

**we are all made of stars**

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# **we are all made of stars**

by [reyesrobbies](#)

## Summary

Jakeem finds a genie in a pen. Mike finds the cosmic converter belt and reexamines his relationship with his family.

The whole thing starts innocently enough, all things considered. Barbara is at work, staying late for the fourth time that week. His dad, Mike thinks with a frown, is out with Courtney, doing whatever it is that dad and Courtney seem to do these days. It's this somber thought that leads Mike to Courtney's room, no remorse or guilt in his steps as he sweeps paper and pens from the top of her desk into his pockets and raids her drawers for hidden snacks. Mike has piles of his own pens, of course, but they're buried deep in his own desk, covered with scraps of paper and the sticky residue of jolly ranchers and cheeto crumbs (that Mike keeps promising his dad he'll clean 'right now I swear' - but his dad's promised him a lot of things that he can't seem to keep so Mike feels no regret as he shoves another half eaten packet of reese's on top of the pile). What's the worst that can happen? Courtney will get mad, slam his door open and proclaim he's the worst person in the world before flouncing off down the stairs, his dad will appear in his doorway, hands on his hips and a disapproving grimace on his face - and he'll stare at Mike as if he's a child and say something stupid like 'you need to give her some space, bud, she's had a hard time'. Haven't we all, Mike scoffs, like his dad's forgotten that Mike's been as patient as he can be and they'd moved more times than he can count before he was seven and then they'd finally settled down, him and dad and finally Mike had thought this is it and then his dad had met Barbara and it's not like he wanted to move to some bumfuck town in the middle of nowhere away from his friends and become the perfect little nuclear family but, hey, Mike's not an asshole and he can see how happy Barbara makes his dad so he'd swallowed the biting comments that came to his tongue and moved out to Blue Valley, Nebraska and dealt with the fact the internet speed is complete shit and that his dad doesn't seem to want to do anything but follow Courtney around like a lost little puppy and give in to her every little whim, so maybe Courtney's not the only one who's had a hard time, alright dad?

The ringing of the doorbell distracts Mike from his self pitying train of thought and he jams the drawer he's holding firmly back into place. He doesn't close Courtney's door, instead leaving it open, knowing that Courtney hates it when Max goes into her room, leaving his slobber on every accessible surface. Mike takes the stairs three at a time and flings the door open - Jakeem stands on the other side, and Mike hurries him inside. The two push each other playfully on the way up to his room, each trying to be the first one up the steps, and drop onto his bed, full of good intentions to study for their math test the next day.

Two hours later and they haven't even got past decimals and fractions and are instead watching tiktoks on Jakeem's phone, howling with laughter and shoving handfuls of doritos and cheese balls into their mouths as they watch clip after clip of Green Lantern flying into drones set to the latest meme song of the week. The next clip is of Superman, lifting a car into the air with his bare hands and Jakeem pauses, one of Courtney's stolen pens dangling loosely in his grip, and proclaims 'yo, that is so cool'.

That, Mike decides later, is the moment when everything goes to shit.

There's a burst of bright purple light, then there's a...a...genie? In his room? Shaking Jakeem's hand and ruffling Mike's hair and telling the two how great it is to be there and 'hi my name's' Yz? Or Lkz? Or Ylzkz? Mike's having a hard time concentrating because there's a fucking genie in his room but Jakeem seems to hang on Yl...e..zzkz's? Every word and he's

nodding as if he understands what's going on and Mike has no fucking clue but before he can even begin to switch his brain back on the genie has hold of both of their shoulders and is asking them if they want to go to Civic City and visit the JSA Headquarters and before Mike can even mouth a sound of protest Ylzkz is snapping his fingers, clicking his heels and - Dorothy were are not in Kansas anymore.

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The Justice Society of America Headquarters (which Mike decides is a stupid name but can't seem to think of anything better either so keeps his thoughts to himself) is empty, full of boxes and dust and a big ass fucking owl that trills and screeches at Ylzkz as he leads them through the quiet halls. Ylzkz avoids the owl, and Mike catches Ylzkz muttering under his breath about someone called Chuck and how Hootie needed to get over it, it was one time and it wasn't even that bad and Mike is dying to ask what the hell he's talking about but before he can make the words appear on the tip of his tongue Ylzkz has stopped, holding his arms open wide and proclaiming 'here we are' as if they're supposed to be impressed.

