

The Pen He Stole

By Wei Wei Z. and Allison Y.

The pen hadn't been worth stealing.

He looked at it for the longest time, as if some kind of answer would appear. In the end, it just lay there in a mocking way, its rusty cap screwed tightly to its thin metal frame.

At first glance, the pen wasn't anything out of the ordinary. In fact, it may have been less than ordinary. But to him, that pen was a mere symbol of what used to be. What used to be the hours he spent inside of his head, thinking of all the words he could say, and most of all, the words he could say to her.

The words he thought. The words he heard. The words he saw. Every letter and sound belonged to her, and yet, was never delivered. The world was his torment; it held her answers, her location, her. The rest of them could believe they were another pair of star-crossed children wandering about in the skies of reality.

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His name was Luca Han and he loved Annie Huang. The secrets they wrote with the pen was between them and the world. Them and the others, as it always had been. But now, his hand held no one's, the pen wrote no one's name, and he? The only person he had was a person he needed to find.

The next morning, a cold wind drifted down his neck sending shivers along his spine. Sunlight streamed through his window, causing him to shield himself with the covers. Luca eventually rose, wondering how he would get through the day.

"Sharon?"

"Hi, Luca." The shadowy outline of his little sister stood in the doorway, casting a small smile. Luca instantly knew what would begin with the appearance of Sharon. It was as it always had been: a lecture. A few months ago, it would've been the importance of family. Now, it was his "obsession" with Annie.

“Tell me, Luca, please tell me this one thing,” she said, her voice quiet but deadly, “when are you going to accept that Annie is *gone*?” *So she had been listening in on my thoughts after all*, Luca thought bitterly.

“What do you want?” He shot back, as if he hadn’t heard her speak at all.

“You know, you may think you have an excuse, losing your ‘fiancé’ and all, but you *know* Annie would never have wanted— “

“Don’t say her name again. Who do you think you are? Have you ever even spoke to her? Who *exactly* do you think you are?” Luca repeated, venom dripping from his words. He slammed the door. He didn’t feel sad anymore. Just frustrated—he never had asked for anything, and yet, when he finally did, it was miles away from his reach.

An hour later, frost rose to touch his cheeks as he stepped outside. Snow crunched under his boots as he trudged towards the house. *Annie’s apartment.*

*The place where all his happiness disappeared.*

A moment later, Luca arrived at the apartment. Shivering, he punched the numbers into the machine and pulled at the gate. When it swung open, he was greeted by an array of buildings with skinny staircases leading to the second floor. He wandered about, noticing the strange collection of empty flower pots and statues on one of the balconies.

Luca gingerly stepped on the narrow staircase. The door was unlocked, as it always had been. Instead of the familiar sensation of Muffins, her pet cat, rubbing against his foot, all he felt was a weak nudge. Looking down, Luca saw the once-fat, spoiled cat begging him for food. Clumps of fur hung to the cat’s skeleton, some missing. Gently picking her up, he brought her to the food bowl. Luca rummaged through the cabinets and gently blew the dust covering the bright lettering on the cat food away. After feeding the cat, he started towards Annie’s room.

Small cobwebs hung to the ceiling, seeming to obnoxiously hint of the disappearance of the apartment owner. A metallic scent filled his nose. He glanced around. Pillows were thrown across the room and abandoned posters of people with strange hairstyles seemed to be peeling off the walls. Luca nudged the closet open, his eyes flickering. Crumpled notes were scattered on the floor.

Luca smoothed one out. The handwriting seemed large and sloppy, and dried liquid made the paper spotty.

*“Open.”*

Luca frowned, wondering if he had misread it. He flattened another piece of paper.

*“Desk top”*

Luca reread both notes again, then opened the other notes. They all said the same thing- *open desk top*.

With shaking hands, he crumpled the notes again. The desk top—he had known about the old desk where Annie had kept all her photo albums. He sat down at the desk top and lifted the surface. Strangely enough, no dust had collected on the albums or the desktop. It seemed as if it had been wiped clean. Luca was too anxious to be suspicious.

Instead of a stack of albums, it seemed that they had all been cleared out, leaving a single book in the desk. Luca skimmed leather cover before flipping to the pages.

All he saw were the same photos of her parents and relatives, none of them with Annie. Finally, at the end of the book, Luca noticed that blood was leaking from his index finger.

The blood traveled down his palm at an alarming speed.

*I love you...*

The blood spelled out, the letters seeming too neat to be real blood.

*Luca.*

And at that moment, Luca Han’s dark eyes rolled upwards and his body tumbled out of the seat. Never had he known that the blood that robbed him of his life was the exact same color as the stolen pen.