



A STAR WARS FANFICTION VIGNETTE

EXPECTATIONS

A moment of self-study told through fanfiction

QWAE29

I neither own these characters or the literary universe in which they live, though there are a few new faces and places that are of my own design. I neither make nor intend to make any profit off of this writing, but indeed I expect die poor, clutching a legal pad and pen to my chest, a half-written chapter scribbled on the fading yellow page.

Author's Note: This is not like my usual stories because, well this isn't really a story. It is a vignette I suppose. In truth, this was more like therapy. Writing it helped a bit to get me out a bad place and I'm posting it with the hope that maybe it might provide a little help or peace to those who have recently traveled to that same dark place we call grief. This piece is as much a labor of love as it is one of pain. It begins in a place and space where Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan are a happy couple who is on the cusp of adding a welcomed, new dimension to their relationship.

Thank you to my lovely beta, Maeve Pendergast. However, I couldn't help making some tweaks, so any errors are purely my own doing.

~EXPECTATIONS~

“Stop pacing, love. I’m sure it’s nothing. This visit is purely precautionary.”

As requested, Obi-Wan ceased his pacing, but the worry in his eyes remained. Qui-Gon reached out a hand from where he sat on the medical couch. Obi-Wan took his lifemate’s hand with a sigh and allowed himself to be pulled close. He stood in the space between Qui-Gon’s legs and wrapped his arms around the older man’s shoulders. Qui-Gon mirrored Obi-Wan’s action and wrapped his arms around the younger man’s waist.

“Everything’s going to be well.”

“I know,” Obi-Wan replied softly. Qui-Gon sighed as he stared into the cloudy gray eyes in front of him.

“Yet you still worry.”

Obi-Wan pulled himself back slightly at the comment. Not enough to escape the circle of his lover’s arms, but enough to give himself some emotional distance.

“Of course I worry. You were bleeding earlier and before that you were in pain. What if,”

“Hush,” Qui-Gon interrupted. He placed a silencing finger across the other man’s lips. “The healer’s said the pain I experienced appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary and we both know that a little bleeding is not uncommon in pregnancy.”

“I know,” Obi-Wan said with a sigh as he stepped back in to Qui-Gon. He leaned in and rested his forehead against the older man’s. “I just want you and the baby to be well.”

“I know you do. So do I and so does everyone here. And remember, we don’t know that there is any reason to believe things are otherwise, so let’s not borrow worry, hmm?”

“And if there is a reason?” Obi-Wan asked cautiously.

“Then we will deal with it,” Qui-Gon replied, a wave of determination, assurance, and love flowing across the bond. “Together.”

“Together,” was the whispered reply followed by a return of the same emotions through the bond with double their intensity. For several long moments, the two men remained there, silent and holding each other, each wrapped as deeply into the bond as they were wrapped around each other. Both basked in the warmth and absolute love that was there bond and allowed the safety of the moment to calm their anxieties and restore

their sense of serenity. However, both instantly opened their eyes at the sound of the exam room door sliding open.

“Master Jinn, Knight Kenobi,” Ar Songe said with a bow aimed at both men. Obi-Wan returned the greeting with a nod of his head and stepped from between Qui-Gon’s legs to instead stand at his side. Though they were no longer entangled, Qui-Gon took hold of Obi-Wan’s hand and gave it a gentle squeeze before turning to greet the healer.

“Songe,” he said with a dip of his head. The healer stepped into the room proper, the door sliding closed behind him. Though every Jedi typically wore a stoic mask, something in Ar’s eyes betrayed the healer’s thoughts.

“You’ve determined the cause I take it?” Qui-Gon inquired, his voice as calm and serene as if he were simply asking after the weather. Ar nodded solemnly.

“Yes, I have. And I’m sorry it is not good news.”

Now, it was Obi-Wan who tightened his grip around the hand he was holding.

“The baby?” he asked. Ar’s eyes softened and the tips of his mouth curved down ever so slightly. The healer gave a small shake of his head.