Jakeem and Mike are definitely not impressed, Ylzkz must sense it, because he pouts and folds his arms like a child. Mike supposes the room behind Ylzkz must have been magnificent once, but now there's nothing there but large banners drooping from the ceiling and empty display stands, as if someone's been recently and cleared everything out. Jakeem wonders out loud how thieves could even get in here and Mike shrugs. Ylzkz lets them wander the halls, turning them this way and that way, telling them stories about the heroes that once roamed the dusty pathways and laughing at his own jokes - Mike thinks you probably had to be there to find them funny. They've been walking for over forty minutes when Mike...stops. Ylzkz has been walking them deep in the headquarters, into an area that he affectionately referred to as the JSA's homes from home. Mike's in front of a door, the peeling paint on the door reads 'Sylvestor' and Mike feels like he knows that name from somewhere, a memory floating behind a wall in his head. He shakes his head and turns to carry on, but stops again. He presses his hand to the door and feels a burning inside him. There's something behind that door, something that's calling out to him. It's a no brainer, Mike opens the door and walks inside. If Jakeem gets a cool genie, Mike is finding whatever's on the other side of that door because like hell is he being left out of another thing in his life. Sylvestor's room is bare, the photo frames resting on the bedside table are empty, and poorly put back together, as if someone has frantically taken the photos out and shoved the frames back. Something in Mike tells him to look under the bed, and Mike does. He pulls out a suitcase, full of muck and grime and smirks, dad and Courtney can keep their secret outings, this is way fucking cooler. Mike shimmies the suitcase open, the lock on it worn away with rust and age. Inside the box is a belt, and underneath that a costume. Mike picks the belt up in his hands and finds himself grinning. Jakeem was right. So. Cool.

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The rest of the week is spent testing their new found powers in an abandoned warehouse downtown, which Mike knows is so freaking cliché but who cares when he can use a superpowered belt to lift a car above his head and run up the side of a freaking building. Jakeem finds out that Ylzkz is a super powerful being that he can control by holding the pink pen they'd stolen from Courtney's room. Mike spends about forty seconds wondering how

the pen ended up with Courtney before the thought flies out of his head because Jakeem just asked Ylzkz to do a backflip and Ylzkz did - but also made the whole fucking warehouse go upside down as well and if that wasn't the coolest thing he'd ever seen. Jakeem makes a number of wishes that have Ylzkz shaking his head and groaning that he's 'a fifth dimension djinn and you know I can warp reality and others would kill to have this amount of power' but Jakeem just smiles and throws his arms open wide and Ylzkz is powerless and now the warehouse is a full on bounce house and they can't hear Ylzkz's dismayed muttering that 'Johnny is haunting him from beyond the grave' over the sound of their own laughter. Mike figures out the belt can shoot beams of light and stars and the two enjoy bouncing up and down amongst the stars as Ylzkz gazes fondly at them from below.

Mike thinks this could be the happiest he's ever been.

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The thought of fighting crime is always in the back of their heads but, as Jakeem and Mike have discussed at length, Blue Valley is boring as fuck. The most interesting thing that's happened there in the past few months is some high schoolers car overheating and blowing up at the local drive in. The two are quite content sitting in their lair née warehouse watching movies on the fifty foot projector they'd asked Ylzkz to create - and they'd said enough to said djinn. Ylzkz sighs, something they've also grown used to, and says very calmly and patiently that he can take them anywhere they want to go - they don't have to fight crime in Blue Valley. Jakeem spits out his slush and Mike chokes on his chips. The two boys splutter for a moment, arms flailing wildly before they rush forward, grabbing an arm each, and beg Ylzkz to take them to fight crime. Ylzkz is bewildered, and looks as though he's regretting even saying anything but agrees nonetheless. The two high five and gesture frantically at each other, cities and supervillains flying from their lips as they try to decide where their first crime fighting activity should be. Eventually, they ask Ylzkz to take them somewhere they can find a street mugging - best to start out small and work their way up from there.

Ylzkz nods and takes them to Gotham City.

