

I don't ask for help.

Not because I don't need it—but because I've never had to.

There's a difference.

Most people assume my life is effortless. That everything I have—my grades, my car, my reputation—just *exists* the way designer handbags appear in my closet or the way my father signs checks without asking questions.

They're not entirely wrong.

But they're not entirely right either.

Because today, for the first time in my life, something isn't falling into place.

And it's humiliating.

The final lecture of the day ends with the professor's voice fading into a blur of symbols and numbers that might as well be written in another language.

Derivatives. Limits. Acceleration.

None of it sticks.

I sit there for a moment longer than everyone else, staring at the board as students begin packing their bags, laughing, talking—*understanding*.

My jaw tightens.

This is ridiculous.

I've passed every class I've ever taken. Not because I'm stupid—despite what people think—but because I've always had... *support*.

Tutors.

Connections.

Donations.

But this semester is different.

This semester, my father decided to teach me a lesson.

"If you pass on your own," he'd said over breakfast, not even looking up from his tablet, *"you can have the car."*

I remember setting my fork down slowly, narrowing my eyes.

"I already have a car."

A mistake.

He finally looked at me then, unimpressed.

"You have a Mercedes. You want the Porsche."

...He wasn't wrong.

So here I am.

Walking out of the lecture hall with a knot of frustration sitting heavy in my chest, my heels clicking sharply against the polished floors.

Eden falls into step beside me almost immediately, like she's been waiting.

"Okay," she says, dragging the word out dramatically. "You've been glaring at your notebook for an hour. What's wrong?"

I don't answer right away.

Instead, I adjust the strap of my bag on my shoulder, lifting my chin slightly.

"Nothing."

She snorts.

"Hazel. I've known you since forever. That's your *I'm about to ruin someone's life* face."

I stop walking.

Turn to her.

"It's calculus."

There's a beat of silence.

Then—

"...That's it?"

My glare sharpens.

"Yes, that's *it*."

Eden presses her lips together, clearly trying not to laugh. Failing.

"I'm sorry," she says, not sounding sorry at all. "I just didn't expect your villain origin story to be math."

I roll my eyes and start walking again.

"It's not funny. I actually have to pass this semester. On my own."

That gets her attention.

She blinks.

"Wait. What?"

I sigh, pushing open the doors to the courtyard, sunlight spilling over us.

"My dad made a deal. If I pass without help, I get the Porsche."

Eden gasps.

"The Porsche?"

"Yes, Eden. The Porsche."

She grabs my arm, eyes wide.

"Oh, this just got serious."

"Thank you for that insight."

"No, I mean it," she says, spinning to face me, walking backward now. "We cannot let you fail. This is a *crisis*."

"I'm aware."

"Okay," she says, thinking fast. "So we get you a tutor."

I scoff.

"That's exactly what I'm not allowed to—"

"No, no, no," she cuts in, waving her hands. "Not like an official tutor. Like... a *person who happens to be smart*."

I narrow my eyes.

"That sounds exactly like a tutor."

"Shhh," she says, looking around dramatically. "Semantics."

I sigh again, rubbing my temple.

"Even if I wanted to, who would I ask? Everyone I know is either useless or too busy pretending they're not."

Eden grins.

"Oh, I know someone."

I don't like that smile.

"...No."

"You don't even know who I'm talking about."

"I don't need to. That face means it's a bad idea."

"It's a *great* idea."

"It's a terrible idea."

She leans in, lowering her voice like she's about to reveal a secret.

"Nanami."

I stop walking.

Slowly turn my head toward her.

"...Absolutely not."

Nanami.

Everyone knows who he is.

Not because he tries to be known—but because he's impossible to ignore.

Quiet.

Detached.

Always alone.

The kind of person who sits in the back of class, headphones in, sketchbook open, like the rest of us don't exist.

He doesn't talk to anyone.

Doesn't *look* at anyone.

And when he does?

It's like being assessed and dismissed in the same second.

I hate that.

"No," I repeat, starting to walk again. "Find someone else."

Eden hurries after me.

"Why? He's literally perfect."

“He’s insufferable.”

“You’ve never even spoken to him.”

“I don’t need to. I’ve seen him.”

She grabs my arm again, stopping me.

“Hazel. He’s top of every class. Calculus, physics, chemistry—he’s basically a walking brain.”

I cross my arms.

