

# Mightier than the Sword [B1]

Un giovane aspirante scrittore scompare misteriosamente dopo aver visitato la casa-museo di Richard Elliott.

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It was the opening day of the Richard Elliott House and Terrence stood outside with other fans of the author, waiting to enter. Well, Terrence wasn't so much of a fan of Richard Elliott. He'd always had a love-hate relationship with the author. You see, Terrence was an aspiring author too, and he'd always [resented](#) Richard Elliott, who wrote the type of speculative fiction that Terrence wanted to write, that Terrence knew he could write, if he could just find the right words... Terrence had just received the first of many rejections for his first novel when Elliott had published his first book, titled *The Pen Is [Mightier](#) than the Sword*. It was the type of book Terrence had been trying to publish, and it soon became a bestseller. As Terrence had continued to try and fail to become a published author, Elliott had published one bestseller after another, and then — just as suddenly as he'd appeared in the publishing world — he'd disappeared. "I went into his home office and there he was, gone," his idiotic [housekeeper](#) had told the local news channel the next morning. "On his chair were his clothes, as if he'd disappeared right out of them. And on his desk was his final, [handwritten](#) manuscript, the pen beside it. It was most mysterious." In response to the reporter's questions, she'd said the author had become more and more fragile in recent weeks, but the doctors had found nothing wrong with him. They'd told him to rest but once he'd started working on a book, he couldn't stop, not until it was finished. Naturally, his final book had become his biggest bestseller of all. And Terrence was certain the author [had staged](#) his disappearance. He'd [run out](#) of ideas to write about, and instead of admitting this, he'd disappeared, [ensuring](#) his notoriety. Now his house in Brooklyn, New York, had been transformed into a museum, and Terrence was hoping a tour of it would inspire his writing. However, there wasn't much about Richard Elliott's house that Terrence found inspiring. He was hoping for a cabinet of curiosities— a house filled with the objects that had inspired the author's fantastic stories. But the interior was [sparselyfurnished](#) and depressingly normal. Terrence [trailed](#) behind the tour guide with the other visitors, as she

recounted facts about the author that he already knew. He was considering leaving when they entered Elliott's office: the office where he'd written his final book, the office from which he'd disappeared, leaving behind his clothes on a chair — no doubt, thought Terrence, to give the scene a dramatic touch. The clothes were still there, as was the manuscript, which had been transcribed and published. Beside it was the pen he'd used to write it. Like everything else in Elliott's house, the pen looked banal and normal. But Terrence knew it wasn't normal. Terrence knew that the pen had made Richard Elliott a bestselling author, that it had unleashed his writing talent, and that it could do the same for Terrence, that it wanted to do the same for Terrence. The pen wanted him. And he wanted it. He waited until the tour [trailed](#) into the next room to grab the pen, and replaced it with the one he always kept in his shirt pocket — an [affectation](#) he hoped made him look like the author he wanted to be. Then he left the museum and, as he travelled home on the subway, he was certain he could feel the pen pulsating in his pocket. It was as excited as he was to start writing the bestselling novel he knew he possessed. The moment Terrence arrived home, he sat at his desk. And the moment he touched the pen to paper, he started to write. Or more precisely, it started to write. The pen wrote fluently and elegantly, extracting from Terrence a work of speculative fiction that was as good as any of Elliott's bestselling novels. He wrote for hours, and when he finally stopped to use the bathroom, he found it difficult to move. When he got up, his head [spun](#), and he fell back into his chair. He was a young man [in his prime](#), but suddenly he felt [infirm](#) and fragile. And when he looked down at his hand, he saw that it was translucent. He flexed it, convinced it was an illusion. But it wasn't an illusion. It was the pen. The pen wasn't just extracting his talents; it was extracting him. And if he continued writing, he'd disappear, just like Richard Elliott had. No, that was impossible. This was real life, not one of his fantasy stories. Besides, Elliott had written over a dozen books before he'd disappeared. Terrence hadn't even written one. But deep inside Terrence knew why. He knew the pen extracted all the talent from an author before it extracted its compensation: the author's life. And Richard Elliott had had a much greater fountain of talent than Terrence did. He [threw the pen across the room](#), promising to never touch it again. But when he woke the next day, he convinced himself [otherwise](#). His hand looked

perfectly normal now and he was sure he'd imagined everything. He'd gone to the Richard Elliott House hoping for inspiration and he'd found it in the form of this abandoned old pen. He'd finally found his voice and the force of it had unnerved him, that was all. He retrieved the pen and, laughing at himself, returned to his desk, determined to finish his book that day. It was two weeks before his landlord found him gone, his clothes on a chair, as if he'd disappeared right out of them. On his desk was his finished manuscript, the pen beside it — a pen mightier than any sword, waiting to snare its next aspiring author.

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# Glossary

- **Mightier** = più potente
- **furnished** = arredare
- **trailed behind** = rimanere indietro
- **spun** = girare (la testa)
- **retrieved** = recuperare
- **resented** = provare risentimento
- **threw the pen across the room** = lanciare dall'altra parte della stanza
- **had staged** = mettere in scena
- **in his prime** = nel suo momento migliore
- **unnerved** = nervoso
- **sparsely** = scarsamente
- **handwritten** = manoscritto
- **run out** = esaurire
- **ensuring** = assicurarsi
- **trailed** = seguire
- **affectation** = artificio
- **infirm** = debole, malato
- **otherwise** = altrimenti
- **housekeeper** = governante
- **landlord** = proprietario