bewildered passengers. The FBI agents started moving off the bus to make room for the forensics team. As one of the men exited Maureen noticed he kicked a small rock out of the bus. Maureen saw that Harry was preoccupied so she moved over to stand by the rock. She bent down as if to brush the dirt off the front of her jeans and quickly palmed it. The rock vibrated as it came in contact with her hand. As she had suspected, it was Force sensitive.

Sliding the rock into her pocket she turned her attention to the crowd of onlookers, already sensing that Malachi was not there. She brushed off the paramedic that Harry had sent to check on her and moved to her boss' side. It was time to let the forensics crew do their job, even though Maureen was already certain they would find nothing.
It had only taken Qui-Gon a minute to push through the crowd and follow his apprentice. He was initially concerned over Obi-Wan's disappearance but now he was more concerned with the boy's impulsiveness. That trait was quickly becoming a problem for their Master-Padawan relationship. But Qui-Gon also knew that Obi-Wan had seen something important to make him act so quickly.

He was able to follow Obi-Wan's progress through the alleys, catching glimpses of him as he rounded corners and dodged behind buildings. Luckily these streets were empty with almost everyone in the area going to see what was happening with the bus.

Qui-Gon tried to keep up with his padawan despite the tenderness in his side. He had not fully healed from the blow he had sustained and his muscles were constantly reminding him of their discomfort. He also suspected that his discomfort was well known to Malachi who was only a few paces behind and gaining on him quickly.

When Qui-Gon rounded the last corner his breathing had become labored. He stopped at the fence and then made an effort to climb it. The strain on his side was too much. A bolt of pain swept through him and it was all he could do to cling to the wire of the fence without falling. He watched helplessly as Obi-Wan fell to the ground and the other padawan escaped. A strong pair of arms encircled his torso and supported him, helping him off the fence. Malachi supported him as he gently lowered Qui-Gon to the ground.

"Easy Qui-Gon," Malachi said as he performed an initial check of the Jedi Master. "I need you to lie still. Take deep breaths."

Qui-Gon flinched when Malachi touched his side but he continued to breathe without interruption. He heard Malachi breathe a sigh of relief.

"We you didn't do yourself any good, but I think you'll live." Malachi said grimly. "Qui-Gon you have to give yourself time to heal."

They looked up to see Obi-Wan scaling the fence near them.

"Mast...Qui-Gon," Obi-Wan corrected himself. "Are you alright?"

"I'll be fine Obi-Wan," Qui-Gon assured him. "You should not have run off like that."
Obi-Wan hung his head.

"I'm sorry Master," he said quietly.

"We'll discuss it later," Qui-Gon said as he slowly moved to his feet with Malachi's help. "Did you recognize the padawan?"

"I don't know her name but I've seen her before," Obi-Wan offered after thinking a moment. "She's older than me. She's a blond human. I think I've seen her with Master Bereethe."

Qui-Gon closed his eyes and focused on his breathing. Deep breaths were coming easier to him.

"I believe Master Bereethe's padawan was a blond female." He spoke quietly. "And Master Bereethe is an expert on Master Rasme."

Malachi noted the frown Qui-Gon wore on his otherwise placid face. He did not try to stop Qui-Gon when he moved to stand up. He could see Qui-Gon's shoulders were slightly forward.

"A friend of yours?" Malachi asked.

Qui-Gon nodded but did not look up from the ground.

Obi-Wan caught everyone's attention when he asked, "What about Maury?"

Malachi focused on his sister for a few moments. He became confident she was all right as he noticed members of the construction crew returning to their work in the adjoining field. Apparently the show was over.

"She's fine," he said. "But she'll probably be busy for a while. I suggest we take the subway home and let Qui-Gon rest. I'll call Maury and let her know. She will meet us as soon as she can."

Malachi started walking away, keeping a close eye on Qui-Gon. The Jedi Master walked as if there were lead weights holding him down. This bothered Obi-Wan who fell into step beside him. After a moment Qui-Gon placed his hand on Obi-Wan's shoulder and gave his apprentice a sad smile. The group traveled in compatible silence until they made their way back to the apartment.

It was almost 5:00 p.m. by the time Maury made it home. She heard noises coming from one of the recreation rooms below the apartment and stopped in there before going upstairs.

Malachi and Obi-Wan were in full sparring gear, going through some basic Taekwon Do fight combinations. Maury stood in the doorway and watched them for a moment. Obi-Wan was obviously a fighter but was just as obviously unfamiliar with hand to hand fighting techniques.
"Keep your guard up Obi-Wan," Maureen shouted in encouragement. "Chi has long legs, be prepared."

Obi-Wan managed to hold his own very well but was no match for the seasoned black belt. In an unguarded moment Obi-Wan found Malachi's left foot on inch away from the right side of his head. Malachi slowly retracted his leg and smiled.

"And that's why you need to keep your guard up," He said.

"I haven't had much training in hand to hand combat." Obi-Wan panted as he started removing his headgear.

"Let me guess," Maury said as she walked into the training room. "They concentrate on lightsaber practice first."

Green eyes bobbed as Obi-Wan nodded.

"Makes sense," Malachi added. "Weaponry takes more time to master. Especially a lightsaber." He turned his full attention to his twin. "I needed a work out and Obi-Wan obliged. What did you find out?"

Maury crossed her arms in front of her and sighed.

"Where's Qui-Gon?" She asked.

"Upstairs resting," Malachi answered. "He should be doing much better now. I made him concentrate on healing himself."

"The forensics team found nothing," Maury paced the living room as she spoke. "Not that I expected them to find anything."

"We know the other Jedi who are involved," Qui-Gon said from the sofa he had been resting on. "That will help us."

"Easy for you to say, Master Jinn. Our people have a hard time with things they can't explain."

"It would have been helpful if I had caught Master Bereethe's padawan." Obi-Wan frowned as he spoke.

"You must focus on the moment Obi-Wan," Qui-Gon instructed. "Not dwell on the past. Perhaps some meditation is in order while I hear what Maury has to say."

"But..."

Qui-Gon lifted his hand and gently pointed at Obi-Wan.

"Your anger has gotten out of control twice since we came here." Qui-Gon's eyes copied the seriousness of his voice. "You cannot risk letting it overtake you at a more inappropriate time. Our success depends on clear thinking."
"Yes, Master."

When Obi-Wan had settled himself in the kitchen the conversation started again in the living room.

"As I was saying," Maury continued. "It will be frustrating dealing with this hijacking knowing what I know and not being able to tell anyone."

"As long as we can stop these two Jedi, without anyone getting hurt, this problem will eventually go away." Malachi offered. "But how did they manage to take control of the bus in the first place."

Maureen reached into her pocket, pulled out the stone she had picked up at the bus site, and tossed it onto the coffee table in the middle of the room. The pale green color of the stone was reflected in the shiny wood below it.