“I’m sorry, but the test results show that this pregnancy is not viable.”

“I don’t... What... what does that mean?” Obi-Wan stuttered. “Is he going t-to... loose the baby?”

[Calm, love.] Qui-Gon sent through their bond in response to the rising maelstrom of emotions twisting and turning away in his bondmate’s mind.

“It is likely that he has already lost the baby,” Ar replied. He turned his attention directly to Qui-Gon. “The bleeding you experienced, though minor, I believe was your body miscarrying the embryo. Sometimes the event is traumatic and painful, but just as often it is not. Your case seems to be the latter.”

Qui-Gon nodded his understanding.

“What happens now?” he asked after a moment’s silence.

“As I mentioned earlier, the embryo has likely already left your body, however, there remains a great deal of tissue from the womb that will still need to be expelled. In this, you have some options. We can wait and let nature take its course, we can medically induce the expulsion, or we can surgically remove it.”

Qui-Gon nodded again then turned to look at Obi-Wan.

[Love?]

[Whatever you think is best, beloved.]

Qui-Gon turned back to Ar.

“If it is up to us, we would like to wait and let things run their course.”

“That would have been my suggestion as well,” Ar offered with a small, rueful smile. “You may take as long as you like, but there is no reason for you to remain here. You may return to your quarters at your leisure and, of course, contact me if you have any lingering questions or concerns.”

Ar made to leave then stopped turning back to the Jedi in the room.

“I am truly sorry for your loss.”

“Thank you,” Qui-Gon replied softly. Ar dipped his head in acknowledgement then left the room, letting the door close behind him. The room, now empty save for the two of them, was filled to the brim with a silence so complete it seemed as if the healer took all sound with him at his leaving.

Qui-Gon shifted his gaze from the door to his lifemate only to find the other half of his soul staring absently out of the room’s sole window. Qui-Gon squeezed the hand still held in his.

[Love?]

[Yes, Qui-Gon?] came the mental reply as stormy gray eyes turned to him.

[Are you okay?]

[No, but you know that already.]

Qui-Gon slid off the bed and stepped in close to his bondmate never once tearing his eyes away from Obi-Wan. He closed the short distance between them and held out his arms. Obi-Wan slid into them without hesitation and quickly pressed himself against Qui-Gon’s chest.

[It’s not fair.] Obi-Wan sent and Qui-Gon sighed and tightened his grip on the smaller body pressed against his own.

[No. It’s not.]

Almost as if Qui-Gon’s soft admission gave him permission, the dam holding back Obi-Wan’s tears suddenly gave way and he began to sob freely. Through it all Qui-Gon said

nothing, just holding on tightly to Obi-Wan or rubbing soothing circles on the younger man's back. Eventually the choking sobs quieted leaving only the occasional shudder and snuffle to shake the lithe frame in Qui-Gon's arms though he never released his grip or ceased his attempts to soothe the younger man.

[It's alright, love. Let it out. I've got you.]

[No. It's not alright. Nothing's alright.] A pause, a snuffle, and a cough. [How are you alright with this?] Obi-Wan asked lifting his head from Qui-Gon's chest so that he could see the man's face.

[I'm not.]

Obi-Wan's brow creased as he continued to stare into the midnight blue eyes of his lover. Then he shrugged and buried his face back against the broad chest.

[I guess I'm just the one that's a pathetic, quivering mess.]

The arms around him tightened abruptly.

[You're not a pathetic anything. You're grieving. Your reaction is perfectly natural.]

[If it's so natural, then why aren't you?] Obi-Wan rejoined his face once again aimed up at his master. [You haven't cried or cursed or even said two words about it. It's almost like you don't even care. Like it doesn't matter to you at all.]

Between one breath and the next Qui-Gon released his hold on Obi-Wan. He stepped away from the other man, a stricken expression on his face.

[How could you think that?] he asked and even his mental voice sounds strained and pulled tight as twin tears push past dark lashes.

[Qui-Gon, I...] Obi-Wan said as he took a step forward, but the movement only drove Qui-Gon another step away. Obi-Wan did not advance any further, but instead reached out his hand towards the other man.

