

Title: “The Quiet Hours”

Characters:

- **Jules** (they/them): emotionally guarded but deeply empathetic. Often uses humor to deflect.
- **Rae** (they/them): sensitive and brave in ways that are sometimes quiet. Has recently been through something difficult.

Scene: A small apartment. It's past midnight. An open window lets in faint city noise. Jules sits on the floor, nursing a cup of tea. Rae stands by the kitchen counter, hesitant.

RAE:

(quietly)

I didn't come here to fall apart.

JULES:

(sipping their tea)

You didn't come here to hold it together, either.

RAE:

(small laugh)

Right.

(beat)

I didn't think you'd still be up.

JULES:

I'm always up when I can feel someone needing a place to land.

(beat)

You looked... like you needed to land.

RAE:

I didn't know where else to go.

JULES:

Good. Then you picked the right place.

RAE:

I didn't want to be *seen* like this.

JULES:

That's the thing about being here. You don't get to decide when I see you.

(beat)

You're seen. Even when you try not to be.

(Rae walks over slowly, sits across from Jules. Long pause.)

RAE:

Do you ever get tired of pretending?

JULES:

Every day.

RAE:

Then why do we do it?

JULES:

Because sometimes the mask is safer than the mirror.

RAE:

I don't want to wear it anymore.

JULES:

Then take it off.

(Rae hesitates, hands fidgeting in their lap. Tears are close, but they don't fall yet.)

RAE:

It hurts more when people see the real me and still... leave.

JULES:

(softly)

I know.

That's why it's easier to pretend. If they leave the mask, you can tell yourself they never knew you.

But if they leave *you*...

RAE:

Then it means you weren't enough.

JULES:

Or they weren't capable of enough.

(Pause. Rae takes that in. It's quiet for a long beat.)

RAE:

You ever wish you could just start over? No history, no weight?

JULES:

No.

(beat)

I used to wish that.

But... everything heavy I carry is also proof I survived it.

And I want someone to love me with the weight. Not in spite of it.

(Rae finally lets a few tears slip. Jules notices, but doesn't crowd them.)

RAE:

I don't know if I'm brave enough.

JULES:

You showed up. That's brave.

You sat down. That's brave.

You're crying and still staying. That's fucking brave.

(Jules reaches out their hand. It just rests, palm up, between them. Not pushing. Just offering.)

RAE:

What if I mess it all up again?

JULES:

Then I'll be here. When you do.

We don't have to get it right. We just have to stay.

(Rae finally reaches and takes their hand. It's quiet again. But this time, it feels lighter. Shared.)

RAE:

Thank you.

JULES:

You don't owe me thanks. Just... don't disappear.

RAE:

I won't.

(beat)

Not tonight.

(They sit there, hands still joined. Quiet. Present. Together.)

END SCENE