Qui-Gon picked it up to inspect it.

"Correlian marcasite." He said as he handed it to Malachi. "I've never heard of it being Force sensitive before."

"This rock was on the bus." Maureen said. "Is it possible that the Jedi used it to control the hostages?"

Qui-Gon said nothing for a long time. Malachi noticed the pause but continued to inspect the stone. After a few minutes Maureen grew restless.

"Excuse me," she glared at Qui-Gon impatiently. "I asked you a question."

Qui-Gon looked directly at her.

"I was trying to remember if I had heard of such a thing." His face was grim. "I don't believe I have. But, it is possible."

"Thank you," Maureen punctuated her words by returning Qui-Gon's glare back to him. She started pacing again.

"So they used this as an amplifier for the Force?" Malachi asked.

"Hello," Maureen gave him and exasperated look and pointed to Qui-Gon. "He just said that. Weren't you listening?"

"Well excuse me," Malachi threw back at her. "You don't need to jump down my back. I didn't take a bus load of people hostage."

Qui-Gon looked from one sibling to the other and shook his head.

"I don't think either one of your attitudes is helping this situation."
"Back off Master Jinn," Malachi glared. "We didn't exactly ask for this."

Maureen responded by moving closer to her brother and fixing him with a hard stare.

"Yes, I think we've already discussed that this morning."

"Apparently, you both were not well trained in dealing with sibling rivalry." Qui-Gon spoke under his breath but loudly enough for the twins to hear him.

"And just what the hell is that supposed to mean?"

Obi-Wan sat in a lotus position in the kitchen and concentrated on his breathing. He tried centering on his frustration and letting it diffuse into the Force. As he tried, however, he felt it bouncing back into his being. He continued to concentrate and try and pinpoint the source of his problem. A sluggish feeling draped over his thoughts and he started to feel an overwhelming sense of pressure in the force. It was forcing his anger back upon Obi-Wan.

Obi-Wan opened his eyes in realization. It wasn't his fault that he had lost control of his anger. Someone or something was using his emotions against him. It was the same as when he had first come to Earth and when he had tried to confront Master Bereethe's padawan.

"I have had enough of this bickering!"

Qui-Gon's yelling caught Obi-Wan's attention. He moved into the living room where his Master, Malachi, and Maureen were all yelling at each other.

Fighting back the impulse to give into his frustration and join the argument, Obi-Wan tested the Force to find the source of the disturbance. He eyes were quickly drawn to a pale green rock sitting on a table between the other three. Obi-Wan could feel the negative energy emanating from this stone.

He looked around quickly and noticed two pieces of metal tubing, a little larger than the size of a lightsaber, sitting on a bookshelf. One tube was silver and the other black. Obi-Wan grabbed the silver one and noticed a small light bulb behind a polymer sheet on one side. Despite the plastic end the tube felt solid. Obi-Wan stepped over to the arguing adults and slammed the rod down on the rock, smashing it into smaller pieces.

Part 6

Qui-Gon inhaled deeply and blinked his eyes. The tension of the
room splintered and broke apart, like the piece of marcasite Obi-Wan had smashed. The air seemed cleaner as if some choking gas had been vented. Across from him Malachi sank down into a chair, face slightly gray with fatigue and Maureen pressed her fingers against her temples as if fighting a headache. The tightness in her features betraying her pain.

Obi-Wan’s face wore a sheen of sweat and his skin was unnaturally pale.

"The stone," Obi-Wan looked to his Master, his voice a little dazed. "I think it had something to do with my anger. Or at least, something was helping me lose control, just like it was doing to the three of you."

"I think you're right, Padawan. I believe Master Beerethe and his Padawan were able to channel emotions using this stone as an amplifier."

"The fear on the bus," Maureen commented with an effort, still rubbing her temples. "People have become more and more afraid of terrorist acts in the U.S."

"My guess is the stone amplifies an emotion already present." Qui-Gon added.

"That would explain why the people on the bus overreacted to nothing," Maury agreed. "And our frustration."

"So much for emotional control." Malachi frowned.

"We are still human," Qui-Gon assured them. The trace amount of humor in his voice had a comforting effect on the rest of the group. "That isn't always a bad thing."

A corner of Malachi's mouth tilted up.

"I'll try to remember that." He said.

Maureen pushed both hands through her hair and rotated her head from side to side.

"Okay," she sighed. "Someone tell me what the chances are that this is the only stone they have."

"Force sensitive stones are not as rare as we would like to believe," Qui-Gon inspected a small chunk of the jade as he spoke. "I've never seen one with this property before. But I doubt anyone would risk traveling the Portal without being prepared." He pushed the larger pieces of marcasite aside and collected the remaining dust in his hand. "We should separate the remaining pieces so they can't be used together." Opening the front door he gently blew the dust outside.

"How did Master Beerethe and his Padawan come in contact with this stone at the temple?"
Qui-Gon contemplated Obi-Wan's question as he watched the marcasite dust disappear in the breeze.

"I don't know Padawan," he said. "But we've run out of time. They're going to hurt someone if we don't stop them."

"If only we had some idea of what they were looking for." Maureen slumped into a chair and continued to rub her temples. "God, I need a work out," she grumbled under her breath.

Qui-Gon straightened up and moved back to the couch, picking up the journal that had belonged to the twin's grandfather.

"It's time to consult our elders." Qui-Gon skimmed though the pages of the journal as he spoke. "Your grandfather mentioned the names of two people in his journal. He believed these were members of the original group of Jedi who had left Coruscant and ended up on Earth." Finding the page he was looking for, Qui-Gon read the names out loud. "Bodhidharma, and Rasputin."

"Legend has it that Bodhidharma was a priest who lived in China close to two thousand years ago." Maureen said with a slight frown. "Supposedly he traveled to a Buddhist temple in the mountains. When he got there he found the priests inhabiting the temple were very sickly, malnourished, and weak. He set up an exercise program to strengthen their bodies, minds and spirits. What he started has been passed on and is now the foundation of modern Martial Arts. The Taekwon Do that Chi and I teach is one type of martial art."

"And the other?"

"He was considered to be a very shady character who lived in Russia in the earlier part of this century." Malachi started. "The heir to the thrown at that time was a very sick child. Rasputin seemed to be able to help the child and the child's mother became very influenced by this man, making others jealous. He was murdered and I think it was his death that made Grandpa believe he was a Jedi. According to legend he had to be shot, beaten, stabbed, exposed to the elements and drowned before he finally died. Through out the process he escaped several times making Grandpa believe he had some control of the Force."

"Grandpa and I had differing opinions on that point. He may have had some control of the Force, but Rasputin was not on the same caliber of man as Bodhidharma." Maureen interjected. "Good old Grigory was a womanizer and an opportunist. He didn't do anything that would not have helped him financially or politically."

"What did you call him?" Qui-Gon asked.

