No Price Too Great

 “How’s that lock comin’ hon?”
 “Oh, just swimmingly. An extra firewall just activated a few seconds ago, and I’m pretty sure that the whole base has been alerted to our presence.”
 Oriah looked about at the flashing red lights, and listened to the sirens that had been blaring for some time now, “You think?”

 She and her companion- a human male by the name of Exadron, happened to be hacking their way into the vault of a very obscure salvaging operation in the Outer Rim. Why, pray tell, were these two wayward souls in such a random, and force-forsaken place? Well, someone had gotten a tip that a sith holocron had been recovered by these salvagers. That tip had, over the course of time, found its way to their master. He wanted that holocron, and he would not accept no for an answer. And so, here the pair were, frantically trying to break the lock *before* the rest of the security forces showed up. They’d already fought their way through a dozen guards, and much to their annoyance, their lightsabers didn’t quite get the job done in forcing the vault open.

 “I don’t mean to rush you…” Oriah started as the sound of many footfalls sounded from down the hallway. She could hear the jingle of equipment, too; the heavy kind. That’d slow them in their approach, but once security got into the hallway it’d be a wrap for these two.

 “Good, because I’ve got it open.” Exadron said with a smirk. Sure enough, the wide door to the vault swung open with scarcely a sound.

 Giggling, the Arkanian remarked, “Your timing is impeccable as ever, Xadron.” The pair slipped into the vault and swung the door shut behind them, giving the target of their visit to this rock their undivided attention. A sith holocron. Loaded with information from the great Sith Lords of the past. Neither of them had ever so much as held one in their hands before. For a moment they both simply stood there in awe, gawking at the device.

 Oriah was the first to make a move, stepping forwards slowly, carefully. She didn’t feel any pressure plates, nor could she see any lasers with her infrared vision. Still, the young woman proceeded cautiously. The sith holocron was placed upon a pedestal, with a number of other items on their own pedestals arrayed about it. Oriah figured that, once she took it, there would be some sort of final defense mechanism that she and her compatriot would need to overcome. What that defense might be, she couldn’t possibly know, but given the nature of these salvagers, she wagered it would have to do with blasters…

 The Arkanian was not disappointed. Upon snatching the holocron from its pedestal, a number of blaster turrets popped out of hidden panels in the ceiling and began firing at the intruders. Oriah and Exadron were prepared for them however, igniting their lightsabers and rushing to stand back to back. The pair deflected the bolts from the turrets back at them, destroying each in turn. They worked together with a grace that suggested they’d been partners for quite some time.

 Oriah let out a breath as the final blaster turret went down, powering off her lightsaber and half turning to face Exadron. The human made an identical movement, and for a moment the pair were staring into each other’s eyes, faces only inches apart. Not giving the atmosphere time to get tense, Oriah leaned forwards that few inches and gave the boy a kiss- it was swift, nothing long and passionate to write home about, but it was a kiss all the same. Exadron smiled and the Arkanian nudged him with an elbow.

 “Wipe that dumb smile off your face, you big dope.” Oriah said with a grin.

 “Only if you’ll kiss me again.” Exadron replied smugly, thinking he’d be getting another kiss. Instead Oriah flicked him on the forehead.

 “Much as I love showing off, I’m not exactly a voyeur. There’s cameras in here y’know.” the pale skinned woman explained, much to her compatriot’s chagrin. With a grin, she gestured, “C’mon, let’s make our escape.”

 Exadron glanced at the vault doorway, which was thankfully still locked, though he could feel the presence of several dozen people on the other side of it. He didn’t imagine they’d be friendly and remarked upon it- “Uh, through the front door? ‘Cause we’ve got a bit of a problem on that end....”

 “No, silly! Through the vents!” Oriah pointed to a number of cooling vents, meant to regulate the temperature of the room to preserve the longevity of the items stored there. Exadron looked up at the aforementioned vents, and then back down at himself. Oriah was five foot six, skinny and lithe. She could fit through those vents without any serious trouble. Exadron, however, was significantly taller, and broader than his Arkanian compatriot. He absolutely would \*not\* fit in one of those vents; he’d tried once already.

 Noting his look, the silver haired lass put her hands on her hips and said, tauntingly, “I told you not to come on this mission. But nooOOOOOoooo, you had to butt your way in. I’ll have you know we’d have already been done if I just went by myself.”
 The young man huffed, “But if I let you go by yourself you’d just get all the credit!” And of course, that’s where the crux of the matter lie. Despite being more than just friends, the two were still vying for the favor of their master separately. Both of them needed as much sway with the dark lord as they could muster, and whoever could claim this heist would earn serious brownie points with their patron.

 Oriah, however, chuckled mischievously at that, stepping away from Exadron. She spread her arms wide and said, “The joke is on you; I’ll get all of the credit anyways.”

 The human realized what was happening a half second too late- just as he darted forwards to catch Oriah by the arm, the Arkanian somersaulted backwards towards the nearest vent. With a careful slash of her lightsaber it came loose from its mooring, and the lass clambered into the vent without another word.

 Exadron ran to the vent’s opening and called after her, “Oriah! Oriah damnit, don’t leave me here! This isn’t fair!!!”

 The voice of his female compatriot called back to him, growing farther away by the second, “Consider this payback for Nar Shaddaa!” She was, of course, referring to a time when he’d left her high and dry to fend off a band of ruffians on her own, while he escaped the scene unscathed. She’d killed them just fine, but she was still salty about it.

 Exadron called after her again, “Okay, I’m sorry for that time but I \*really\* could use a hand getting out of here! Pleeeease?” But he got no reply; as far as he knew, the Arkanian was already gone. She’d make it back to their shuttle and get off this base, while he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Even if he managed to make it out of the vault alive, he wouldn’t have a way off the station.

Oriah Chaar. Thief, pickpocket, scoundrel, spy, agent… She went by many titles in her life. Beholden to Darth Rathon, an independent Sith Lord operating out of the Outer Rim, she had trained hard and earned a name for herself. An unsavory name, but a name nonetheless. The type of person to get the job done, no matter the odds. Even if those odds might be improved by cutting loose any baggage she’d dragged along.

Just when Exadron began to despair, he heard screaming and blaster fire through the thick door of the vault; it must’ve been truly loud to be heard through all that durosteel. He opened the vault from his side, wondering what the ruckus was about, and found the mercenaries posted outside all panicking. Some looked stricken with outright terror, and others were shooting at people that weren’t there. Not a single one of them noticed that the vault door had opened- it was almost as if they were under some spell, or some trick of the Force…

 Exadron grinned- at the very least, Oriah seemed to accept his apology. Whether or not she waited on him with the shuttle, however, was another thing entirely. The human ignited his lightsaber, bathing the hallway in crimson light, and plaintively said, “Well, I better get going, ‘fore she leaves me behind.”

 And then he began to dance. And everywhere he swung his baton, another man fell.