

Secret Identity

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Summary: When Lois and Clark's oldest child begins to discover his powers, he begins to make some connections in his mind...

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Author's Note: Thanks for the beta look over, Val! You rock!

Michael Kent looked at his brother, Christopher, with a serious, troubled expression on his twelve-year-old face. He sighed noisily as he tried to decide where to start. He curled his hands into tight fists before unclenching them again. A sound caught his ear – the pounding footsteps of their younger sister, Rebecca, as she tore up and down the hallway with one of Michael's old toy airplanes. A second later, he heard the "Vroooooooooooooooooom!" she always made when playing airplane.

Silently, he slipped off the deep red comforter on his rumpled bed and crossed the room to close the door. This was a serious man-to-man discussion; he didn't want their baby sister to interrupt. It wasn't that he wanted to keep this between only himself and his brother, but it was too serious of a topic and Rebecca was too young to understand. She'd only get upset and cry and probably spill the beans to their parents. And Michael wasn't entirely sure he wanted his mother and father to know what he was about to tell Chris. Not yet at any rate. He still wasn't sure he was comfortable with the thoughts that had recently begun to crowd his mind. He still needed to sort through them all and figure out what, exactly, things meant.

The door closed with a soft *click* as it latched shut. For a moment, Michael leaned against it, listening to the drum-like beating of his own heart, the whooshing of his blood in his ears, and the queasy, churning sounds of protests coming from his knotted stomach. He closed his eyes and took several deep breaths, trying in vain to calm down, and dragged his hand through his raven locks, in a perfect mirror of the way his father always did. He nearly jumped out of his skin when Chris touched him gently on the shoulder.

"Sorry!" Christopher quickly apologized. "Didn't mean to freak you out. What's going on? You look like you're nervous. Did you get a detention or something? Fail your math test?"

Michael would have laughed if his throat hadn't been so dry. "No, Chris," he said instead, shaking his head and in a voice so brittle it seemed on the verge of breaking.

Chris grinned. "Yeah, that figures. You're too much of a goody-goody to get detention. And too much of a nerd to fail a test. So...what *is* it?"

"You're just as much of a nerd as I am," Michael stiffly replied with mock superiority, but at least his voice seemed to be limbering up some. It didn't get stuck halfway up his throat from his vocal cords this time. But there was no mirth in him at the moment. "Chris...I think you'd better sit down," he instructed, just like their father always told their mother when he was delivering some kind of bad or shocking news.

He gestured to Chris' bed – neatly made, the little suck-up –

on the opposite side of their shared room, but Chris, instead, flopped into Michael's computer chair. With a shrug, Michael crossed back over to his disheveled bed and climbed up to sit cross-legged by his pillows. For a few tense moments, he hesitated, looking for the right words. Worried now – and perhaps a bit bored by the silence – Chris swiveled left and right in his seat.

"Come on! Spit it out already!" Chris finally exploded; his curiosity piqued.

"Okay," Michael finally relented, though his words were slow and carefully chosen. "It's like this. Lately, I've been noticing some weird things going on...with me."

Chris' face split as he started to laugh. "You've got to be kidding me, Mike! Dad had that talk with us already. Frankly, I'm surprised it's taken you this long. I mean, you're twelve and half the guys you hang out with have peach fuzz on their chins. And Bobby Winters' voice has more cracks in it than the school yard asphalt! It was bound to happen to you sooner or later."

"Not that!" Mike said, putting a hand to his forehead. "This isn't the normal 'welcome to manhood' type of stuff. This...this is *weird* stuff, Chris."

Christopher instantly sobered and he cocked his head to one side like a listening puppy. "Oh?" was all he asked.

Michael nodded. "I missed the bus yesterday, while you were in art club. I didn't want to miss my TV show, so I decided to run home."

His younger brother shrugged. "So?"

"So...I made it home in five minutes, Chris."

Chris flinched as though he'd been struck in the face with a bucket of ice water. The color drained from his face. "You...no way. You *have* to be mistaken. You *couldn't* make it home that fast. It would take at least...I dunno...fifteen minutes at a dead run the entire time. Jackson's on the track team and it takes him about that long and he's a block closer to the school than we are."

"I know. But I'm *not* wrong. I checked my watch. Seven times. Chris...it was like...like I had some kind of..."

"Super powers," Chris finished breathlessly, his eyes widening with the thought.

Mike nodded. "Yeah," he said without enthusiasm.

Chris burst out laughing so hard that tears leaked out of the corners of his eyes. Michael scowled. That made his brother laugh all the harder.

"Nice try, Mikey, but I'm not falling for it," Chris said between peals of laughter as he crossed his arms over his stomach in his mirth.

Michael's right hand balled into a fist as he fought not to yell. "I'm not lying!" he hissed in a low tone. "And...it's not just speed either, Chris. I'm getting strong. Watch."

Chris' fit of humor subdued considerably as his older brother slipped off his bed and crossed to the heavy oak wardrobe in the corner of the room. Filled with sweaters, pants, school uniforms, shoes, sports equipment, and forgotten toys, the wardrobe was one of the heaviest pieces of furniture in the house. Many marbles had gone missing over the years as they rolled between the behemoth's legs, never to be seen again, despite attempts they'd made to rescue the little glass balls. Michael went to it now, knelt down, and slipped his hand into the small space between the floor and the bottom of the wardrobe. He placed only his right hand there, directly in the middle of the piece of furniture, then, barely straining, he lifted the entire wooden monster several inches off the floor.