“And a walking attitude problem.”

She grins.

“Perfect match for you, then.”

“Eden.”

“I’m serious! Opposites attract—”

“This is not a romance novel.”

“Not yet.”

I stare at her.

She beams.

I sigh.

Deeply.

“Even if I agreed,” I say slowly, “he would never agree.”

Eden’s smile turns *dangerous*.

“Oh, he will.”

I should’ve walked away.

I should’ve ignored her.

I should’ve trusted my instincts.

But instead—

I find myself standing outside the library twenty minutes later, watching Eden push the door open like she’s about to start something she definitely shouldn’t.

I hesitate.

This is a mistake.

I know it is.

But then I think about the Porsche.

About my father’s voice.

About failing.

And I step inside.

The library is quiet, the soft hum of air conditioning and the occasional turning of pages filling the space.

Eden moves with purpose, weaving between tables like she knows exactly where she's going.

Of course she does.

I follow, slower, more reluctant.

And then—

I see him.

Nanami sits alone at a table near the back.

Of course he does.

A textbook open in front of him.

Laptop to the side.

Sketchbook half-visible under his arm.

He looks exactly the same as always—calm, unreadable, like the world exists somewhere far away from him.

For a second, I consider turning around.

Leaving.

Pretending this never happened.

But Eden is already walking toward him.

Too late.

She slides into the seat across from him.

I sit next to her, picking up a random book from the table and opening it like I belong here.

Nanami doesn't look up.

Of course he doesn't.

Eden nudges me.

I ignore her.

She nudges me harder.

I elbow her.

She grins.

I take a breath.

And then—

"Psst."

No response.

"Psst."

Nothing.

I close my eyes briefly, already annoyed.

"PSSST."

Finally—

He looks up.

And his eyes land on me.

Sharp.

Cool.

Unimpressed.

“If you’re trying to be subtle,” he says flatly, “you’re failing.”

My grip tightens slightly on the book.

“Good to know.”

He leans back slightly, studying me now.

“What do you want?”

Straight to the point.

No politeness.

No pretense.

I hate it.

And yet—

It’s... refreshing.

I close the book slowly, meeting his gaze.

“I need help.”

“I need help.”

The words sit between us like something fragile—and deeply unnatural.

For me, at least.

Nanami doesn’t react right away.

He just... looks at me.

Really looks this time.

Not the quick, dismissive glance people usually give me—the kind that comes with assumptions already attached.

No.

This is slower. Sharper. Like he’s trying to figure out if I’m serious or if this is some kind of joke.

His eyes flick briefly to Eden, then back to me.

“...With what?”

His tone is flat, but there’s a thread of skepticism underneath it.

I straighten slightly in my seat, refusing to let that throw me off.

“Calculus. Physics. Chemistry.”

A pause.

Then—

A quiet, almost disbelieving exhale.

“You’re serious.”

“I don’t joke about things that matter.”

His gaze lingers for another second, like he’s still deciding whether to believe me.

Then he leans back in his chair, crossing one arm over the other.

“And you came to me... why?”

There it is.

The question I knew was coming.

I lift my chin slightly.

“Because you’re good at it.”

It’s the simplest answer.

The most honest one I’m willing to give.

He studies me again, like he’s trying to find the catch.

There’s always a catch.

Especially with people like me.

“I don’t do charity,” he says.

The words are blunt.

Expected.

I don’t even blink.

“Good. I don’t need charity.”

I reach into my bag, pulling out my phone, setting it down on the table between us like a quiet statement.

“I’ll pay you.”

That gets a reaction.

Small.

Subtle.

But it’s there.

His gaze drops to the phone, then back to me.

“How much?”

Straight to business.

Of course.

I could throw out a number.

Something high enough to guarantee he says yes.

But something in me pauses.

Because I don't want this to feel like I'm just... buying him.

Even if I am.

"Name your price."

His eyebrow lifts slightly.

Now *that* interests him.

Eden, who has been suspiciously quiet for the last ten seconds, suddenly leans forward like she can't hold it in anymore.

"This is so exciting—"

"Eden," I say sharply.

She shuts up.

For about two seconds.

Then whispers, "I'm just saying, this is how it starts—"

I elbow her.

Hard.

She winces but grins anyway.

Nanami watches the exchange, expression unreadable.

Then looks back at me.

"You're serious."

It's not a question this time.

I nod once.