[I'm sorry. I didn't mean... I shouldn't have said that.]

[No. You shouldn't have. I need to meditate.] came the quick reply and just as quickly Qui-Gon turned and left. He did not look back and Obi-Wan did not look away.

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"May I join you?"

Qui-Gon didn't turn to look at Obi-Wan's approach, choosing instead to continue his unfocused staring out of the booth's large window. He had found himself at Dex's Diner through sheer desperation after wondering the Temple grounds searching for hours for a place of refuge in the face of Obi-Wan's accusations. When he arrived at the dingy eatery he was immediately greeted by the large, smiling Besalisk, but Dex's grin disappeared the moment he stepped back and looked at his friend. Suddenly, boisterous Dex was gone and a far quieter, gentler one took his place. Asking no questions, he led Qui-Gon to a slightly isolated booth in a corner, brought him a cup of tea, and left his friend to his contemplation.

And in that isolated, quiet contemplation Qui-Gon had remained, until now.

"Please?" the voice asked again, begged really, and Qui-Gon found he was uncappable of ignoring such a plea. Still he did not look at him, only giving a slight nod of his head. A soft rustling of clothing was heard as Obi-Wan slipped into the seat across from him.

[I'm sorry, Qui-Gon. More sorry than you could ever imagine. I never should have said those things to you. I didn't mean them and... I know it hurt you, that I hurt you and... I'm sorry.]

[I accept.] Qui-Gon responded.

There was no pause, not the slightest hesitation between Obi-Wan's request and his response, but the answer's swiftness did little to dispel the doubt or the demons hidden deep within both men. Neither knew what to say at that point, so wisely they said nothing. The two sat in a thick silence despite the cacophony of diners around them. Qui-Gon continued to stare out of the window and Obi-Wan focused his gaze on a fixed point on the empty table.

[This doesn't... feel like acceptance.] Obi-Wan ventured even his mind voice hesitant and halting. He didn't look at Qui-Gon as he sent the thought, uncomfortably wringing his hands distractedly on the flat surface of the table. A soft sigh answered him. Without turning and choosing to verbalize his thoughts rather than use the bond, Qui-Gon spoke. His usual booming baritone, now a delicate thing, hardly more than a murmur, reached Obi-Wan from across the small table.

"They're all waiting, you know," he started. Obi-Wan looked up, his brow creased in such a way that those who knew him would recognize as confusion, but Qui-Gon did not see his expression. The master's eyes never left the glass.

"They're all waiting for me to lose it, to break down, collapse under the weight of untenable grief. They won't say it, of course. They won't even speak of it, but they are expecting it just the same. They are waiting," he said as he finally turned his eyes on Obi-Wan. "And so are you."

"Is that wrong? Is it coming?" Obi-Wan asked, his tenor tinged with a distinct and unusual diffidence. Qui-Gon closed his eyes before turning back to the window.

"I don't know," was the whispered response. A long silence followed, but then he spoke again. "I suppose I'm waiting too."

There was a long, slow inhale followed by an exhale that seemed pulled from the depths of Qui-Gon's being before he turned to his body and his gaze fully to Obi-Wan.

"It had barely seemed real, you know. There were moments where I allowed myself to imagine, to dream... but other times it just felt like... pretend, like a happy illusion, just a possible future. But it wasn't *real* yet. I think... I think I waiting to hear the heartbeat. If I had heard it, I think it would have been real to me then. But now..." Qui-Gon's voice stuttered than faltered completely. Obi-Wan reached out and took one of the man's large hands in his smaller ones, giving it a gentle squeeze encouraging Qui-Gon to talk more, but not demanding it. His efforts were rewarded with the smallest of smiles from Qui-Gon.

"I don't know *what it is* I'm mourning or even *if* I am mourning. It... hurts... that loss of... potential, of what could have been, of what may now never be, but... do I feel like I lost a child? I honestly don't know and the thought that I don't makes me feel infinitely worse. Like perhaps you were right. Like maybe I don't care."

