

Dark Identity

Nothing Is What It Seems...

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Welcome:

In the house where Vermeer Corp is not just a name but a pulse felt in every wall, identity becomes a currency as valuable as it is fragile. Here, the surname carries generations of migration, hard-won lessons, and a promise passed down as a legacy: to be seen, to own one's place, and to sustain an empire that seems destined to last forever. But between two brothers who share the same blood, there is a subtle yet powerful divergence: Lucas, the heir, embodies the public image of continuity, the precision of every gesture, and the certainty of a predetermined future; Wouter, the shadow observing from the sidelines, questions what it means to belong when the center seems reserved for someone else.

From this contrast, the novel unfolds an exploration of identities that defy easy interpretation. What happens when the expected voice of a leader is interwoven with the memories of a childhood where recognition wasn't always equitable? How can one maintain their dignity when their father's name and gaze seem to demand a

script that isn't their own? The book proposes an investigation of the self under pressure: the struggle between obeying one's legacy and finding a voice that truly belongs to oneself, even if that voice sounds dissonant in boardrooms and at family dinners.

A pivotal moment erupts when the family's pulse is shaken by the patriarch's death and the reading of a will that reshapes the power structure. From then on, the story unfolds along two paths: that of corporate intrigue and that of intimate biography. Two worlds that should coexist without clashing, but which reveal, time and again, that identity is not a garment that can be easily changed, but a construct made of choices, losses, and, sometimes, sacrifices. In this hall of mirrors, the investigation aims not only to solve a crime but also to understand what it means to be Vermeer when continuity seems to demand an ever-increasing price from one's own humanity.

Thus, Dark Identity proposes a journey towards the limits between belonging and authenticity: a novel that investigates the truth from the perspective of two brothers, from the shadows of a dynasty and from the questions that each reader, sooner or later, must ask themselves about what price they are willing to pay to be who they want to be.

Chapter 1 — Origin

The Vermeer brothers' story begins within the quiet rhythm of family routines, where the outside world sees only the surface: two young men identical in appearance, yet already separated by an inner current that will grow stronger with each silenced doubt, each achievement celebrated or overlooked. Lucas Vermeer walks the halls of Vermeer Corp with the confidence born of habit, of having been raised since childhood with the certainty that success is a debt to be paid with punctuality and precision. Tall, with blond hair that seems designed to complement his fair skin, and blue eyes that observe the world with the precision of someone who has learned to read financial reports like someone leafing through an adventure novel: each page opens a possibility, each figure, a promise. It's not just his appearance; it's the way he carries himself in life: a kind of promise and a mandate at the same time. "Dad always said that this company is our legacy," he repeats every time he reviews a report, as if the words were a kind of catechism that sustained his conviction that the future was already written for him.

In contrast, Wouter, his twin brother, seems to have been left out in the making of that promise. His life is anchored in a bar in a cluttered apartment, where the music barely drowns out the noise of an existence that lacks a center. A bottle of whiskey has become his constant companion, a kind of refuge offering a few hours of escape in which the world stops demanding answers. His eyes, often red from sleepless nights, betray a fatigue that doesn't simply stem from a hangover, but from a more prolonged battle against the feeling of not fitting into a mold that wasn't made for him. "Why does he always have everything?" he hears himself mutter in the quiet moments, when there are no more assistants, no schedules, no reports to read. In those pauses, memories return to family dinners where their father praised only Lucas, leaving Wouter with a bitter taste that doesn't fade with the passing hours.

The Vermeer family's story is not merely a chronicle of two young men reaching the pinnacle of a business that has grown in the shadow of three generations of Dutch

immigrants. It is also a story of invisible pressures, of expectations so tightly controlled they never explode, of an identity constantly negotiated between the desire to belong and the fear of losing oneself within that belonging. In the family's collective memory, the legacy is not just a name engraved on a plaque or a stock certificate. It is, above all, a narrative that taught each member to maintain the façade — a story that only works as long as no one asks too many questions, if silence is maintained where a doubt might arise that would dismantle years of apparent certainties.

The brothers' childhoods unfolded in parallel, but not in the same tones. In their early years, the house felt like a shared stage: brightly lit hallways, the sense that everything was reserved for one of them, while the other learned to read the room from the sidelines, attentive to every gesture, every sign that might indicate what role he would play next. The Vermeer name, with its weight of influence and responsibility, was for Lucas a banner, an invitation to coordinate, to lead, to firmly uphold the vision

that, it was said, was the family's vision. For Wouter, that same name sounded like a burden he didn't always want to bear. Silent by choice, he sometimes seemed to draw energy from pent-up anger, from the need to prove that he, too, knew how to navigate the arena of high management, though his hands didn't tremble before the unknown, but rather at the possibility of failing spectacularly.