"Yes."

Another pause.

Longer this time.

He exhales slowly, running a hand through his hair like he's thinking it through.

"Five hundred an hour."

Eden chokes.

I don't.

"Two-hour minimum," he continues. "Up front. No rescheduling last minute."

He's watching me carefully now.

Waiting for me to flinch.

To argue.

To act like it's too much.

I don't.

"Fine."

The word leaves my mouth without hesitation.

And for the first time—
His expression shifts.
Just slightly.
Like he wasn't expecting that.

Eden turns to me, eyes wide.

"Hazel, that's—"

"Fine," I repeat, not looking at her.

My gaze stays locked on Nanami.

"When can you start?"

There's a beat of silence.

Then—

"Tomorrow."

Of course.

No delay.

No games.

I nod.

"Four PM. My house."

His jaw tightens.

Subtle.

But I notice.

"Your house."

It's not a question.

More like... confirmation.

"Yes."

Another pause.

I can practically see the thoughts running through his head.

Judgment.

Assumptions.

Distance.

I cross my arms slightly.

"It's private. Quiet. No interruptions."

His gaze flickers, like he's weighing something.

Then he shrugs, like it doesn't matter either way.

"Fine."

Simple.

Done.

Just like that.

I slide my phone across the table toward him.

“Put your number in.”

He looks at it for a second before taking it, his fingers brushing the edge of the case.

I notice things I shouldn't.

Like how steady his hands are.

Like the faint ink on his skin.

Like the way he doesn't rush.

He types his number in, then hands the phone back.

No smile.

No unnecessary words.

“Don't be late,” I say.

His gaze meets mine again.

“Don't waste my time.”

Something about the way he says it—

It's not rude.

It's not even aggressive.

It's just... *final*.

Like he means it.

Like he always means what he says.

I nod once.

“Tomorrow.”

I stand up before the moment can stretch any further.

Before Eden can say something she'll regret.

Before I start overthinking this entire thing.

“Let's go,” I tell her.

She lingers for a second, looking between the two of us like she's watching her favorite show unfold.

Then she hops up quickly, following me.

But not before whispering—

“I love this already.”

I ignore her.

We walk out of the library, the cool air hitting my face as the doors swing open behind us.

I don't realize I've been holding my breath until I exhale.

"That," Eden says beside me, "was insane."

"It was a transaction."

"No," she says immediately. "That was *chemistry*."

I stop walking.

Turn to her.

"There is no chemistry."

She grins.

"Yet."

I stare at her.

"You are not involved in this."

"I'm always involved."

"You're not."

"I am."

"Eden."

She sighs dramatically.

"Fine. I'll behave."

I narrow my eyes.

"You won't."

"I won't," she admits cheerfully.

I shake my head, continuing toward the parking lot.

This is going to be a problem.

Later that night, I sit in my room surrounded by textbooks I should've opened weeks ago.

They stare back at me like a challenge.

Or a threat.

I flip one open.

Read a line.

Nothing.

I close it again.

This is pointless.

I lean back against my pillows, staring at the ceiling.

Tomorrow.

Tomorrow it starts.

And for the first time in a long time—
I feel something unfamiliar twist in my chest.
Not fear.
Not exactly.
Something... close to it.

Across the city—
Even though I don't know it yet—
He's probably doing the same thing.
Preparing.
Thinking.
Deciding.
Because this—
This isn't just tutoring.
It's something else.
Something neither of us understands yet.

And somehow—
I have the feeling...
Everything is about to change. Morning comes too fast.
Not because I stayed up late—I didn't.
Because I didn't sleep properly at all.
That's the difference.
I sit at the edge of my bed for a moment, staring at my phone on the nightstand like it's going to change if I look at it long enough. It doesn't.
Four missed calls from Eden.
Seven messages.
All of them variations of *"THIS IS INSANE"* or *"I NEED DETAILS RIGHT NOW."*
I don't reply.
Instead, I get up.
The house is quiet in the way expensive houses always are—thick carpets muting footsteps, walls too far apart to ever feel crowded, silence that feels engineered rather than natural.
My father is already gone.
Of course he is.
He's always gone.
A maid passes in the hallway, offering a polite greeting I return automatically. Breakfast is already set out, untouched.

I don't eat much.

I never do when I'm thinking.

And today, I am thinking too much.