Ylzkz thinks if he had eardrums, they'd have burst from the loud shrieks that come from his boys as they panic, moving closer to him and crawling up his arms, screeching 'what the fuck what the fuck no this isn't small what the fu- go back go back Ylzkz what the fu-'

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Their first official act of justice is helping an old lady find her bag of shopping she'd left on a bus. Ylzkz seems to be on the edge of repeating his eighth 'i'm a fifth dimension djinn and you know I can warp reality and others would kill to have this amount of power' lecture of the week to the woman but bites his tongue because, hey, Jakeem smiles, a good deed is a good deed. They find her shopping twenty minutes later at the bus depot, wave goodbye and shout thank you to the bewildered bus driver and have it returned to the elderly woman in no time. She showers them with wrinkly kisses on their foreheads and tries to press crisp five dollar bills into their hands. Mike and Jakeem shake her off and say they were glad to help. She is eventually placated fifteen minutes later when they take a box of homemade cookies from her and she waves them off happily.

The two boys are buzzing with excitement and Ylzkz can't help but smile at them. His smile drops less than twenty seconds later when they exclaim that they're ready for the big stuff now and who are the ISA again?

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Joey Zarrick dies and things seem to change at home. His dad and Courtney spend mealtimes sending secret codes across the table using only their eyes and Mike digs his fork into his mashed potatoes bitterly, swirling his fork through the butter and Barbara dishes out more kale, seemingly unaware of anything that's happening. His dad spends more time at his garage, shooing off Mike's offers of help even though fixing his dad's car used to be their thing but now it's Courtney's and some guy called Rick? And there's a new lock on the door and it's not like Mike's pissed off but who the fuck is Rick?

He repeats this all to Jakeem, who nods wisely and asks him if he wants to find someone to beat up. Mike nods. They ask Ylzkz to take them to Fawcett City and spend the next few hours helping Captain Freaking Marvel fight a tiny alien worm intent on destroying the world. After the fight, Captain Marvel takes them to one side and asks them if they've ever thought about costumes because, secret identities you know guys? Mike looks down at his worn out converse, his jeans with the least amount of rips and the Blue Valley tee that Barbara had proudly bought him on one of their trips in town that he hadn't had the heart to say no to. He glances at Jakeem, who's perusing his own sneakers and jeans combo. Nah, they both announce in unison. Ylzkz smiles painfully behind them. It wasn't like they hadn't thought about it, they explain, but tights and capes? It just wasn't a good look. Captain Marvel looks flustered as they hold onto Ylzkz's hands and magic back to Blue Valley. Hey, Jakeem shrugs, that's adults for you, they just don't get it.

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They visit different cities and meet different heroes over the course of the next few weeks. Hub Town has them investigating the disappearance of ducks from the town's park with an eccentric man by the name of the Question. They find the ducks, and also learn from the man that the Girl Scouts were responsible for the crop circle phenomenon. Who would have guessed? ('Few think to ask the question,' The Question nods seriously). They found little to do in Keystone City, everytime they even got close to a potential crime there was a whoosh of air and the situation had resolved itself. A man called Rip Hunter appears to them as if by magic on a rooftop in Central City. He swishes his trench coat very dramatically and tells them they could be legends. They turn him down - Jakeem has an algebra test next week and his mother would kill him if he missed it. Rip isn't sure how to respond. Mike comes home late one night, hours past his eight pm curfew and crawls through his bedroom window, expecting his dad to be sat on the end of his bed, a stern look in his eye and a raised voice, asking him where he'd been.

His dad isn't there.

A couple of nights later, he lies still in bed and hears Courtney climbing the trellis outside her room. Her window creaks open and Mike listens to his dad's disappointed voice echoing through his open door. He rolls over and wonders why it hurts so much.

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Opal City is full of smoke and magic and mystery. There's alleyways that seem to disappear underneath the sunlight and slink back into being under the cloak of the crisp night air. Mike pats the belt on his hip and feels strangely at home. They stop two muggers, one villain going by the name of Calendar Man who mutters bitterly under his breath that Opal wasn't supposed to have freaks like Gotham and enjoy shooting stars from Mike's belt off the top of a large clocktower, Jakeem leans forward to pop several with his fingers and Ylzkz covers his eyes and tries to prompt them to climb down. They're about to, when Mike hears the soft sound of footsteps approach. There's a man behind them, and for some reason, Mike feels the same pull he did back at the JSA headquarters. The man sighs and runs a hand down his face, dragging the skin down.

"Fucks sake, another Star Spangled Kid."