Maureen replayed her words in her mind.
"Oh, I'm sorry," she said. "Rasputin's full name was Grigory Efimovich Rasputin."

Qui-Gon inhaled sharply.

"That's him," he said. "The Padawan who stole the key to the Portal of Rasme. His name was Putain Grigor."

Lost in his or her own thoughts, no one spoke for a long time. Eventually Maureen rubbed her face with both hands and gave out a little chuckle.

"What?" Malachi asked.

"Oh, nothing," she shook her head as she spoke. "I just realized that Grandpa was right ....again. Like I shouldn't be used to that now." She rubbed her face again.

"At least now we have a direction to move in," Qui-Gon commented. "What else can you tell me about this Rasputin?"

"Not much I'm afraid," Maureen frowned. "Russian history isn't my forte."

"That's something in itself," Malachi rubbed his chin as he spoke. "Russia is on the other side of the Earth. If this Master Beerethe and his Padawan could somehow guide the portal to take them where they needed to go, why come here? And all this doesn't explain hijacking that bus."

"I don't think they were interested in the bus at all," Obi-Wan spoke up.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because when I saw the other Padawan, she was leaving the area. Once the crowd had formed she was no longer interested in what was happening with the bus."

"So she was creating a diversion," Qui-Gon said thoughtfully. "This bus is a form of public transportation, correct?"

A pair of nods confirmed his suspicions.

"Is there anything on the bus route that could be related to Rasputin or Russia?"

"Well there's Arlington National Cemetery," Maury extended her fingers as she named the landmark sites. "The Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the Smithsonian..."

She stopped and looked intently at her brother. Twin pairs of eyes glowed with realization.

"Of course," Maureen said. "I must be losing it. I need to make
a call.

She held out her hand and called her cell phone to her with a touch of the Force. Pressing a button she placed the phone to her ear and started pacing a little.

Malachi moved over to a bookshelf.

"The Smithsonian Institution is probably the greatest collection of museums on Earth." His fingers brushed across several volumes as he spoke. "And they recently had an Exhibit on Russian Antiquities. Ah, here it is. This was such a neat exhibit that I bought the catalogue."

Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon watched as Malachi flipped the pages. Glossy photos showed images of Russian artistry and wealth from a time long past in the countries history.

"Captain Benton please. Maureen Lee." Obi-Wan heard Maureen say as she paced just inside the kitchen door. He continued to look at the book Malachi had presented while he kept watch of Maureen movements.

"Here, this is what I was looking for." Malachi stopped flipping pages and pointed to a picture in the book. "I remember there being at least one item attributed to Rasputin."

Obi-Wan looked closely at the picture provided. It was a solid gold cross with elaborate metal work and encrusted with several jewels. At the center of the cross was an uncut stone that seemed misplaced amongst the delicately jeweled ones around it.

"Hello Captain," Maureen was speaking again. "Yes, it was an interesting situation. No, I'm fine. Thanks for asking. Captain have you heard of anything interesting happening at the Smithsonian today? Really?"

Maureen slowed her pace and listened intently for a long time. Her pause in speech attracted Qui-Gon and Malachi's attention as well.

"Interesting," She said at last. "Were they hurt? Good. I'm not sure. It just seemed logical if you consider the bus route. Thanks Captain. I'll keep you informed." She hung up the phone and turned to the rest of the group. "Obi-Wan, you get a gold star. The bus incident was only a diversion. While much of DCPD was busy with the bus, someone entered the rooms where the Russian Antiquities exhibit was located."

"Is that so strange in a museum here?" Qui-Gon asked.

"No," Maureen continued. "People come and go throughout the Smithsonian all the time. What our friends didn't anticipate when they planned their diversion is that the Smithsonian increased their security once they heard about the bus. They
were on the lookout for suspicious activity. And when someone deliberately entered a closed off area of the Smithsonian, it caught Securities attention."

"Closed?" Malachi's eyebrows knitted together. "Why was the exhibit closed?"

"Because the exhibit ended last Friday," came the reply. "It has been packed up and waiting to be sent to the West Coast for another showing."

"You asked if someone had been injured," Qui-Gon said.

"Yes, two security guards were dispatched to intercept the trespasser. When security caught up with them they were sitting on the floor, confused about what had happened."

"Master Bereethe used the Force on them." Qui-Gon hung his head as they spoke the words.

"Apparently this Master Bereethe was trying to find out where the exhibit had been moved to." Maureen then added, "He didn't hurt them. That's significant."

Qui-Gon nodded but continued to frown.

"So where is the exhibit now?" Malachi asked.

"The museum curator's are not saying but how would you send a priceless exhibit across country?"

Malachi thought for a moment about all the security lessons his sister had told him in the past.

"I'd probably fly it unmarked aboard a commercial passenger flight." He said finally. "That's where the best security is."

Maureen nodded in agreement.

"Dulles?" Malachi asked.

"No," Maureen answered as she picked up the flashlight Obi-Wan had used to smash the Force Sensitive stone. "Baltimore International." She tossed the flashlight to her brother and retrieved the black one from its resting-place. "We might need these."

With a frown Malachi looked at the flashlight in his hand and nodded. Stepping back he used a touch of the Force to activate the lightsaber within the cylinder. A soft white beam with intermittent patches of blue, pink, and green emerged with a familiar hum. Malachi moved the saber through a riposte to check for balance and then powered the saber down.

Qui-Gon's eyes widened.
"You have lightsabers?" It was a statement more than a question.

Maureen copied her brother's actions with her own saber. Her blade was a deep amber color.

"Yes, Master Jinn." She answered carefully. "Grandpa insisted on it but we've never used them in public. I meant what I said earlier. This world is not ready for the Force and the technology that you are used to."

Malachi chuckled a little as he thumbed a red button on the side of his lightsaber's casing.

"When Grandpa told us about the portal he emphasized that someone else could come through it at any time, and that we should always be prepared for when that happened. We keep these disguised as flashlights so we can carry them if we ever need to, without attracting too much attention." Malachi explained. "The saber cannot be turned on without using the Force to activate the blade. But the flashlight is just a simple flashlight. Obi-Wan broke my bulb."

"Better than your focusing stone," Maureen commented. Setting her lightsaber down she left the room to gather some supplies.

"May I?" Qui-Gon asked and held out his hand.

"Of course," Malachi said as he turned his saber over to Qui-Gon to inspect. "We promised Grandpa that we would never use these unless it was absolutely necessary. It feels strange to be faced with that prospect at this time."

"I've never seen a saber that's multicolored before," Obi-Wan commented, watching the colored patches of the saber glow as his master examined the blade.

"The focusing crystal is an opal." Malachi explained. "A friend traveled to Australia and brought back a simple rock for me as a gift. When she gave it I could feel its Force sensitivity immediately. She had no idea that inside the rock was the crystal I had been seeking to finish my saber. My only concern is that opals are naturally fragile."