"No," Obi-Wan answered sharply. "I was wrong and I never should have said that. It isn't true."

"But what if it is? Surely, I should... *feel* more than this. There must be something wrong with me and if there is... if I'm so..." Qui-Gon stopped as his gazed dropped to the table's surface. "Perhaps it is better that it ended this way. That what I wanted should not come to be."

"Qui-Gon," Obi-Wan called, but his bondmate did not look up. He tried again. "Qui-Gon, look at me please."

The quiet plea got a response as midnight blue eyes rose to meet his. Obi-Wan took the hand he held in both of his.

"Qui-Gon, there is nothing wrong with you," he began, but as he saw the man open his mouth to argue, Obi-Wan continued talking over any attempts at protest. "There's not. Your feelings, whatever they are and whatever they are not, are yours and there is nothing wrong with them."

"But others,"

"Others mourn in their own way and you will mourn in yours," Obi-Wan countered, then he softly added. "And you are mourning."

“How can you be so certain?” Qui-Gon asked the pain, fear, and hope in his voice unmistakable to anyone with ears to hear it. Obi-Wan squeezed the hand in his once again as he uttered a rueful chuckle.

“Because you care enough to worry that you aren’t,” he answered with a light shrug. “Maybe you don’t show your grief like most people might, but that’s just who you are. Different maybe, but not wrong.”

“A rebel?” Qui-Gon replied with a tiny lift at one corner of his mouth. Not quite a smile, but at least the beginnings of one.

“Always, my Qui-Gon. Always.”

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Qui-Gon had been meditating for hours, days really. Of course, he stopped for the recurrent inconveniences of life like eating, sleeping, responsibility, and duty, but mostly he meditated. He meditated on all that had happened during the past weeks. From being newly pregnant and hopeful, to be newly not and despairing, to this current space where he now lived somewhere between the two previous emotions.

The long-awaited breakdown hadn’t come.

He *had* wept once, briefly. Obi-Wan had returned from teaching his initiate saber class to find Qui-Gon curled in on himself, sobbing into the worn fabric of their sofa. The tears, though short-lived, had been accompanied by keening wail that Qui-Gon was unaware his throat could produce. The tears had also opened a gaping chasm inside his center that did not close when his sobs ended.

Obi-Wan had held him then, saying nothing because there were no words that would change things for either of them neither were there words to soothe their aching hearts. They returned to their day after that, the spell lasting only a few scant minutes. It wasn’t the breakdown they were expecting, so they moved forward warily, always waiting for the other boot to finally fall.

Yet still, the long-awaited breakdown hadn’t come.

So, Qui-Gon had taken to meditating, steadily in an almost vicious act of self-reflection, seeking to suss out the root of his feelings or the lack of them. He had spent painfully long hours on his knees scouring the changing currents of his inner self and finding... nothing. No answers. No sudden revelations. No special insights.

There was nothing in him just as Ar had so brutally diagnosed.

Qui-Gon opened his eyes with a sigh. No, such a thought was beneath him. He could admit that even from his depressed perspective. And he was depressed. He could admit that too, even if he didn't know quite what to do about it. He never said the words out loud. Neither did Obi-Wan, but Qui-Gon held no illusions his bondmate was ignorant of his melancholic state. As long as it seemed mild, the depression functional, both Jedi seemed content to let it run its course.

Just like they had allowed another natural process to run its course.

And run its course it had. Eventually. Now, nearly two months later, Qui-Gon felt his body was finally returning to normal, well... if not normal then at least his pre-pregnancy state. But with that return so began the countdown to a question that had to be answered. A question Qui-Gon had assiduously avoided thinking about. A question that Obi-Wan decided to casually ask as Qui-Gon rose from his meditation mat.

"Are we going to try again?" Obi-Wan asked from his seat on the couch. He looked over the back of the sofa to where Qui-Gon was standing. The older man sighed and scrubbed his face. Immediately Obi-Wan's face fell into a grimace at the sudden weariness that now limned his lover's body.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked."