By 3:40 PM, I'm standing in front of the mirror in my room, staring at myself like I'm trying to recognize the version of me that agreed to this.

A tutor.

Nanami.

At my house.

I adjust my sleeves unnecessarily.

Then stop.

Why am I nervous?

I shouldn't be.

This is business.

That's all it is.

A transaction. A solution to a problem I didn't want to admit I had.

I grab my phone.

No messages from him.

Of course not.

Nanami doesn't seem like the type to confirm things twice.

At 3:58 PM, I hear the gate outside open.

I pause.

Listen.

The faint sound of tires on gravel.

A car stopping.

Footsteps.

I exhale slowly and walk downstairs.

He's already inside by the time I reach the foyer.

Of course he is.

Eden is here too.

Of course she is.

She's sitting on one of the modern chairs near the entrance like she owns the place, legs crossed, phone in hand, looking entirely too pleased with herself.

Nanami stands a few feet away from her.

Not sitting.

Not leaning.

Just standing there like the space itself hasn't decided whether it accepts him yet.

He's wearing a plain black hoodie.

Jeans.

A backpack slung over one shoulder.

That's it.

No effort.

No performance.

And somehow that makes him stand out more than anyone else I know.

His eyes shift to me as I come down the last step.

No reaction.

Just observation.

I hate how calm he looks.

Like this is nothing to him.

"On time," he says.

Not praise.

Just fact.

"Barely," I reply.

Eden gasps softly behind him. "Ooooh. First exchange. I feel the tension—"

"Eden," I say without looking at her.

She raises both hands. "Silent. I am silent."

She is not silent.

Nanami glances at her once.

Then back at me.

"You said private."

"I didn't say empty," I reply.

A pause.

Then he nods once, like that answers something in his head.

"Where?" he asks.

I gesture toward the hallway.

"This way."

I turn before waiting for him to respond.

Because I don't need to wait.

He follows anyway.

Of course he does.

My study is at the far end of the house.

Glass walls.

Bookshelves I've barely touched.

A long table that looks more like something from an architecture magazine than a place someone actually studies.

He stops just inside the doorway.

Looks around.

Not impressed.

Not unimpressed.

Just... assessing.

"You always work like this?" he asks.

"Like what?"

"Like you're trying to prove the room is smarter than you."

I blink once.

Eden, who has somehow followed us despite me very clearly not inviting her, makes a strangled sound like she's trying not to laugh.

"I don't need to prove anything," I say.

"People who don't need to prove anything usually don't build rooms like this," he replies.

That lands somewhere uncomfortable.

I don't respond.

Instead, I walk to the table and set my bag down.

"This is where we'll work."

He nods, then finally takes off his backpack, setting it on the floor like it's not worth placing anywhere higher.

Eden immediately drops into one of the chairs.

"Okay," she says brightly. "First session. I am emotional support."

"No," I say.

"Yes," she replies instantly.

Nanami looks between us again.

"You always like this?" he asks me.

"Unfortunately," Eden answers before I can.

I shoot her a look.

She ignores it.

Nanami exhales lightly through his nose—almost a laugh, but not quite.

Then he pulls out a notebook.

Sits.

Finally.

"You said calculus," he says.

"Yes."

He opens the notebook.

Turns a page.

Writes something down.

Then slides it toward me without looking up.

"Start there."

I look down.

A problem set.

Not simplified.

Not adjusted.

Full difficulty.

I narrow my eyes slightly.

"This is first session material?"

"This is baseline," he says.

Eden leans forward. "Oh my god, he's one of *those* tutors."

"What does that mean?" I ask.

"It means he's going to suffer through this with you," she whispers dramatically.

Nanami glances at her.

"You talk a lot," he says.

Eden grins. "I know."

He looks back at me.

"Can you solve it or not?"

That tone again.

No judgment.

No patience.

Just... expectation.

I take the pen from the table.

Sit down.

Begin.

The first ten minutes are silent.

The second ten are worse.

Because I'm stuck.

Not completely.

But enough.

Enough that I hate it.

Enough that I feel it.

That small tightening in my chest that I refuse to acknowledge as frustration.

Nanami doesn't interrupt.

He just watches.

Not my face.

Not my frustration.

My process.

Eden, on the other hand, is clearly about to combust from silence.

"So," she whispers loudly. "Do you always tutor emotionally unavailable geniuses or is this a special occasion?"