"You grandfather brought the rest of the materials with him?" Qui-Gon asked as he finished his inspection.

"All of the important components, yes." Maureen answered as she reentered the room. "He brought several supplies with him when he left Coruscant. It was up to us to find and cut our focusing crystals. Mine is made of a smoky quartz crystal I found in a river bed. Now we must hurry. The airport is an hour away from here and our Jedi friends have several hours of a head start."
Malachi picked up his doctor's bag and grabbed his car keys off a nearby table.

"I'll drive." He said and they headed out the door.

To be continued...Comments always welcomed at Sphinx@hyperchat.com

Part 7

Qui-Gon watched the scenery pass by from the back seat of Malachi's car. He gently tugged on the straw to a vanilla milk shake he had received when the group stopped for food. Maureen had not eaten since early in the morning and the sun was rapidly setting to the West. Qui-Gon's expression had shown his surprise when Obi-Wan placed his own order. Instead of questioning this, Qui-Gon requested the same and was now slowly sipping a drink that was a little too sweet for his taste.

In his mind Qui-Gon considered the events of the past few days. He could sense that when they met with Master Bereethe and his Padawan their situation would reach a climax, and that climax was fast approaching. Even more frustrating for Qui-Gon was his relationship with Obi-Wan. There seemed to be no improvement in their relationship and that bothered the Jedi Master. Obi-Wan's bouts of anger, although artificially induced, had reawakened Qui-Gon's doubts about his training abilities. Could he still be the type of Master able to lead a young mind away from the dark and show him the right path? Without question Qui-Gon could see that Obi-Wan was very intelligent and full of promise to the Jedi Order. Would not that promise be better trained by someone who was younger and more confident in their abilities?

Yet Qui-Gon remembered the smile on his Padawan's face when they first saw each other after traveling through the Portal. Obi-Wan's smile had done much to remove the lingering pain Qui-Gon experienced as a result of being hit by the car. Behind a slight smile Qui-Gon thanked the Force for bringing Obi-Wan into his life.

"So what's the plan?"

Malachi's question intruded on Qui-Gon's thoughts.

"We know the airline, so finding the correct hanger won't be difficult." Maureen turned in her seat so she could look at all the car's occupants. "However, I am concerned about security. It will be tough to get through without raising suspicions."

"In what way?" Qui-Gon asked.

"As an F.B.I. agent I can get us in the door. But I don't want to use that advantage." Maury paused to consider her words carefully. "I don't want to place my concerns about the future
ahead of stopping this Master Bereethe and his Padawan. However, it will be much harder for Malachi and myself to explain certain things if my presence here is recorded officially. And there will be security cameras."

"Then we will have to disable the cameras."

"Actually, that might not be necessary." Maureen reached into the bag she brought and pulled out two small electronic devices. "These are a type of radio transmitter a friend of mine was developing at work. He was trying to create a better wireless radio for negotiators and I helped him test these. The problem was that in all film footage of the test my image came back extremely blurred. My friend eventually scrapped the project because the radios didn't meet his expectations. I kept the transmitters for just this type of occasion."

Qui-Gon inspected one of the devices.

"I'm not sure why my image was blurred," Maureen continued. "But I believe it has something to do with the Force. No other image was blurred on the film. There are two drawbacks. The first is that I only have two of these."

"You and Malachi should keep these with you." Qui-Gon said. "You are in more danger of being recognized. What's the second drawback?"

Maureen shrugged and continued.

"Even if these distort our image on security tape, there's no guarantee that the F.B.I. lab can't remove the distortion later."

"That's a risk we'll just have to take," Malachi said with conviction.

"Agreed," his sister replied. "And if we're lucky, and we stay close to each other, the radios may keep all of our identities concealed."

"We should separate into two groups," Qui-Gon said. "Which of you has the best skills with your lightsaber?"

"Maury does," Malachi spoke without hesitation. "But it's been awhile since either of us worked with them."

"Then I want Obi-Wan to go with you, Maureen."

"The are several buildings that make up the hanger structures for the airlines. There may be a lot of ground to cover." Malachi paused as they passed under a highway exit sign. "Maury, once we exit I'm going to pull over and change places with you. You can drop Master Jinn and I off by the maintenance road. That will take us straight to the holding hangers."
"Understood," Maureen nodded. "Obi-Wan and I will slip in from the opposite end."

Twenty minutes later Qui-Gon and Malachi walked quietly toward the proper hangar. Although the airport bustled with activity, the hangars seemed quiet. The younger man mentioned third shift being low on personnel but Qui-Gon remained cautious. There was little chance they would be able to enter the hangar undetected. As they passed by a light pole Qui-Gon noticed a security camera focused on the surrounding area. A little red light indicated that the camera was recording.

Malachi and Qui-Gon entered the large hangar easily, a happily sleeping security guard no longer posed a threat.

"Surgeon General says we aren't getting enough sleep," Malachi said as he gave the guard a Force suggestion. "As a doctor it's my duty to see this man follows the General's orders."

Qui-Gon let out a quiet snort of amusement but continued to be aware of his surroundings. He could sense a fluctuation in the Force around him, as though someone was trying to hide their presence. In that moment he knew Bereethe and his Padawan were already here.

Across the airport Obi-Wan and Maureen were cautiously making their way through a terminal.

"Once we get outside the hangars it will be easy to slip into a hanger through the employee entrance." Maureen spoke quietly to Obi-Wan. "If I remember correctly there is a staircase just over..."

"Maury? Hello, Maureen Lee."

Maureen stiffened visibly before Obi-Wan's eyes. He watched as she transformed her face into a strange smile and turn around to meet the man who had called her.

"Kevin, hello." She said as she turned to the man who approached her. "Imagine seeing you here."

"Yes, funny isn't it?" Kevin seemed rather nervous as well when he spoke. He was a little taller than Maureen. Obi-Wan guessed that he was about the same age as well even though he was slightly balding and with small wire rimmed glasses. Next to him stood a beautiful young woman with flowing blond hair. Obi-Wan noticed the other woman was not smiling and looked at Maureen in a very guarded way.

"We just came back from Cozumel," Kevin stammered, blushing slightly. "Sort of a vacation for us."

"A second honeymoon sweetheart," the woman corrected as she
plastered herself against Kevin. Obi-Wan could feel the tension in the area rising.


"Yeah," Kevin looked down at his feet. "So what are you doing here?"

"Uhm, I am bringing..." she paused and looked at Obi-Wan, "my student to meet someone. This is..."

"Ben," Obi-Wan offered.

"Hello Ben," Kevin smiled at him. "It's nice to meet you. And a martial artist as well. I can tell you you're getting the best training in D.C. You have a great teacher, two actually."

"I hate to interrupt," Jackie smoothed her hand over Kevin's chest. "But we really must get going."

"Of course," Kevin blushed a little more as he spoke. "It was good seeing you Maury. Tell Chi I said hello."

