

The background of the cover is a large, green silhouette of a house. Inside the house's outline, there is a sun in the upper right window, several birds flying in the sky, a large tree in the center, and a silhouette of a girl holding a balloon. The house has a porch with a railing at the bottom.

Lena Garza

ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE

HINDSIGHT

PJ GRAY



CHAPTER 1

NO ANSWER

A TV sat on the floor of a dark apartment. It was tuned to a horse race. “And they’re off!” a voice blared from the screen.

Other than the TV, the place was nearly empty. A single folding chair was set up in the middle of the room. The walls were bare.

In the kitchen, a man sat at a small table. He stared at his computer. Dirty dishes were piled high in the sink.

“Meow!”

The man glanced out the kitchen window. A stray cat appeared. It pawed at the

windowsill, as it did every day. Then it paced back and forth, rubbing against the glass.

“Shoo!” the man yelled. “I have no food for you today.”

He turned back to his screen. His right foot tapped as he typed. Empty soft drink cans were stacked beside him. There were drawings spread on the table. They looked like floor plans for a house.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Upstairs, the man’s neighbor pounded on her floor with a cane. It was a reminder to turn down the volume on his television. He rolled his eyes.

The man sat and typed for a while longer. His neighbor banged a few more times. Finally, he grabbed his remote and turned down the volume. Then he picked up his phone and made a call.

After five rings, a message played.

“*Hola!* Hello! You have reached the Garza

family. Sorry we can't come to the phone. We must be busy, as usual! Please leave a message. We will get back to you soon. Thanks."

He ended the call without speaking. Then he turned off the TV and hurried out.



CHAPTER 2

A RIDDLE FOUND

It was a sunny Saturday in October. Mrs. Garza was directing workers in the family's backyard. Luna smiled as she watched her mom.

"Hey!" Mrs. Garza called out. "Be careful with that ladder, mister. It almost hit the birdbath. We want to keep that. You're here to *paint* the house, not destroy it."

Luna looked at the birdbath. It was made of concrete. A statue of a woman stood in the center. She had her hands folded in front of her and wore an old-fashioned dress with ruffles.

“Really?” Luna said to her mom. “Why do you want to keep *that*? The woman is wearing funny clothes.”

“It’s beautiful,” Mrs. Garza said. “And it’s a girl, not a woman.”

Luna smiled and shook her head. Her mom always saw the best in old things.

The Garza family had moved to Apple Glen, Ohio, a few months earlier. Luna’s parents wanted a new adventure. They found the house for sale online. It was a big, old two-story home. But it needed a lot of work. That’s one of the things they liked about the place. There were other houses in the neighborhood. Few were as full of character as the Garzas’ house.

Apple Glen was a faded American town. It had seen some hard times. But the Garzas thought it was charming. They wanted to help bring it back to its former glory. Fixing up the old house was a chance to do that.

Luna's dad had been ready to start as soon as they moved in. Then his boss surprised him. Mr. Garza was sent to Japan for a business project and would be gone for months. Luna's mom did not want to wait for him to come back. She began to fix up the house herself.

"We will go room by room," Mrs. Garza had told Luna. "This place will be beautiful again once we are done. Your dad will be so surprised. Just wait until he sees it."

Since then, Luna's mom had barely sat down. She was constantly starting new projects on the house. There were plenty of little tasks for her daughter too. Luna was always happy to help. It was fun to get her hands dirty.

After the painters left that day, Luna's mom led her upstairs. They went to a spare bedroom. Mrs. Garza opened the closet. "Here," she said, handing Luna a hammer and protective goggles. "Pull the loose nails

from the floor. Then I will take the wood away.”

Luna began pulling up nails. She counted in her head as she went. *One, two, three.*

The fourth nail did not want to come out. Nothing happened on her first try. It didn't budge on the second try either.

Luna pulled one more time with all her strength. Suddenly, the nail came loose. She lost her grip and fell back. The hammer flipped into the air and came down on her hand.

“Ouch!” Luna cried, grabbing her fingers in pain.

She looked at the floor. The piece of wood that the nail was in had broken in half. Underneath it, Luna could see the glint of something metallic.

“What is that?” she whispered to herself.

Carefully, Luna lifted a few more pieces of the floor. This made a small, dark hole. She

reached inside and pulled out a black metal box.

“Whoa, cool,” she said while opening it.

Inside the dusty box was a pair of wire-framed eyeglasses. There was also a rusty key. These rested on an old, yellowed piece of folded paper.

When Luna opened the paper, she found a handwritten poem:

*Perched so high
I stand alone
to view all beauty,
set in stone.
They drink to days of nevermore
then fly away, fly away
past my door.*

Luna was puzzled. *What does this poem mean?*

She held up the glasses and then slid them

on. Luna looked around, expecting things to appear distorted through the lenses. But nothing changed. “Weird,” she said to herself. Then she picked up the box. “Mom!” she shouted as she raced downstairs.