"Eden," I warn.

"I'm just observing the dynamic—"

"There is no dynamic."

Nanami finally speaks without looking up.

"There's a mistake in your setup."

I pause.

Look at him.

"What?"

He leans forward slightly, tapping the edge of my notebook with one finger.

"Here. You misread the constraint."

I glance down.

He's right.

I hate that he's right immediately.

I fix it.

He watches me redo the step.

Then nods once.

"Better."

That single word does something irritating to me.

Because it's not approval.

It's confirmation.

Like he expected I would eventually get it right.

Like there was never doubt.

I continue.

Faster this time.

Eden shifts in her chair.

"This is kind of hot," she whispers.

I almost throw my pen at her.

Nanami hears her.

Of course he does.

He pauses.

Looks at her.

Then at me.

"...Your friend is strange," he says.

"She's not my friend," I reply instantly.

Eden gasps. "Wow."

I don't look at her.

"Focus," I say instead.

Nanami leans back slightly.

"I am focused."

I glance up.

"You're watching me."

"I'm tutoring you."

"That's not the same thing."

"It is when you're doing it wrong."

That again.

Not rude.

Just factual.

It should annoy me more than it does.

Instead, it pushes something else up.

Something sharper.

I finish the problem.

Slide it toward him.

He looks at it.

Longer this time.

Then nods.

"Good."

That's it.

Just that.

No smile.

No praise.

Just... good.

And somehow, that feels more significant than anything else I've ever heard in a classroom.

Eden claps softly. "We're witnessing growth."

"Eden," I say again.

She leans back. "I'm quiet. I'm silent. I am a statue."

She is still not silent.

Nanami closes the notebook slightly.

"We'll do three hours," he says.

"Today?"

"Today."

I hesitate.

"You said two-hour minimum."

"I also said don't waste my time."

That's not an answer.

But it is.

So I nod.

"Fine."

He stands.

Moves to the other side of the table.

Closer now.

Too close.

I notice things I shouldn't again.

The faint crease in his hoodie sleeve.

The smudge of ink on his thumb.

The way he doesn't shift his weight unnecessarily.

Like everything about him is intentional.

He looks down at my notebook.

Leans slightly.

"Next one," he says.

And I realize—

This is going to be harder than calculus.

Not the work.

Him. Three hours sounds reasonable when you say it out loud.

It stops sounding reasonable about forty minutes in.

Because Nanami doesn't teach like other people.

He doesn't explain things in soft steps or break them into comforting pieces.

He dismantles them.

Then rebuilds them in front of you like it's obvious you should've seen it all along.

And I hate how effective it is.

"Again," he says.

I exhale slowly.

"I got it right."

"You guessed it."

"I didn't guess."

"You substituted without understanding the structure."

I pause.

Look at him.

"...That's called solving it."

"That's called surviving it," he corrects.

Eden makes a quiet choking sound from her chair.

"I'm going to write a book about this," she whispers. "Enemies to tutors to something deeply concerning."

"Eden," I warn.

She holds up her hands again. "Statue mode. I am stone."

Nanami doesn't even look at her anymore.

He just leans forward slightly, tapping the page again.

"Do it properly."

I glare at the paper.

Then at him.

"You're enjoying this."

That gets a pause.

A real one.

His eyes lift to mine.

Not amused.

Not offended.

Just... still.

"No," he says.

Simple.

Honest.

It should shut the conversation down.

Instead, it does the opposite.

Because I don't believe him.

Not fully.

Not entirely.

I redo the problem.

Slower this time.

Not because I want to.

Because I'm trying to prove something.

When I finish, I slide it toward him harder than necessary.

He looks at it.

Longer again.

Then nods.

"Correct."

That word again.

No decoration.

No softness.

Just fact.

I lean back in my chair slightly.

"Finally."

"You rushed the first two steps," he says.

"I didn't rush anything."

"You did. You just didn't notice."

There's a difference between being corrected and being studied.

And he does both like they're the same thing.

Eden suddenly leans forward.

"Okay," she says brightly. "Question."

I don't look at her.

Nanami does.

"What," he says flatly.

She grins. "Do you ever smile?"

Silence.

I close my eyes briefly.

Of course she asked that.

Nanami doesn't react immediately.

Then—

"No," he says.

Eden nods like she's expected that answer her entire life.

"Okay," she says. "Follow-up question. Why not?"