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Jack, as they come to know the man by, used to be Starman. Who was given the name by his dad, who also went by Starman. Mike thinks that's the coolest shit. Jack rubs his arm, self conscious under Mike and Jakeem's awestruck stares, Mike thinks he can make out a nicotine patch on the spot he's rubbing, but Jack begins to talk again and Mike's attention drifts. Jack explains that the belt he's wearing is called the Cosmic Converter Belt (Jakeem snorts and Mike kicks him under the table). His dad created the belt - again so fucking cool - and had passed it down to a young man by the name of Sylvester Pemberton when he made something called the Cosmic Staff. He pauses, as the waitress of the small diner they've come to refills his coffee and he offers her a half smile. He drinks his coffee with a grimace as Jakeem clicks the pink pen over and over again, waiting impatiently. Again, Mike feels like he should know the name Sylvester, as if there's a memory he just can't reach, like smoke on his fingertips. Jack tells them about the Star Spangled Kid, how Sylvester had buddied up with a friend from his hometown and a couple of other heroes and had created a team called the Seven Soldiers of Victory ('even though there were eight of them,' Jack mutters into his cup). Jakeem asks why Sylvester gave up the belt and Jack tells them about the cosmic staff. About his dad, his brother. How Jack had wielded the staff, but had felt his life pulling in another direction years later. How he gave the staff to Sylvester. How Sylvester had died fighting the ISA. Jakeem and Mike are silent, Jack sips his coffee. Mike asks where the Cosmic Staff is now.

"Don't know, don't care," Jack replies.

Mike feels like that's a lie.

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Jack walks with them back to the roof of the clocktower, Jakeem can sense something in Mike, because he pats his friend on the shoulder and clicks the pen, dragging Ylzkz to the edge of the tower and asking him if they could fly like in that Peter Pan movie. Jack asks him if he knows the cosmic converter belt can help him fly. Mike did not know that. It's awkward. Mike kicks his feet, hands in his pockets, Jack mirrors him.

“Your dad was a superhero?”

Jack snorts, “yeah, better superhero than he was a dad.”

Mike’s stomach clenches and he thinks about his dad. Jack must see his face drop, because he sighs. “It was complicated, kid.”

Yeah, Mike thinks, dads are.

They spend another few moments, awkward in each other’s presence, before Jack speaks, surprising them both.

“What’s your name, kid.”

“Mike, Mike Dugan.”

Mike can see the look in Jack’s eyes, he thinks that’s what he must look like, when he tries to recall where he’s heard Sylvester’s name before, like Jack is trying to grab onto water as it trickles out of his hands. Jack stares him down, hard. Before sighing, the thought is lost. He steps forward, reaches into his pocket and pulls something out, placing it into Mike’s hands.

“Wear these, kid, fucking belt will stuff your eyesight if you’re not careful.”

Looking down at the oversized goggles in his hands, Mike thinks Jakeem was right - adults just don’t understand.

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Thoughts of Jack and his dad, and Mike and his dad, keep Mike awake for the next few nights. Mike knows it’s different, Jack said his dad was never around - his dad was always around, well, that’s not entirely true but...and. Mike stops. He thinks about the dark look in Jack’s eyes as he tells Mike it’s complicated and decides he doesn’t want to ever think about his dad like that. Okay, so his dad wants to spend time with Courtney. That’s fine. But nobody ever said he couldn’t spend time with Courtney and Mike.

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The football game is a washout and Mike ends up at Jakeem’s house shouting profanity into his friends pillow as Jakeem kicks him and hisses to keep it down before his mom hears. It had all been going so well, then Courtney did her teenage bullshit and vanished and his dad had got the look in his eye he’d had once when Mike was eight and decided to walk home by himself without his dad knowing and went after her and then it was hours after the football game had finished and Mike was sat in the bleachers in the cold and on his own and he wishes Courtney was dead.

A couple of hours later he comes to regret those words.

He sits in his bedroom, knees pulled up to his chest, listening to Barbara fretting over Courtney in the next room and texts Jakeem for what feels like the fiftieth time that day, checking over and over again that Ylzkz hadn’t taken his dark thoughts as a wish. Jakeem



reassures him, as does Ylzkz. Mike doesn't hold the pen, he had no control over what happened. It wasn't his fault. Mike digs his fingernails into his palms so tightly that he draws blood and thinks bitterly that maybe it was.

