

Star Wars: Continuance

Unexpected

*What if Qui-gon Jinn had survived the battle with
Darth Maul...? Part I*

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Anakin Skywalker was being torn in two; and there was only one way out of his dilemma. It was uncertain, unsure, risky- but it would work. It HAD to work. She would listen to him. Save him from an impossible choice.

He would convince Padme to join the Separatists.

He could not choose between her and his master. And yet, if she would join him in defecting from the Republic...

He knew she would listen. She had to. The Senate was being controlled by the Sith; that would horrify her as much as it did him. She would have to join him in fighting it.

Anakin hated the Sith, passionately. How many times had he lain awake at night, wondering what his life might be if the Zabrak Sith on Naboo had killed his beloved master? The thought of losing Master Qui-Gon still chilled him to the bone. The thought that a Sith monster could have stolen this life from him...

And what a life it was. Master Qui-Gon had said Anakin would soon be ready to face the trials, to become a knight. The thought thrilled Anakin; and yet, in some ways, it would be hard to leave the blessing of being Qui-Gon Jinn's Padawan.

His master was unorthodox and unique, this Anakin knew. He loved it; he reveled in it- Qui-Gon's unorthodox methods suited Anakin perfectly. He knew that he and Master Qui-Gon were destined to be together; no other master would have given Anakin the freedom to be Anakin the way Qui-Gon had. He had known that from the first day, when Qui-Gon had left Naboo with Anakin in tow, his Republic credits exchanged for something 'more real'- headed for Tatooine to buy out Watto and free Shmi Skywalker from slavery. He had grown a deep appreciation for Qui-Gon's mischievous rebellion against the Jedi party lines as Qui-Gon had, outwardly, encouraged him to shun all attachment, in the Jedi way... while in secret, encouraging to go and see his mother, every time that they were at liberty on Coruscant. He had grown to love Qui-Gon's generosity from the moment he had arranged for Shmi to support herself, waitressing at Dex's Diner.

Anakin shared more than a student-teacher bond with Qui-Gon Jinn... he loved him like a father. When Qui-Gon advised him to steer clear of Senator Palpatine, Anakin was torn- but in the end, he'd acceded to his master's wishes, because he trusted Qui-Gon's judgment.

Anakin stopped in his tracks momentarily, grunting a grim chuckle at his own naivete. His Geonosian escorts exchanged glances, confused, as Anakin resumed his stride.

Torn? He had thought he was torn then? He'd had no idea what being torn truly meant until today.

But Padme would listen. She'd have to... after all that was shared between them...

He'd known a conflict was coming. He'd had a dream at lake on Naboo; Master Qui-Gon in pain, suffering. But a quick comm. call to his master had reassured Anakin that all was well with his master's investigation, currently on the stormy world of Kamino- and he had returned his focus to Padme. For that, he was thankful; if he had left immediately following his dream, who knew if the next few wonderful days by the lake would have happened? Would he and Padme have grown closer? Have finally, at long last, admitted their feelings for each other?

Anakin tightened his resolve. They were close, so close... she'd listen. She had too. She may have turned down his proposal for marriage (at least his Master's urgent call for help on Geonosis minutes later had saved him from having to wallow in THAT)- but he knew she loved him as he loved her. And she would believe him.

Arriving outside the door to her temporary quarters in the Geonosian hive tunnels, Anakin took a deep, steadying breath. He centered himself in the Force. And then knocked on the door.

"You're leaving the Jedi Order?"

Padme's face was a mask of shock.

"Anakin, why? If this is about us-..."

"No," Anakin assured her, "No, it's not that. Not only that. Padme... the Republic is being subverted. Not by the Separatists, but from within."

Padme looked at him with a mixture of sadness, disbelief, and confusion.

"Anakin, what's happened? Where is Qui-Gon?"

Anakin smiled.

"Master Qui-Gon is fine."

"Did he escape? I don't understand how he was there to meet us-"

Anakin interrupted her again, immediately regretting doing so. But he had to keep control of the conversation, focus, if he was going to convince her.