I open my eyes again.

"Eden," I warn.

But she's already committed.

Nanami looks at her for a long moment.

Long enough that I think he's going to ignore her again.

Then he says—

"Because there's nothing funny."

It's not harsh.

Not defensive.

Just... stated.

Like it's a truth he's carried for a long time.

Eden's expression softens slightly.

Just for a second.

Then she smiles again anyway, because that's who she is.

"That's sad," she says.

"I didn't ask," he replies.

Fair.

Eden leans back again, but quieter this time.

Even she knows when to stop pushing.

I look down at my notebook.

Try to focus again.

But something about his answer lingers.

Not because it's dramatic.

But because it isn't.

It's too simple.

Too clean.

Like he's not trying to be mysterious.

He just... is.

"Next," he says.

I blink.

"Next what?"

"Problem."

I glance at the clock.

“Two hours aren’t even up.”

“Time doesn’t matter if you’re not learning.”

I narrow my eyes.

“That’s not how time works.”

“It is when you’re paying me.”

Eden coughs. “He’s kind of terrifying when he’s right.”

“I’m always right,” Nanami says without looking at her.

That earns a quiet laugh from her despite herself.

I hate that I almost smile at that.

Almost.

I don’t.

I shouldn’t.

I continue working.

By the end of the third hour, my hand hurts.

My brain feels... stretched.

Not in a bad way.

In a way I’m not used to.

Like something inside me is being forced to reorganize itself.

Nanami closes his notebook finally.

“That’s enough.”

I blink.

“That’s it?”

“For today.”

I lean back slightly.

“And tomorrow?”

He glances at me.

Same calm expression.

“Same time.”

I nod slowly.

“Fine.”

Eden immediately perks up. “Tomorrow I’m bringing snacks.”

“No,” I say instantly.

“Yes,” she replies just as fast.

Nanami stands, slinging his backpack over his shoulder again.

"Don't overthink it," he says.

I look up at him.

"I don't overthink things."

A pause.

His eyes hold mine for a second longer than necessary.

"You do," he says.

Not judgmental.

Just certain.

Then he turns.

Walks toward the door.

Eden jumps up after him like she's been dismissed from court.

"Wait—wait—wait," she says. "Do you always talk like you're in a dramatic indie film or is this just her effect?"

He doesn't turn around.

"I don't talk much at all," he replies.

"Then why do you talk like that?" she calls after him.

He stops at the doorway.

Just briefly.

Looks back at me.

Not her.

Me.

"Because she asked," he says.

And then he's gone.

The door closes behind him.

Silence returns.

Eden lets out a long breath.

"...Okay," she says slowly. "That was worse than I imagined."

I stare at the empty doorway for a moment longer than I should.

Then stand.

"I'm done."

Eden tilts her head. "For today?"

"For this conversation."

She grins. "You're blushing."

"I am not."

"You are emotionally overheating."

"I am not."

"You are—"

"Eden."

She raises her hands. "Okay, okay. I'll go."

She walks backward toward the door, still smiling.

"This is going to be fun," she says.

"It's not supposed to be fun."

"That's why it will be."

And then she leaves too.

Later that night, I lie in bed again.

But this time, my mind doesn't feel foggy.

It feels... active.

Too active.

I keep replaying moments I shouldn't care about.

His voice.

The way he says "correct" like it costs him nothing.

The way he looked at me when he said I overthink.

The way he didn't look away first.

I turn on my side.

Stare at the dark ceiling.

This is stupid.

It's tutoring.

That's all.

Just tutoring.

But somewhere between the equations and the silence and the way he stands too still—

Something shifted.

Not enough to name.

Not enough to admit.

But enough that I notice it.

And I hate that I do.

At the same time, across the city—

Nanami sits at a desk in a dim room.

Lamp on.

Notebook open.

But he isn't writing.

Not yet.

He's thinking.

About problems.

About patterns.

About the way she doesn't give up quickly, even when she's wrong.

About the way she looks when she's trying not to be frustrated.

He exhales once.

Quietly.

Then writes one line in his notebook.

Not math.

Just a note.

And under it—

He pauses.

Then continues writing anyway.

End of Chapter 1

If you want, I'll continue next with:

👉 **Chapter 2 — Nanami POV (first real shift in perspective, deeper insight into him, and how he experiences Hazel + Eden's chaos)**