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In time, things begin to get better. The best they've ever been. He and Courtney have reached an understanding (she called him her brother), his dad sits in the living room and plays round after round of Mario Kart with him even though he sucks at it, something Courtney finds hilarious for some reason, and Barbara smiles, curled up next to him on the couch. Mike is happy.

He should have known it wouldn't last.

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Barbara and his dad are fighting, whispered words he can't make out and then his dad is packing his bags and telling him that it's all going to be okay. Mike bites back the tears and tries to be strong, he's the superhero here. He pushes past his dad before he can say 'I love you,' knowing he won't be able to hold it all together, he acts like it doesn't matter, brushing past Courtney who's stood on the stairs, fingers twisting anxiously through her locket. He doesn't give her a second glance.

They sleep in the car that night, Mike tucked up in his dad's arms in the back of his dad's prized car. As his dad snores, Mike pats the cosmic convertor belt, looped over his jeans and hidden underneath a thick sweater. It's going to be okay, his dad has said.

Mike doesn't know if he believes him.

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In the morning, his dad waves Mike off to school. He walks, thoughts bubbling in his head. He skips the last half of the school day, goes to Opal City with Jakeem and Ylzkz and bugs Jack, who buys them McDonalds in a desperate attempt to shake them off. Mike dips his fries in ketchup aimlessly, Jakeem pats him on the shoulder and Mike knows if he's asking if he's okay. Mike doesn't know, but a few hours later, after they've spent a whole afternoon mercilessly mocking a villain by the name of Polka Dot Man and asking if he wanted to play Twister with them, Mike thinks he could be.

He walks back to the garage, head finally straight and prepares himself. He cares about Barbara, secretly refers to her as his mom, but it's him and his dad now. He's ready for it to be him and his dad.

So when his dad pulls up outside the house, Barbara still glaring holes in his head but speaking to him as if nothing has happened, Mike is thrown off balance. He doesn't understand what's happening. He asks his dad for answers, glances at Courtney, who looks at him and he brims with rage as he realises she knows exactly what's going on. His dad yells, he's never yelled at Mike before. He looks between the two of them, betrayed, makes a biting remark and swallows down his fear. Mike goes to his room and locks the door.

Nobody follows him.

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His dad tells Mike to pack a bag, he says they have to leave, he doesn't tell him where. Mike tells him he can't leave without speaking to Jakeem (he doesn't mention Ylzkz, but Mike can't leave him either). His dad yells, frustrated - he's been yelling a lot these past few days - and tells Mike he can't tell anyone they're leaving. Mike bangs the drill he's been messing with onto the top of his dad's worktop with force, he's glad he isn't wearing the belt, or the drill would have gone through the desk, with the rage that's brimming beneath the surface. He bites back the fucks you's and the 'I hate you' that burns beneath his tongue (remembers the haunted look in Jack's eyes) and walks away instead. He bumps into a man on his way out of the shop, the man stares at him as he walks away, arms folded as if he's thinking about something intently, but Mike can't find it in him to apologise. He stares the man out, who seems to make a decision, he smiles at Mike and Mike resists the urge to shudder. The man opens the door and greets his dad. Mike can't help the unease that builds in his stomach. He looks back at the garage. What's the worst that could happen?

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It turns out, a lot. Mike can feel the way the drill cuts through flesh, feels the blood speckle onto his hands, hear the crunch as it spins through bone. His dad clasps his shoulder and leads Mike out of the shop, arms wrapped around him, trying to protect him. Protect him. Mike thinks through the fog clouding his brain, as if his dad wasn't bleeding out on the floor a minute ago. His dad hurries him into a car, not his favourite car, and drives them to their house. Barbara and Courtney hurry out, cuts and blood marbling their faces and Pat's face turns to stone. They're ushered into the car as well and Mike is silent. Normally he'd be shouting questions and profanities and he can tell his silence in unnerving his dad. He can feel the questions on the tip of his tongue, but he can't bring himself to say them out loud. He's fought people before, kind of has to when they're out there claiming to be superheroes. But he's never hurt someone before. Never felt their blood on his hands. He threads his fingers through Max's fur and avoids his dad's eyes in the mirror.