"You too, and I will."

Maureen didn't move for a few minutes as the couple left them. Finally she closed her eyes and exhaled loudly.

"Well that was uncomfortable," Maureen offered at last.

"Who was that?" Obi-Wan's curiosity got the best of him.

"That was my ex-husband and his wife."

"Your ex-husband. You mean here you don't bond for life?"

Obi-Wan's eyes widened a little as he spoke.

"I used to think so, Obi-Wan. But no, not always."

They turned back to their original task but Obi-Wan noticed Maureen was more subdued than before the meeting. Finally, as they reached the door they were looking for, she stopped.

"You're very lucky Obi-Wan." Her voice was quiet as she spoke. "You live in world where your gifts are accepted and understood. Where there are others who share those gifts. Here, even those you think will understand, who you think will accept you despite your differences, don't. It makes relationships hard. I'm just thankful Chi and I are so close."

She smiled a sad smile and then shook her head as if to toss away her train of thought.

"And what's this Ben stuff?" She asked with a playful tone.
The hangar was quiet but Qui-Gon could feel an unease settling in the air. He let the Force lead. There was a muted presence nearby, a life Force that seemed to be slowly but steadily diminishing. This confused Qui-Gon but he did not let it distract him.

Finally they came to a closed door in a darkened area of the hangar. The lock to the door lay in pieces at their feet. Qui-Gon raised his lightsaber but did not ignite it. Malachi followed his actions and nodded. In one swift motion Qui-Gon kicked the door open and entered the room, Malachi following behind.

The back of a dark figure stood over some crates on the other side of the room.

"I knew you were coming Master Jinn." Master Bereethe straightened his shoulders as he quietly spoke. "Your Force is so strong."

"Bereethe," Qui-Gon spoke firmly. "We know what you are looking for. You and your padawan must stop and turn yourselves over to me. We need to go back to Coruscant, to the Jedi Council."

Bereethe bobbed his head up and down a little but didn't speak. Malachi shifted his gaze between the two Jedi present.

"I cannot go back with you, Master Jinn. Jeslyn will not go back." The voice was almost a whisper as the older Jedi slumped before them. "It will not be allowed."

"I don't understand." Qui-Gon took a cautious step forward as he spoke but kept his guard up.

"Funny," Bereethe said. "I thought you would." He slumped forward, his cloak vibrating over shaking muscles. In a quick movement he groaned and then turned to face his adversaries while igniting lightsaber. Malachi nervously clutched his lightsaber, ready to ignite it when Master Jinn did the same.

"Please don't do this Master Bereethe," Qui-Gon begged as the older man faced him. The words were merely absorbed by the humming of Bereethe's lightsaber as he lunged at Malachi.

Obi-Wan moved cautiously between the rows of shelving and boxes in one of the airport's hangars. He and Maureen had been led in this direction, not by any strange direction in the Force, but by a trail of sleeping security guards and destroyed security cameras.

"Apparently we didn't need to worry about security after all. Our friends from Coruscant have taken care of that problem for us."
These were the only words Maureen had spoken since they had found the first guard. Obi-Wan sensed her growing agitation with each of the four guards they had found. As they each walked down a separate isle in the building, Obi-Wan could see her in between the boxes that separated them.

A loud crack, the sound of wood bending under strain, echoed in the building and they stopped their progression. Maureen looked at Obi-Wan and he nodded, his shoulders straightening for the task ahead. Cautiously they moved forward once again.

Master Bereethe's Padawan, Jeslyn, was so engrossed in searching the crate in front of her that she didn't notice their approach. They watched as she pulled bubble wrapped objects and stuffing out of the crate. Finally she stopped and carefully lifted a smaller object with an odd sort of reverence. Even though it had been made amorphous but the packaging around it, Obi-Wan and Maureen could make out the vague shape of Rasputin's cross.

The air around the three men crackled with unseen energy. Qui-Gon easily deflected Bereethe's blows but between each riposte there was a pause as the men considered their next move. Malachi followed Qui-Gon's lead and did nothing past defense in those few moments of calm before the fury, blocking a blow to Malachi's head, another to Qui-Gon's forearm. Qui-Gon tried to reason with the older Jedi.

"Master Bereethe, you are out numbered. Throw down your saber and we can discuss this."

Malachi deflected three thrusts in quick succession, not backing up but managing to hold his ground. His confidence with his saber skills started to increase the more he entered the fight.

Qui-Gon side stepped a vertical swipe and stumbled over a small crate, almost losing his balance.

Another lunge and a Force thrust knocked Malachi off his feet. He rolled immediately into a crouch as Qui-Gon leapt to protect him but stopped as Bereethe sagged where he stood. The older Jedi was trembling, his breathing labored, one hand unconsciously rubbing his chest.

"I do not want to fight you Master Bereethe." Qui-Gon spoke carefully. "I sense that you do not want to fight either."

Haunted eyes answered Qui-Gon.

"You cannot fight what you do not see, Master Jinn."

Bereethe yelled as he resumed his offense with jerk like a puppet thrown on stage. Malachi jumped to his feet to aid in the fight but Qui-Gon was very much in control of the
situation. Lunges and thrusts were met with effective blocks. Master Bereethe, however, was not without tricks and he maneuvered close to Qui-Gon. Their glowing blades locked, pouring sparks in a blazing fury near Qui-Gon's head. With the strength of the Force Qui-Gon threw Bereethe off and the older Jedi spun backwards, the cloth of his tunic tearing as he fell against a crate, his lightsaber falling from his hand.

Qui-Gon called the other saber to him and deactivated it. Malachi and he looked at the fallen Jedi speculatively for any signs of aggression. It was then that they noticed a large burn on the other man's chest where his tunic had been ripped open.

Dr. Malachi moved into prompt action, carefully helping Bereethe onto the ground where he could examine the wound more carefully. Bereethe did not resist, but watched with glassy eyes some turmoil only his brain could see.

"He's got a full thickness burn here," Malachi said as he pulled his doctor's bag out of his backpack. "He was exposed to whatever burnt him for some time."

Qui-Gon surveyed the area and finally noticed a small pouch that had apparently been torn off of Bereethe in his fall. Once he retrieved the pouch it opened to reveal a stone of Corellian Marcasite. Malachi paused in his ministrations to look at the stone with a grim face and then turned back to his work.

Qui-Gon laid the stone on the ground and reignited his saber. With stoic control he lowered the beam of focused light onto the stone. An eerie hiss filled their ears followed by a loud pop. When he removed the blade of his saber the charred, shattered remains of the crystal were revealed. Qui-Gon ground the remains to dust with the heel of his shoe and moved to Bereethe's side. The older Jedi raised a weak hand to him.

"Jeslyn," he whispered.

"She was controlling you with the stone." Qui-Gon said gently.

"I should have been stronger. I should have detected her deception sooner, before she had control of me."