"Master Qui-Gon was only in prison a few minutes before he was released, Padme. It turns out his benefactor was Count Dooku."

"Dooku is here? Anakin, he-"

"It wasn't him that was trying to have you killed, Padme. It was Nute Gunray. One of the conditions of my joining the Separatists is that he'll be dealt with. He'll never try to harm you again."

Anakin nearly flinched at the look of abject horror on Padme's face.

"You're joining the Separatists? Annie, how could you?"

Anakin took another calming breath. This was NOT going the way he'd planned.

Over the next hour, Anakin explained, with some difficulty, what he'd learned since their capture on Geonosis. Dooku had appealed to the master-student bond that he and Master Qui-Gon had once had, begging Qui-Gon to hear him out. He knew that Qui-Gon, one of the least dogmatic of the Jedi, might have an open mind where other hadn't. And Dooku's evidence had been compelling.

Anakin had been taken aback to find Master Qui-Gon waiting for them at their landing point with a squad of Geonosians; he knew Padme must be even more confused, as she hadn't spoken to anyone since. Anakin explained that he and Qui-Gon had been taken to a conference room; a massive chamber where Qui-Gon himself had been spying hours earlier. There, Qui-Gon had recounted the facts to Anakin. They had fought, argued, debated for hours. They had questioned, challenged, and bickered. And yet, ultimately, Anakin found that he could not deny the facts that his master had presented them; the Sith ruled the senate, the Jedi order was becoming arrogant and corrupt... and the place of the Chosen One, to bring balance, to fix the decaying order and Republic... was from without.

And so, Anakin agreed to join his master at Dooku's side, supporting the Separatists. Their conditions were few but non-negotiable; the Separatists would avoid engaging in open warfare with the Republic at least until a negotiation- spearheaded by Anakin and Qui-Gon- could be attempted one last time with the Republic. It would be difficult. There would be elements in both the Republic and the Separatists

that saw them as untrustworthy at best; traitors at worst.

"It will be an uneasy truce. The Trade Federation, Jango Fett... there are a lot of people that don't like Jedi. But Count Dooku is a strong leader, Padme. He can keep them in line. And we... we can bring them back together, Padme! First we can destroy the Sith, and then... we can re-unite the Separatists with the Republic. I know we can!"

Padme looked doubtful.

"Anakin, it may not be that easy to-"

"And think of it, Padme- we can marry. It won't have to be in secret. We can be together, and the Jedi order won't stand in the way. This is our future, Padme. Our destiny. I can feel it!"

He looked at her, eyes shining, grinning triumphantly, and began to see the seeds of hope forming in her countenance- wishing, hoping to overcome the doubt written all over her expression. She wanted to believe it could work, he knew.

And so, he continued on. Talked. Plead. Argued. Explained. Just as it had been for he and his master, the realization was difficult to reach, but eventually, it came.

Padme said yes.

To more than one proposal.

Departing Padme's quarters to deliver the good news to Master Qui-Gon, Anakin knew that his future and Padme's still remained uncertain. A great battle was coming; the Jedi were on their way. Qui-Gon had warned the Separatists of the Clone Army, but the conflict would still be brutal if the Separatists could not evacuate Geonosis in time, he knew. And yet, there was hope- Dooku had a plan.

As the truth had been passed master-to-student, master-to-student, could it not be passed student-to-master? Just as Qui-Gon was master to Anakin, and Dooku master to Qui-Gon, Jedi Master Yoda once trained Dooku. And so, the three of them would wait, the last ship to evacuate, in the hangar of Dooku's solar sailer. Dooku had foreseen that Yoda would come to them there. And there, three generations of Jedi, tracing a direct lineage from the revered Grand Master down to the Chosen One, would try to convince him of the truth. If not, Dooku was certain that the three of them, battling together, could fight him to a standstill and escape.

Either way, the separatist movement would live, would fight the battle on their own terms, at a field of their choosing. And yet, together, he, his wife-to-be, and his master would stand united; they would overcome and cleanse the Republic, and under Dooku's leadership, the galaxy would be free of the threat of the Sith forever.