They arrive at a cabin, deep in the woods. Mike is starting to find his voice as the car rolls to a stop (he would have killed dad, you had to), but as he steps out of the car he finds himself on the outside once again. There are some of Courtney's friends there and...the high school janitor? And he's got kfc and a sword? Mike barely has a minute to compute these new facts before his dad is sweeping him upstairs to a guest room. His dad forcefully sits Mike down on the bed and looks as if he's going to say something before he stops himself. He sees his dad clench his jaw.

"Hey bud," his dad starts, kneeling down in front of him and clasping his shoulder, "Courtney, Barb and I...well, we've got something to do. I want you to stay here. Look after Max okay? And I'll...I'll tell you everything when it's all over."

Mike nods. His dad smiles, looks as though he wants to hug him but is stopping himself.

"Get some sleep, okay kiddo?"

Mike nods again and his dad turns off the light, closing the door behind him. Mike feels for his phone in his pocket. He'll call Jakeem. Soon. But his dad's right, he really needs some sleep. Mike lies down and is asleep before his head hits the pillow.

When he wakes, he's alone in the cabin. His dad has left a note with his name on, folded next to his bed on the nightstand. Mike swallows, wonders if his dad had come in and watched him sleep. He unfolds the note, and feels more confused than ever.

"Just in case. I love you, Mike."

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Mike finds a phone in the cabin, thankfully plugged in and connected. He calls Jakeem's mobile, knowing the numbers off by heart. Jakeem answers on the first ring.

"Mike, shit! I've been trying to call you-"

Mike tries to cut him off, to explain where he's been, but Jakeem continues.

"Mike, you are not going to believe this, there's a fucking satellite coming out of the ground at the high school. That's like, supervillain evil plans #1. A satellite. In Blue Valley. Here. Mike, shit!"

Mike holds the phone tighter. He grins.

"Jakeem, can you come and pick me up?"

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They fly to the satellite first, Jakeem thinks Mike's shooting stars should be able to disrupt some of the energy beaming out of the satellite. He's right, it does, but Mike's not nearly powerful enough to stop a whole satellite. They watch helplessly as the satellite continues to fire beams into the sky, Jakeem frantically asking Ylzkz what they should do. Ylzkz is about to answer, no doubt to tell them he's a powerful being from the fifth dimension and if they just asked he could turn the satellite into jello, but he's interrupted by...the satellite turning off? And going back under the ground?

Huh, Mike thinks. That was easy.

They potter aimlessly around the scorched football field, waiting for the satellite to pop back up or for some supervillain to appear from around the corner. When neither happens, they both sink into the artificial grass and Jakeem pulls out his phone.

"Well, that was fun," Jakeem sighs, scrolling through his apps and pulling up snapchat. Mike stretches back onto the grass, and closes his eyes. Even supervillains in Blue Valley were boring, he should have known.

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They spent several more minutes double checking the football field to ensure that there were definitely no hidden bad guys before shrugging and deciding to head to the main square in town to get a milkshake. Mike decides to leave the goggles Jack had given him on his head, despite Jakeem's friendly prodding that he looked like a nerd. Ylzkz follows behind them, telling jokes and trying to keep their spirits up, when suddenly he stops. Ylzkz pushes his way in front of the two boys and, crackling with energy, forces them behind him. Mike peers from the side of Ylzkz and wonders why Ylzkz is so hyped up. Jakeem stares at Ylzkz, ignoring the scene in front of him, he's never seen the djinn so serious before. Ylzkz breaths out a word, and everything makes sense.

Icicle.

Ylzkz had told them once, when he was trying to convince them that trying to find the ISA wasn't a good idea, that the original owner of the pink pen, Johnny, had been murdered by the ISA. They'd forced their way into his home, surprising him, and as Johnny had reached for the pen, Icicle had frozen his arm solid. Ylzkz had been trapped, unable to help, no command to be shouted. Icicle had laughed, laughed at Johnny frozen and in pain. And he'd killed him.

And there he was.

There were a group of people in front of Icicle. His arms were outstretched towards them and his face was glowing blue with rage and his mouth open in an echoing scream. They were going to die. Jakeem seems frozen in fear, his hand reaching out to hold Ylzkz's as Ylzkz looks back to Jakeem. Time slows and Mike barely has time to even register what he's doing. He leaps forward, Ylzkz cursing as he does so.