Qui-Gon smiled a sad smile filled with memories of Xanatos.

"It is hard to acknowledge deception where we don't want to see it," he offered in simple understanding to the Jedi before him.

Malachi opened a packet of white cream and gently smoothed it over the charred skin at his fingertips.

"Your burn is deep, but it will heal," he said. "But we'll have to get you somewhere where we can care for it properly." After he spoke he shook his right hand and then drew it into a fist. "Maureen has ignited her lightsaber." He looked at his hand and
then added. "The stone in my ring is from the same stone as her focusing crystal."

"I'll go." Qui-Gon spoke as he stood. "See what you can do to help Master Bereethe."

"Master Jinn," Bereethe spoke in a tone that caused Qui-Gon to stop. "What she is looking for, Jeslyn will not find here. But still, you must stop her."

Obi-Wan watched as Maureen slowly reached behind her back and pulled her gun out of its holster. She jerked her head at Obi-Wan and he hid behind a crate. The gun would be no match for a lightsaber, but Obi-Wan hoped Maureen could catch the Padawan by surprise. He gripped his lightsaber tightly.

"Freeze!" Maureen yelled at the Padawan.

Jeslyn jerked her head in Maureen's direction and hissed at her. Suddenly Maureen was knocked backwards against some shelving. Obi-Wan watched as Jeslyn ignited her lightsaber and leapt at Maureen. She looked like a savage animal as she attacked.

Maureen rolled out of the way of the first blow and ignited her lightsaber in response. Although she knew how to handle her lightsaber Maureen was definitely outskilled by the enraged Padawan. Obi-Wan moved to help his friend when he noticed something. Jeslyn was no longer holding the cross. Looking back towards the crate in which the cross had been packed, Obi-Wan spotted the cross on the ground. Jeslyn must have abandoned it when she attacked Maureen. Maureen continued to successfully block the attack so Obi-Wan moved to the crate to pick up the cross. He started to reach for it when he heard a sickening thud followed by the heavy clatter of a lightsaber across the floor.

Obi-Wan turned around to face Master Bereethe's Padwan, her saber pointed at him. Maureen lay on the floor, apparently knocked unconscious by her fall.

Obi-Wan took in Jeslyn's full appearance for the first time. Her face was gaunt, her eyes sunken, her mouth slightly open. Her breath's came in a ragged staccato that made her appear more like a wild animal than a controlled Jedi. She was more skilled than Obi-Wan but he quickly pushed thoughts of failure out of his mind. He would defend his friend, the Jedi, and the Portal of Rasme. He cleared his mind and called the Force to him just as Jeslyn thrust towards him with a loud yell.

The hum of her saber sang past his ear but he blocked it in time. Another blow landed on the ground by his feet with a shower of sparks but he jumped away, forcing himself to remain calm. Jeslyn continued her assault with wild movements but
Obi-Wan refused to follow. He continued to release his anxiety and felt the strength of the Force behind his defense. A block to his midsection, a twist and another swipe at his head. Obi-Wan continued to defend himself.

After a few moments of the heated battle, however, Obi-Wan felt himself growing tired. He held on in amazement at the other Padawan's stamina. Something in the back of his mind told him her abilities were unnatural, even to the Jedi.

He followed the Force and tried to land a blow to Jeslyn's arm but by some adrenaline induced state she was able to fend him off and catch him off guard. He twisted his ankle just as he saw her blade heading for his chest. A flash of green caught his eye as Qui-Gon entered the fight, protecting his Padawan. Soon the two of them were fighting side by side. In the excitement Obi-Wan realized Jeslyn was between them and the cross. She stepped back and bumped against it on the floor.

A sickening smile crept across her face when she realized what she had bumped against. She no longer attacked and the other Jedi stopped.

"Jeslyn," Qui-Gon spoke calmly, despite his labored breathing. "We have Master Bereethe. Let us take you both back to Coruscant where we can help you."

Jeslyn just smiled. In a quick motion she called the cross, still wrapped in bubble wrap, into her hand.

"Padawan!" Qui-Gon spoke more forcefully now. "I know you are under the spell of some Force you cannot control. If you fight it we can help you."

Behind him Obi-Wan heard Maureen stirring. Keeping his eye on Jeslyn, he moved to Maureen side to keep her from moving.

Somehow, with one hand Jeslyn managed to removed the wrapping from the cross and hold it up. She rubbed the center stone with her thumb. Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon felt the shift in the Force around them. She had opened the Portal of Rasme, the vortex swirling near to her side.

"Jeslyn," Qui-Gon attempted to move closer to her as he spoke. "Think of Master Bereethe, your Master. He's hurt. He needs you. Do you really want to go against him like this?"

The shift in Jeslyn's eyes was subtle but Obi-Wan saw her momentarily shift from being a crazed animal to a human being once again. Her grip on the cross loosened.

"Jeslyn stop!" Master Bereethe yelled from behind Qui-Gon. He was walking into the room with Malachi's support.

Jeslyn looked at her Master and horror filled her eyes. Whether
it was fear of her Master or acknowledgement of what she had tried to do no one would ever know. At the moment she looked away Qui-Gon turned off his saber and struck down with the casing, hitting her on the wrist of the hand in which she held the cross. The cross dropped to the ground as Jeslyn was thrown into the Portal. She screamed as she disappeared into thin air.

The group stood still with the realization of what had just happened. Only Master Bereethe moved as he walked to the Portal and held his hand in front of it. After a few minutes of silent meditation, the Force creating the Portal dissipated.

Qui-Gon watched Master Bereethe while he lifted the cross off the floor.

"May I?" Bereethe asked and Qui-Gon handed the cross to him.

In the back of the room Malachi turned his attention to his sister who was attempting to sit up.

Master Bereethe handled the cross almost reverently. So this is what Padawan Greigor took with him."

"Then the center stone is the key to the Portal," Qui-Gon spoke as he watched the older Jedi.

"No," Bereethe shook his head. "It isn't." Qui-Gon looked at him in surprise until Bereethe spoke again. "Master Rasme left no physical key to unlock the Portal. After all, he had to pass into the Force in order to create it. By then it was too late to leave anything solid behind."

"Then how..."

"The key is in the mind, Master Jinn." Master Bereethe handed the cross back to Qui-Gon as he continued with his soft whispy voice. "A Jedi can open the Portal if he or she has the proper focus to do so. This was Jeslyn's sole purpose for coming here. She controlled my actions but she never asked me about the key itself. When she finally had her hands on what she thought was the key she was so focused on opening the portal that she was able to do so without realizing she was doing all the actual Force manipulation herself."

"Where did she go?"

Bereethe looked away and sighed. "She will travel wherever her focus takes her. Then, hopefully, she will travel no more. I do not know why she turned to the dark. But I can only suspect someone or something else was behind this."

"Ow! Cut it out."

