

# **A Reason to Live**

## **Ana was simple. Guji was not.**

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I'm no one special. Really.

I wear my hair the same way each and every day that anyone who's known me for some time would already assume that nothing extravagant would come out of me. No love letters in my locker, never mind the secret admirers. For someone as simple or plain as me, I've stopped all hopes for anything romantic to happen in the future. I'm not bitter.

I'm not bitter that my name is as simple as only two syllables: Ana.

Leaves your mouth easily, doesn't it? No special pronunciation needed, no guttural sounds to create an accent to beautify the way it's said. Just Ana, thanks. I'm not complaining that my name is often used; because it's actually not. Many just often assume that it is because it sounds very plain. Sorry, but that's not the case. That is why Ana is ironically a rare name.

I've made my peace with the simplicity which I stand for.

Also, I have no special hobby as interesting as the students in room 408 in my high school. They have passion, I can tell, because of the way their paint brushes run smoothly across the canvas the art teachers have provided. All I can do is knit, but please don't assume that I don't enjoy it just because it is not as interesting as Sarah-from-room-408's drawing is. I actually enjoy knitting. I've anonymously knitted some sweaters for my school. One of my teachers found me in the lunchroom knitting my thoughts away and approached me with a question. She asked if I was interested in making something a person could wear, and participate in the fund raiser for the school's basketball team. As she said, they needed money for uniforms. I told her that not many people in that school liked me very much and all she said to me was that it was non-sense. "Everyone is always liked by someone else," she said.

And stupid me, I believed her, and so I agreed-- on one condition. She gave me this look and I sighed. "Please don't tell anyone that I was the one who made them. They won't buy it otherwise." I just told her to accept the credit. She agreed, and that was the beginning of my new found motivation to go to school. Soon, I was able to make six sweaters for a woman's size. Much to my surprise, many of our cheerleaders were eager to buy them, and at such a high cost, too. The school's main pricing for all of my work was twenty-five dollars each. Because of the scarcity of the sweaters (after all, I couldn't make too many in a week all by myself), some girls fought over it. Until the highest bidder won and bought them. My teacher was ecstatic and ran into an empty classroom one day, where she kept me so I can knit alone, just like I asked her. She allowed it only after school, though. Since the sweaters caused so much raucous during school hours, the sales had been changed to after school.

Inside, of course, I was proud. Of course I was happy that such beautiful girls would buy something my own two hands have made... but the sadness lingered each time I realized that the school would probably make no money if someone had known that it was I who made

them. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you-- my hands are cursed. No one ever touches anything I've touched because they all think that I'm simply too dull or filthy to contain any talent. Yet now, the cheerleaders wore them with pride as if it were the new fashion trend.

I know that my hair is always covering my face, especially since I'm always looking down at the floor; no one liked to make eye contact with me. I only ever tie it up in a bun or in a ponytail when I'm hard at work with my knitting either at home or alone in the classroom. I can't afford to risk any needle accidents because it slows down my progress.

I know I've babbled on and on about knitting but the last thing you should know about it is that since it raised so much money, the school staff decided to keep the fund-raiser going all throughout the year. I was fine with it since I didn't have much to do in school or at home, anyway. So they all agreed to my condition and allowed permission for my teacher to receive credit.

At times during that year, I've had the same amount of people sneer at me as much as the number of people who wore my sweaters. It didn't end there.

Some of the staff asked me if I would like to help sell during after school hours since I am the original creator. I was sure there would be no harm in that, so I agreed. But it wasn't to my expectations when some freshmen and sophomores chuckled at the sight of me holding one of the products. They turned their heads away and asked to have another sweater. I think that was the time when the staff finally realized why I did what I did anonymously. After seeing that, I asked indifferently if I could stop. None of them asked why but instead thanked me for my help.

Sometimes when I reached home, I would wonder the many reasons why I was well-hated. Maybe it was the fact that my attire was always so gray... I never had any specific themes on my shirt and pants, but if it did, no one had ever heard of the brand. Then again maybe it was because I was quiet in class? Never raised my hand? I try to, I really do, but sometimes there was simply too much risk in raising my hand. It was either I spoke, answered correctly and be made into a controversial topic about the girl who never speaks but now she does, or not raise my hand and have everyone wonder if I was so stupid as to never raise my hand at all.

I guess I *was*  
a pretty controversial topic.

One of my biggest problem was this guy. A senior in the basketball team. Yes, that guy which every girl swoons for when he does nothing but merely walk down the hall with his basketball buddies. I hate them. Especially the one who always stayed in the middle of the group. If you've ever been to my school you'd probably swoon, too. They may all be obnoxious, but even I can't deny how good-looking they were.

Alright. I guess it would only be fair to give you an example of how obnoxious one of them is.

One day, the day before Valentine's Day, I walked over to my locker and sighed at the misery I was sure to face that day. Everyone had a special someone to give them chocolate meanwhile all I was scheduled to do was my private knitting class after school. But I'll never forget how wide my eyes must've gone when I opened my locker and saw that there was a

small and simple heart-shaped box inside! I couldn't be sure yet if it was a joke from someone or not, so I tried to hold in my excitement as I cautiously opened the box and inside were four pieces of chocolate. My heart skipped a beat when I saw a small piece of paper from the side of one of the chocolates. I pulled on it and began to read. No, I can never forget what it said...