Chris gaped, open-mouthed, like a fish out of water. He blinked rapidly, as if trying to dispel some magic spell that had been cast over his eyes. He pointed and tried to say something, but no words came out. Michael used his free hand to reach into the newly exposed space and grabbed up seven dust-covered red, green, and silver marbles. Then, as gently as he could manage, he

placed the wardrobe back down. It would not do to simply let it crash to the floor to alert their parents that something wasn't right.

Michael stood up and handed his brother the marbles, which clinked slightly as they knocked into one another. Chris still appeared too shocked to form words, but his fist automatically closed around the rescued marbles.

"See?" Michael said with a casual shrug. Or, he *hoped* it had looked casual. Internally, he was a bundle of panicked nerves.

"But that's..." Chris finally managed before swallowing hard.

"I know," Michael sighed, feeling oddly tired all of a sudden. The burden of his new abilities seemed overwhelming.

"But...how?" Chris asked.

Mike shrugged again. "There's only one real explanation that I can think of," he offered.

"Which is?"

"Mom and Dad have been keeping secrets from us."

Chris blanched, as though he'd been slapped in the face. "You don't think Mom...she loves Dad too much to have ever..."

Michael laughed hollowly. "Mom's not a cheater. No way," he replied with firm conviction, making a motion like an umpire calling 'out' on a ball player.

"But then that means..." Chris began. It was clear from his look of concentration that the wheels of his mind were whirring.

"I've been thinking hard about this. And I can't see anything else making sense. It *has* to be," Michael said with a confirming nod. "There's no other explanation. There's a secret identity that we haven't been told about."

"But...why *wouldn't* they have told us?" Chris questioned, looking hurt. "They trust us...don't they?"

"Maybe they didn't think any of us would get powers," Michael guessed, rubbing the back of his neck as he considered the possibilities. "Or maybe they were...I dunno. Embarrassed or something."

"Embarrassed?" Chris asked incredulously. "No way! This is too *cool* to be embarrassing!"

Michael furrowed his brow in thought. "Maybe, but neither of them likes to show off, you know? Or maybe...you know how Dad's told us about all the times he and Mom had to go undercover at work, to protect their identities? Maybe this is like that. Maybe they felt like if they told us, they'd be putting themselves...and us, I guess...at risk. I mean, supers get targeted all the time, right? People who try to sue them after a rescue, bad guys who want to expose who they are, even kill them. Remember how Dad told us about how Lex Luthor tried to eliminate Superman?"

Chris mulled this over for a moment. "You're probably right. At least, it makes sense to me. Oh man, how did we never see this before, Mikey? All their veiled conversations. All the times they've beaten other papers to an exclusive...be it an interview with one of the supers out there or just one of their rescues or something. They had an *in*, deeper than just their friendship with Superman."

"That's what I'm thinking, yeah."

"And remember how Superman showed up to your eighth birthday party? And Batman came to my sixth birthday?" Chris added, getting more and more animated as he spoke. His arms flailed in every direction as he talked, as if painting images in the air that only he could see.

"It wouldn't be asking much for a colleague to stop by and say hi to their kid on their birthday," Michael responded slowly as memories from years before floated ghostlike before his eyes.

"Exactly!"

But more pieces were falling into place for Michael – things that he hadn't thought of before. He nodded shallowly. "And remember all those stories Mom's told us, about how she's had some really close calls while investigating? All the times when she probably would have died?"

"She always said Superman saved her," Chris said thoughtfully.

"Seems really convenient to me," Mike muttered darkly.

"Doesn't it seem weird that Superman just always *happened* to be around?"

"You think she made it up?" Chris blinked in shock.

Michael shook his head but didn't answer the question. "And notice how *everything* always gets done around here, even with their crazy work schedules? How else could it all get done, if not for super powers? I mean, the laundry is always done, our house is *literally* the cleanest one out of any of my friends' houses, even the ones who have a stay at home mom, there's almost always a home-cooked meal, unless we all decide to go out or have takeout..." His voice trailed off. He knew he didn't need to list every example that was swirling around in his head.

Chris nodded in agreement. "That's true. Like when mom discovered my wrecked gym sneakers last week at ten o'clock at night. By the time I woke up for school, a new pair was waiting for me. I was surprised, but didn't think too much about it. I was more annoyed that I wouldn't have an excuse to skip Coach Carter's class."

Michael smiled grimly. He hadn't thought much about it either. Shopping for school supplies was just part of what parents did, wasn't it? But it *had* been kind of late, and even the shops that stayed open late were all the way downtown, not in their cozy, quiet neighborhood. Getting there on time before the doors closed would have been a hassle...unless one had the aid of super abilities on their side.

Another thought struck him at nearly the same moment though. "And isn't it weird how we've never seen..."

"Sssh!" Chris suddenly warned as heavy footsteps sounded in the hall.

A moment later, they heard the deep, amused voice of their father just outside of their door. "Becca? Sweetie? It's bath time! Let's surprise Mommy by being all ready for bed before she gets home from work, okay?"

There was a crash as something fell over next door in their sister's room. "Aww, but I was having a *tea party*, Daddy!"

"Well, maybe we can finish it after your bath. I think you dragged in half the garden when you came in from playing. I've only *just* finished getting your footprints out of the living room carpet," their father continued with a slight chuckle.

"Fiiiiiiiiiiiiine," Becca conceded with a whine. "But I wanna bring my mermaids into the tub!"

There was a sound of agreement, then the sound of two sets of footsteps retreating back down the hallway. Michael let go of a breath he hadn't been aware he'd been holding.

"Man, I never would have guessed it," Chris said after a moment, his voice barely breaking a whisper as he stared off into the far distance, as though looking at something miles away. "Dad is *so* lucky."

"I know," Michael said with a sage nod as a grin spread over his face. "He's married to Wonder Woman!"

THE END