"No," Qui-Gon replied as he slowly made his way from behind the couch to join his bondmate on it. Obi-Wan quickly moved the two datapads and stacks of flimsy that he was reviewing for his classes off of the cushions and on to the small table between the sofa and armchair. Qui-Gon sat down heavily in the now open space.

"No, it's alright that you asked. I just don't know if I have an answer."

Obi-Wan nodded, but said nothing as he took one of Qui-Gon's hands in his own. Qui-Gon relaxed into the cushions letting his head fall back. He allowed his gaze to rest on a fixed point on the ceiling. There was some muted shuffling to his left and then Qui-Gon felt the press of a warm body tuck against his side. Almost reflexively, he brought his arm around the smaller frame and pulled the other man tightly to him. He took in the strength and comfort Obi-Wan's presence afforded him, letting it wash through him before speaking.

"Despite what has happened, I do want to, but..."

"But?"

"I honestly don't know if we can. We simply don't have the resources... or the time," Qui-Gon answered. It was a hard truth to admit, but a necessary one. Though his people held within their genetic code the ability for males to bear children, a flaw in Qui-Gon's DNA created a slight anomaly in his hormonal balance resulting in a greater difficulty in, but not the exclusion of, conceiving a child. The difficulty was further increased by Qui-Gon's age, but again this was not an insurmountable hurdle. The problem, such as it was,

was financial. A Jedi's needs were seen to by the Temple and only a modest allotment was provided for nonessential pursuits. However, the fertility treatments necessary for Qui-Gon to conceive were quite expensive and after two attempts the two Jedi had quickly depleted what little savings they had. Then their friends stepped in, donating their own meager funds to their fellow Jedi's endeavor to start a family. That had enabled the pair to try a third time and it seemed a blessing from the Force itself when they discovered that the treatment took and Qui-Gon was with child.

What had followed were the most wonderful two weeks of the lives.

Then one afternoon, Qui-Gon doubled over in pain. Five days later, he woke to light bleeding. The next day... well, the next day a trip to the healers destroyed any hopeful delusions either man still carried.

Now, their hope for the future lay flattened, suffocated under the smothering reality of their lack of credits and the inexorable march of time as Qui-Gon would only get older. If they wanted to try again it would need to be sooner rather than later. This urgency was also exacerbated by the knowledge that it was likely that Qui-Gon would be *more* fertile during the two cycles immediately following his miscarriage which meant their best chance for conception would be in just over a month and a decision would have to be made quite soon if they were going to pursue treatment.

Qui-Gon suspected that this was the true reason behind his depression. The pressure of this biological deadline coupled with his inability to meet it left him feeling rather ineffectual and hopeless.

"If credits were no object, would you still want to?" Obi-Wan asked. Qui-Gon paused a moment before answering.

"Yes, I would," he replied then he looked down at the mop of auburn hair that rested against his chest. "Would you?"

"I would," came the instant dulcet reply then more hesitantly "but I'm scared of it too."

A large hand moved under Obi-Wan's chin, gently tilting his face up until their gazes met.

[What is it your fear, Love?]

[That it will happen again, of course. Don't you fear it?]

"I do," Qui-Gon said aloud and with a nod. "But I also fear not trying. I fear trying and only wasting our money and our time. I fear inviting more pain into hearts. I fear that perhaps this is a task I am not up for or deserving of. I fear that maybe it was simply not meant to be," he finished with a shrug. "As you can see, I fear a great many things."

“And yet, you would still try?”

“Yes, with your agreement, of course, but even so I don’t see how it will be possible.”

Obi-Wan lowered his head to snuggle more firmly against the broad chest, the heartbeat under his always a source of security and comfort.

[We shall just trust in the Force knowing what will be, will be.]

“I find that far less comforting than I used to,” Qui-Gon replied. He tightened his arm around his bondmate feeling somewhat content and mostly resigned and sighed.

[But you are right. We will trust the Force. We can do nothing more.]