*You are as simple and sweet as these chocolates.*

Of course if you were ever in this circumstance, how could you ever stop yourself from looking around as quickly as you can right after you read a note like that? Holding the box in my hand, I anxiously turned my body... stood face-to-face with him.

“Oh,” Guji said with a sly smirk. “So even someone as misunderstood as you deserve to receive some chocolates once in a while, huh?”

I didn't dare say a word and I'm sure I must have looked so stupid as I did, holding on to that box with a petrified look on my face; Guji was quite tall so I know I looked like a mouse compared to his height. Then... he took a bite out of the four chocolates and frowned, I'm assuming, at the taste and one by one, he threw them on the ground and stepped on it. One by one.

Yes, I've hated Guji ever since. Who wouldn't? Please keep in mind that you're trying to picture yourself in my shoes. What do you think happened after that? Nothing absolutely nothing. No one asked if I was okay. No one cared to look at me a second time after Guji left my sight. I couldn't move. Picture that, you couldn't move.

One of Guji's friends began to laugh but all I heard Guji say was for him to shut up. Did he think he was ultimately on top of everyone else? He wasn't. He wasn't. "You're *not*!"

"I yelled and ran off the other end of the hallway opposite of where those idiots were walking and tried to hold back the tears and fury.

And for three weeks straight, there were no sweaters made, no sweaters sold. And that was when I knew I that I was not even allowed to breathe the same air as them, and I couldn't take it anymore. It was bad not having any companion but the lack of understanding from anyone was worse. My own mother couldn't understand why I was so caught up with knitting all the time. When I tell her that it was my hobby, she tells me to take up a new one that was less quiet and lonely. When I tell her nothing, she complains to dad that “there's something wrong with that child.”

No, mom. There's nothing wrong with this child.

I just needed someone to understand. Maybe with my final decision, many will understand through my silence that that was the only time I really meant to reach out.

Making my way upstairs to the fifth floor, the roof of the school, I wiped the last few tears from my eyes before pushing the metal door open. The sun was blinding at first but someone suddenly stood before me and blocked it.

“Ana?” Guji asked with uncertainty. But I wasn't there to speak to him.

“Get out of my way, Guji.” Shoving past him, I headed for the cemented edge of the balcony.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! What are you doing?”

“I swear, Guji, you better stay away from me.” I squinted at him with increasing anger. It was as though wasting second after second of looking at him infuriated me more. I knew it did.

He tried to walk over to me but with caution to his steps. He never broke eye contact. “Ana, wait. What're you doing up there-- please, come down here!”

“You're disgusting,” I told him as my hair flew all around my face but even with that, I saw his face crinkle with embarrassment. “I never even knew who that box was from... What if it was meant for someone else and it was put in my locker by accident?”

“I-I'm sor--”

“You could've ruined someone else's Valentine's Day present! How could you do something like that?” I was crying then, but it didn't matter. This was the end, and I refused to be quiet about it. I sniffed and kept on going. “Now I know that it really must have been a mistake for that box to have ended up there. No one cared if I received a box of chocolates or not... but why did you do that? I'll never know, and you'll never care. You're disgusting, Guji, and that's all you'll ever be. So don't mistake these tears for sadness because I'm not. I'm glad that I was finally able to say what I've wanted this whole time.”

“Ana, this isn't--”

“You know nothing about me! *Nothing!*”

Without any further interruptions from me, he yelled. “I'm sorry I threw your chocolates on the floor! I'm sorry. I only did that because I knew you would never be willing to take a present like that from someone like me. I know you hate me and I know you'll always hate me, but please, please don't jump... I'm sorry.” He was breathless and I think I was, too. Then he added, “I love you so much. I just...” --he shrugged shamefully-- “I just didn't know how to show it.”

I don't know why I continued to listen to what he had to say, but whatever his words were made out of-- be it insults or onions-- it didn't stop the tears from coming.

“I've seen how beautiful you are when you have your hair up and you're all alone knitting in that empty classroom,” he hesitated to say. “But I always sneaked a glance each time before I headed off to practice. You're quiet but I know your capabilities, I know what you like and what you don't. If getting attention from you meant that I step on the very chocolates I bought you, then I was going to do it. And it worked but I... I didn't know you were this far off the edge, I swear, I didn't know, Ana. I would've stopped a long time ago if only you'd say something once in a while.”

“Get away from me, Guji.” The words itself were much harsher than the actual tone in which I said it.

“Fine, but if you jump I'm jumping too!”

“No, you won't,” I scoffed. He was the prized player of the basketball team and I know Guji loved his place there, as well. Why would he go this far, if this was a joke, just to hurt me?

He smiled weakly. “You won't know that. You'll be dead before my head hits the ground next.” His hair blew in the wind, too, but not once did he break that eye contact. He never did. All around my being I remembered each and every single time Guji had bothered me, and judging from them I would still think that to this day he hated me. But in case he didn't...

“Guji... please tell me you're not joking around,” I sobbed, pulling the hair away from my face. “Because if you are, I think it'd be my last hit from you. I'm so tired... please tell me you're not joking.”

“Shh,” he lulled as he reached out a hand for me to take. “Come down from there so we can talk, alright?”

It's very unimportant how the story ends between Guji and I. But no matter how it ended, I'll never forget the feeling of simplicity drain away from my body when I took his hand, and encircled in his embrace. I'll never forget how my name used to be simple but if you say it whole, it revives the beauty in which my parents named me for.

*Anabella.*

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