The Goblet

Evening

Ruby walked through the streets of the Goblet shortly after midnight. When she left Fortuna, the party was still going, but her work, thankfully, was over for the night. Most women might have been worried about walking through this district alone, in the dark. Most women didn't carry large axes though. Ruby's axe had traveled across half the world with her.

Still, she was grateful that the room she was renting wasn't too far away. It had been a long night working security at a busy club, plus avoiding a certain Miqo'te. Her pale face reddened at the memory from a few weeks ago, the girl bent over a table, poofy tail in the air and shorts and underwear around her ankles. She was still a little shocked that it didn't seem like she had been reported, but maybe mafia bosses didn't care too much about a little assault between employees, as long as they did what they were paid for. It was good money, and regular money, after working countless odd jobs to scrape together the cash for a meal and a roof for the night. She could finally settle down a bit and decide what to do with her life.

There was a small smile on her face as she turned the last corner onto the street where she lived, but it quickly faded when she spotted someone standing at the gateway. It was the last person she wanted to see. Too late to hide though; Kira's ears twitched at the sound of her footsteps and the Miqo'te turned to look at her.
"Well, it took you long enough to get here." Kira spoke as she approached. "I talked Jale into telling me where you lived, and…"
Ruby sighed and brushed past her, fumbling in her pocket for the key to the front door.
"You've been avoiding me." Kira followed her to the door.
"So what if I have?" Ruby replied shortly, her tail twitching tensely. "You're not entitled to my attention." She felt a little smug as she saw Kira bristle with annoyance.
"Hey! It's… it's not like I'm after your attention or anything!" Kira replied, her hands clenched into fists. "I just… well everyone's saying you're not yourself lately, so I wanted to find out why. But not because I care."
"So just because you're a nosy brat then." Ruby unlocked the door and stepped inside. "It's none of your business. Now, I'm tired and going to bed." She pushed the door to close it and walked across the hall inside, but Kira slipped in and followed her.

"Fine! I care a bit." Kira caught up to the Au Ra and reached out to place her hand on her shoulder. Ruby turned quickly and seized her hand by the wrist, squeezing it tightly.
"Don't lie to me, princess! You don't give a shit about anything but yourself."
"If that was true, I'd have got you fired weeks ago!" Kira replied, trying to tug her hand free. "You left me there, high as a fucking kite! I barely got my knickers before the bar staff came in to lock

up the good booze!"
Ruby released Kira's hand abruptly and turned away, hiding her face as she unlocked the door of her room.

"At least you'd have had a good reason to get me fired this time." She shook her head. "I crossed a line. And I should have apologised to you much sooner."
Kira rubbed her sore wrist and placed her hand on Ruby's shoulder.
"Don't get me wrong. I was going to tell them the next day, but I changed my mind when I saw you turn up for your pay." She spoke quietly. "I expected you to look arrogant or proud of yourself… but you just looked like you were hurting." Kira felt Ruby tense under her hand, before she silently pushed the door open and walked in. The door was left open behind her, so Kira followed.

The room inside was mostly bare. There was a bed in the corner under the slanted ceiling, partly hidden by a screen. A small pile of cushions on the floor, a pot plant, and a few outfits hung on pegs on the wall. Ruby unslung her axe and placed it carefully in the corner.
"Seven hells, you've been robbed!" Kira exclaimed, looking around. Her ears perked up as she heard the Au Ra laugh.
"If you hadn't noticed, princess, I'm not from round here." Ruby spoke, exaggerating her rough Xaela accent. "I came here from Othard not that long ago. That axe was pretty much all I brought with me. And my lifestyle since then hasn't really allowed me to collect much 'stuff'."

"So… Why'd you come here?" Kira asked, watching Ruby removing the outer layers of her clothing, turning a little pink without realising it.
"I was looking for some friends of mine. But they're all gone." Ruby replied, stepping behind the screen by the bed to remove her corset.
"And… Why did you stay?"
"Because everyone at home is gone now too." The Au Ra's voice cracked slightly. "Whether I stay or I go, I have no one."

Kira's sensitive ears twitched, catching the sound of Ruby's deep breaths as she tried to keep herself from breaking down in front of the Miqo'te. Now that her time and thoughts weren't taken up with constantly searching for work, the reality of her loss had sunken in deep, leaving her angry and depressed by turns, barely able to keep her usually energetic, perky attitude going even at work. She closed her eyes, determined not to start crying…

…and jumped as she felt Kira's arms wrap around her waist, the Miqo'te's cheek resting on her bare breast.
"You idiot! You have people who care for you …like me." Kira said. "If you want. Doesn't bother me either way."
Ruby sighed and let her tears fall as she put her arms around Kira's shoulders.
"Stupid brat…" she whispered into Kira's hair, sniffling.

"Not 'princess'?..."