The belt pushes him further, a burst of speed. He leaps into the air and feels the wind of his face. Holy shit, he's flying. He lets forth a beam of stars. They hit Icicle, who bursts into fragments, consumed by the power of the bright lights. Icicle shatters in front of him and Mike touches the ground with a gasp. He wrenches the goggles above his head and smiles. He looks up at the people he's just saved and...

Oh shit.

"Mike?!"

"Courtney?!"

--

His dad's face is stone. Barbara hovers behind him, fussing and torn between Mike and dad and Courtney, who's sitting on the patio in the garden with her friends, trying unobtrusively to look inside and see what's going on. Jakeem sits next to (Yolanda?) sipping a coke while trying to sit as close to Ylzkz as he can. Rick is sat on the other side of Jakeem, trying (and failing) to look unperturbed by Ylzkz. His dad looks at Barbara, and his face softens, he turns to her and tells her to go to Courtney. She smiles a tight smile and kisses his dad on the forehead, holding his hand tightly before walking outside. She closes the patio doors tightly behind her as she leaves.

For a few moments, there's silence. Mike clenches and unclenches his fists. His dad sighs heavily and rubs his face in his hands. The cosmic converter belt sits in the middle of them, lying flat on the table.

"Where did you even find this?" his dad gestures towards the belt.

"JSA headquarters," Mike mumbles.

This seems to frustrate his dad even more.

"And who told you about the JSA headquarters?"

"Ylzkz."

His dad pinches the bridge of his nose.

"And where did you find Ylzkz."

"Borrowed a pen from Courtney."

Dad looks to the sky, as if asking it to give him strength, and is silent once more.

Mike has his own questions.

"When were you going to tell me?"

His voice is soft, and his dad cracks his knuckles, a sign that Mike knows means he's going to avoid the question.

"You told Courtney," he accuses, feeling the hurt in his words.

For the first time that day, his dad meets his eyes.

"Courtney found out. I didn't want to tell her. I didn't want to tell you," he admits, honestly. "Mike you were... You were two years old when the ISA murdered Sylvester -" in the back of his head, Mike feels the smoke drift around his hands, a memory of a man with a soft voice, lifting him high in the air. - "We always joked he was like your uncle. He loved that. He loved you. You loved him. After he died, you cried for weeks, you kept asking me where he was and I... I couldn't do it again. Couldn't let it happen to you. I had dreams, Mike. Nightmares. Of it happening to you. Of the ISA finding you and..."

His dad trails off. Mike lets him.

"The JSA was buried, that part of my life was gone. I kept us moving so nobody could find us."

His dad looks ready to cry, Mike can't stand it. He jumps to his feet and crosses the barrier between them. He wraps his arms around his dad and his dad buries his face in Mike's shoulder. He knows his dad is going to say 'I love you'. He lets him this time. They stay like that for a while, his dad breathing in heavily, just needing to know that Mike is there - that

Mike's okay. After several moments, they part, and Mike wipes his eyes on the sleeve of his sweater, trying not to let his dad see. The conversations not over, not really. But it is for now.

His dad rests his palm on the belt, feels its warmth beneath his fingertips and lets out a sad smile.

"How did you even figure out how to work this? It took Sylvester years to figure out how to fly."

Mike shrugs, "Jack told me."

Mike sees the cogs turning behind his dad's eyes. Sees them click into place and watches the exasperation flood them.

"Please for the love of god tell me you don't mean Jack Knight."

Mike grins and leans forward in excitement, "You know Jack?"

His dad groans and drops his face into his hands, there's a dip on the couch next to him and Mike glances up to see Courtney smirking at them. "Who's Jack?"

"Nobody you need to know about!" his dad shouts in frustration.

"He had the staff before Sylvester," Mike cuts his dad off, smugly, folding his arms and leaning back into the couch.

Courtney gasps, "shut up and tell me all about him."

His dad shakes his head, leaning back into the couch and throwing his arm around Mike's shoulders. Mike leans into the touch. He finds himself laughing properly for the first time in weeks, lets Courtney join their mirth and smiles when he feels no itch of jealousy. He catches Jakeem's gaze through the window and nods to him, grinning as Jakeem gives him a thumbs up in return. Jakeem turns back to Rick, who's still staring at Ylzkz. Mike closes his eyes as Barbara joins them on the couch, tucking herself into his dad's side and resting a hand on his leg.

All things considered, everything's going to be okay.

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