The attention of the Master's was drawn to Obi-Wan, Malachi, and Maureen.
"Don't be such a baby," Malachi chided his sister as he looked at the purpling bruise that was starting to form on her temple. "You're going to be okay but you'll have a nasty headache for a while." He turned his attention to the rest of the group. "Everyone okay?"

The Jedi nodded in response.

"I suggest we get out of here." Maureen offered. "The sooner the better.. Let the police think there was an attempted break in."

Obi-Wan looked around the room. Although several crates had been knocked about, and one obviously opened, there was little sign of the battle that had been there. He watched as his Master placed the cross back in the crate it had come from. As Qui-Gon turned to help Master Bereethe he looked to Obi-Wan and smiled. Obi-Wan smiled back, an unspoken indication of their partnership and friendship. With that the group cautiously made their way out of the hanger.

The next morning the group stood in the main recreation room of the center below the twin's apartment. Everyone felt relieved when the headline news mentioned a break in at Baltimore International. However, since nothing was stolen, the investigation was focusing on it being a robbery attempt and nothing more. Malachi had seen to Master Bereethe's burn but had voiced some concerns of the Jedi's overall health to Master Jinn in private. Both Qui-Gon and Chi suspected that the emotion of losing his padawan would be an important factor in the older Jedi's recuperation.

"The Portal can be opened anywhere," Master Bereethe said to the rest of the group. "This discovery came to me after studying Master Rasme's teachings for several years. I never shared this knowledge with anyone for fear the Portal would be misused. Obviously I was correct in this assessment. It is time for me to return to Coruscant and unravel the mystery of my Padawan."

He smiled slightly and then turned to the twins.

"Thank you for all your help. Your grandfather would be proud."

Both twins smiled at this and then turned toward Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan.

"I guess this is goodbye." Maureen said with a sad smile. "Things aren't going to be half as exciting with you gone."

"That may not be such a bad thing," Qui-Gon offered with a smile as he shook her hand.

"True," Maureen chuckled and then turned to hug Obi-Wan. "You take care of yourself kiddo. I'm really gonna miss you."
"I'm going to miss you too," Obi-Wan hugged back. "Thank you for everything."

Malachi held his hand out to Qui-Gon who shook it in friendship.

"Be careful Master Jinn." Chi said. "You can tell the council that we'll be watching things at this end, should something like this ever happen again."

"They'll be glad to know that." Qui-Gon tried to release from the handshake but Malachi held on.

"And thank you for helping me see the truth about the Jedi."

Qui-Gon smiled at Malachi. The unspoken understanding flowed between both men and was quickly picked up by Maureen who also smiled at her brother.

With the final goodbyes the group waited quietly as Master Bereethe focused on opening the Portal. As the Force created the vortex within the room the twins stepped back to give the Jedi plenty of room. Master Bereethe was the first to enter the Portal. Peacefully his robes swirled around him and he was gone.

Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon moved to the vortex, Qui-Gon's hands planted firmly on his Padawan's shoulders.

Just before they were about to enter Obi-Wan turned and waved to the friends they were leaving behind. Chi and Maury waved back as they watched the two Jedi disappear from their sight.

"Do you think we'll ever see them again?" Malachi asked as he and Maureen stared into the empty room.

"I don't know Chi. But would it be a bad thing if we did?"

He looked at her and shook his head.

"No," he said, "but just incase I think we out to look into some Kendo classes. A little Japanese swordmanship training is probably a good idea."

"I agree," Maureen said as she rubbed her bruised temple. "I definitely agree."

With that the twins turned out the light and left the room.

Traveling back through the Portal was not as bad as their first experience. When they stepped out on Coruscant both Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan were feeling dizzy and slightly nauseated, but not seriously so. They instantly met Mace Windu who was pacing back and forth with his hands on his hips. Upon seeing them he let out a sigh of relief, his features haggard from lack of sleep.
"Welcome back Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan." His face light up with a smile as he approached them, eyeing their clothing. "It looks as though you two had an interesting time."

Qui-Gon chuckled softly, then asked immediately, "Master Bereethe?"

Mace directed his attention to the other side of the room where a healer was checking Master Beerethe.

"He came through the Portal a few minutes before you did." Mace explained. "We've been waiting for your arrival and have had healers here since you left two days ago. He told us about his Padawan. I suspect this was the seed to the darkside that we discussed earlier."

Qui-Gon watched the healer attend the elder Jedi and then his gaze fell on his own Master, sitting quietly in a dark corner of the room.

"The Council would like a full report as soon as possible." Mace caught Qui-Gon's attention once again. "Perhaps we can ascertain what happened to Jeslyn."

"We'd like to change clothes first." Qui-Gon said.

"Fine," agreed Mace with a grin. "I'll set a meeting up for one hour from now." He then directed his attention to Obi-Wan.

"It is good to have you back Padawan Kenobi." Mace's genuine smile eased any lingering fears Obi-Wan had of the Councilor. "The Council looks forward to hearing your views on this mission as well."

Obi-Wan looked to his Master with slightly wide eyes. Qui-Gon smiled encouragingly and placed his hand on Obi-Wan's shoulder.

"Thank you Master Windu." Obi-Wan said, a bright smile across his face.

"Padawan," Qui-Gon said, "I'd like to speak with Master Yoda before the Council meeting." He turned to where the diminutive Master had been sitting only to find that Master Yoda had left the room. A crease formed on Qui-Gon's forehead. "Well, never mind."

He turned back to Obi-Wan and smiled again.

"Obi-Wan," he said, "ready to go home?"

"Yes Master," was all the assurance he needed.

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Epilogue:
Qui-Gon sipped tea as he nonchalantly glanced to his master. The council meeting had taken longer than expected. According to the healer's (and Malachi's) instruction, Master Bereethe's activity was limited, but he had been allowed to address the council while seated. His body appeared small and Qui-Gon realized this was due to the older man's posture. Qui-Gon could almost see himself in the Master Bereethe. It had not been that long ago when Qui-Gon had to report to the council about Xanatos. The heavy weight of a fallen padawan on their master's shoulders was easy to recognize by those who had experienced it first hand.

And what had his master looked like when Noipreen Delco had left Coruscant? Losing one's padawan to the Dark was something every Master accepted as a possibility, even if they kept those thoughts in the most distant corner of their minds.

"But to have a student simply walk away from you," Qui-Gon thought to himself. "Would that be easier or harder to take than losing someone to the dark?"

"Good looking, Noipreen's grandchildren are. Healthy. A resemblance I see." Yoda's spoke his first words after inspecting the gift the twins had sent back to him. It was a framed photograph of them with their grandfather. Noipreen's eyes showed his pride as he hugged his adult grandchildren tightly. Master Yoda had quietly looked at the photo for a long time before speaking.

"As I said in the council meeting, they are very strong individuals. They have been well trained." Qui-Gon unconsciously eased into his chair now that his Master was speaking once again.

"More questions you will receive, I believe," Yoda moved across the room and placed the picture on a shelf. "Curious many will be about Force sensitives trained outside Coruscant. Concerned many will also be."

"How many Jedi left through the Portal of Rasme?"

The little Master hung his head and closed his eyes for a moment.

"With Padawan Greigor, 37 there were. Made it 38, my apprentice did. Hard to lose him it was."

"I read Knight Delco's journal Master," Qui-Gon offered in comfort. "By his own words I know it was a hard thing for him to do as well. He missed you. But he also loved his family on Earth."

A slight smile raised the corners of Master Yoda's eyes and he nodded.
"His place he found." Master Yoda agreed. "Good that is. For all Jedi the same, one can hope."

"Master, what caused the discontent among the Jedi all those years ago?"

"Believe we stressed knighthood too much, they did." Yoda sighed before he continued. "Give the option of becoming a healer, member of agri-corps, or other, to the students we should."

"Many have the same argument now." Qui-Gon spoke gently. "Even though there is no shame in being a member of the agri-corps, many see assignment there as a sign of failure."

"Much worse is was, in Noipreen's time. Change there has been. More there is needed, perhaps."

With a thump of his gimer stick Yoda was standing up again.

"More tea for you Master Qui-Gon," he spoke as he moved to his kitchen area, pausing only to adjust the position of the picture he had just received.

The corner of Qui-Gon's mouth curled up as he watched his mentor.

"Only a cup more," he said. "I need to start working with Obi-Wan on his hand to hand combat tactics."

"Ah yes, good training this will be." Master Yoda called. "More about your Padawan's progress, you will tell me. Excellent hand to hand fighter Norpreen was. Told you of this, have I?"

Obi-Wan sat with his friends in the dining hall, filling them in about becoming Master Jinn's Padawan and all the adventures he had experienced.

"Chi took care of Master Beerethe's burns before he allowed us to leave. And Maury went to a store and bought me and Master Jinn books to read."

"What about?" As Bant spoke Obi-Wan observed her eyes. He hadn't thought it possible that her eyes could become wider than they already were.

"She gave my Master a book on the history of the martial arts they practice. He says I can read it after he's finished with it. Me, she gave a book about some girls adventure through a looking glass." He frowned a bit and then continued. "Apparently it is a classic and book she grew up with. She said I would appreciate it more after I read it a few times."

"And the Portal of Rasme?" asked Reeft, who had forgotten to eat during Obi-Wan's tale. "Are the Jedi going to start using it soon?"
"Yeah, Obi," Guy Muln added. "When do we get our chance to travel to another world?"

Obi-Wan folded his hands on the table in front of him and shook his head.

"The Council destroyed it after we reported to them." He didn't look his friends in the eye as he spoke. "But trust me guys, you wouldn't want to use it even if you could. It makes my stomach upset just thinking about it." After a moment he looked back at his friends and smiled. "And just wait until I make all of you a milk shake. They're terrific."

The four friends chatted happily for a while until Bant stiffened in her seat.

"Oh, oh," she whispered. "Don't look now but Bruck and Aalto just came in."

As if that were a queue, Bruck noticed Obi-Wan and his friends.

"I heard you were back Oafy!" He chided as he approached the group. "Probably a good thing too. I heard you've been signed up for some extra classes by Master Jinn. He must have realized how much work you need."

For a moment Obi-Wan closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Bant unconsciously brought her hands to her face while Reeft and Guy Muln looked nervously at each other and their friend.

"I believe you're right Bruck." Obi-Wan said at last. His green eyes were calm as he faced his childhood nemesis. "I'm sure Master Jinn has found several skills I need to work on. That is his job, as my Master." The slight emphasis on 'my' was not lost on Bruck.

"Yeah, well you'd better work on it." As he spoke Bruck jabbed a finger into Obi-Wan's chest. "Because I'm going to be working too, and you're going to see me at every competition and in every class you attend."

Bruck was caught completely off guard by the genuine smile that spread across Obi-Wan's face.

"That will be fine Bruck," Obi-Wan spoke easily. "Competition can be fun. But as I learned recently, I don't have to compete with you or anyone else if I don't want to. The only one I truly compete with is myself."

"You're exactly right Obi-Wan."

The group had been so engrossed in the scene before them that they had not noticed Master Jinn enter the dining hall. He gave Obi-Wan's friends a polite nod before turning to Bruck.
"You're Bruck Chun aren't you?" He asked. "I owe you a large debt of thanks."

"Sir?"

"You were the one who realized the Council had not officially recorded my taking Obi-Wan as my Padawan learner."

Obi-Wan bit his lower lip as his Master continued to talk. Bruck grew pale as he listened to the elder Jedi.

"We were away when I chose Obi-Wan and I assumed Master Yoda had taken care of the paperwork." Qui-Gon smiled pleasantly as he spoke. "But one learns we should never assume anything. Thanks to you I have corrected that error. Of course it was suggested that it may have been too late to enter Obi-Wan as my Padawan. But that was easily taken care of. Thank you again for ensuring Obi-Wan's place as my Padawan." He turned to Obi-Wan and continued. "If you don't mind visiting with your friends later Padawan, I was wondering if you could assist me. I could use your help on some chores."

"Yes Master." Obi-Wan said as he stood up from his seat and waved his good-byes. He didn't quite succeed in hiding his smile as he walked past Bruck. Obi-Wan didn't speak again until he and Qui-Gon were safely in their quarters.

"Master," he hung his head a little when he spoke. "It doesn't feel right lying to my friends."

"I know Obi-Wan," he said with a reassuring smile. "As Jedi we are often called to do things that make us uncomfortable. In this case, however, I know you are aware of just how dangerous the Portal of Rasme can be. As the council decided, it is best that we make everyone believe the Portal has been destroyed."

"And you're not angry with their decision?" Obi-Wan asked. "You told me you were angry that the Portal had not been destroyed earlier. Why doesn't it bother you that the Council isn't going to destroy it now?"

Qui-Gon looked away from questioning eyes a moment and thought.

"You ask a valid question Obi-Wan. One I hadn't thought about until now. I'm not sure I know why myself." He paused a moment and signed. "Perhaps the thought of a Force sensitive in a far away galaxy isn't as frightening as it first was. In any event, the Portal is a link to the Jedi who left through it in the past. Perhaps there will be a need to contact them or their descendents in the future."

Obi-Wan nodded his head with a smile that faded as he turned his attention to the carpet.

"Master...uhm..." he said with hesitation. "Just now...with
Bruck in the cafeteria...

"Yes, Obi-Wan?"

"I...uh...didn't expect you to...well...thank you Master."

A larger smile dominated Qui-Gon's face.

"Believe it or not Obi-Wan, I was also an apprentice at one time." He spoke with a mischevious glint in his eyes. "And you're very welcome."

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