Their conversations weren't flowing rivers, but rather small detours: comments that revealed more than the words themselves conveyed. Lucas, unintentionally, seemed to have inherited the ability to turn every challenge into an opportunity to prove his worth to the family council and to his father, who, in his view, transformed every mistake into a lesson for the future of the company. Wouter, on the other hand, seemed to communicate with the world through negation: he denied the need to be the center of attention, but in reality, he sought a center that would see him, that would recognize he had something valuable to contribute,

— something different from the version his lineage had envisioned for him. This difference was no secret; it manifested itself in every family gathering, in every moment of deference, and in every silence that weighed like a ton of bricks.

The story of Vermeer Corp. is more than just a bit of background information. It's the thread that runs through an identity built on repeated behaviors, the approval earned, and the guilt kept to oneself. Lucas learns to read the company's pulse with the ease of someone born into a world of numbers and strategies, as if the language of business were as natural to him as breathing. His father, an authority figure who sees the potential for continuity in his eldest son, speaks to him with the certainty of someone who has witnessed the birth and growth of an empire. In these conversations, the company emerges as a legacy passed down not just on paper, but in habits: punctuality, discipline, the ability to make decisions when the world seems to demand surgical precision. It's a legacy that, for Lucas, is almost a personal mission: to be

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worthy of the name that the family's history has transformed into a symbol of integrity and performance.

Wouter observes this scene from another part of the house, from a different angle of the family table. His experience of the corporation is more one of risk, of emptiness. In his mind echo the bursts of competition that never tire of reminding him that he is not the chosen one, that someone else could always have inherited the helm. The first real confrontation with this perception arrives subtly: the feeling that, despite his physical proximity to Lucas, his place is different, his role is not that of the central figure who has been groomed to star in the story. And, without realizing it, this emotional separation maintained as a precaution against hurting the family, but which ultimately hurts him is fertile ground for shadows to emerge within him that no one wants to face: doubts about his worth, fear of exclusion, and a longing for a child who perhaps had fewer opportunities to be seen for who he truly was.

Home, which should be a refuge, transforms into a stage where every gesture and every word can be interpreted as a sign of the hierarchy that has yet to be spoken, but which is there, present in every toast, in every achievement celebrated with eyes fixed on Lucas, and in every silence filled not with a truth, but with the promise that everything will work itself out in time. Amidst this emotional intensity, an opportunity arises to glimpse the conflict that, without yet erupting, was already simmering in the relationship between the brothers: the possibility that legacy is not only a bridge between generations, but an invisible boundary that separates souls, that defines identities in a way that only the experience of loss can heal.

The theme of identity begins to insinuate itself as a question no one wants to ask, yet one that throbs in the memory of every scene: what does it mean to be oneself when every trait, every skill, and every mistake seems already attributed to a role? Lucas is the embodiment of a self that recognizes itself in achievements, in the public

perception of strength, in the security of leading an empire that proudly bears his name. Wouter, on the other hand, sees himself through his own shadow: the shadow of comparison, of the suspicion that his value lies not in the figure of the leader, but in the ability to survive the pressure of not being the chosen one, of not being the one who carries the torch. Thus emerges a twofold lesson: identity is not forged solely in the acceptance of a role, but in the way each individual negotiates, confronts, and, at times, defies the expectations that besiege them. At the crossroads between Lucas's security and Wouter's vulnerability, the story of the Vermeer family becomes a mirror reflecting the universal tensions between belonging and individuality, between protecting lineage and the need for each person to find their own voice.

The introduction of the siblings in this first chapter doesn't aim to resolve anything, but rather to establish a framework for how two perspectives, which could be complementary, coexist. However, due to the pressure of such a visible legacy, they appear as potential antagonists.

There is, of course, a subtle line separating the possible from the impossible: the idea that the family, through its history and values, offers each child the possibility of becoming the best version of themselves, provided they are willing to look beyond expectations and seek authenticity. Nevertheless, the narrative progresses with the clarity that this path will not be easy, because identity, when forced to coexist with the identity another has previously embraced, tends to become strained. Within this tension, the echo of a house that has learned to breathe through ambition, loyalty, and the need to belong will unfold throughout the following pages.

The relationship between Lucas and Wouter, as it is established in this opening, is presented as a duo that could either sustain the company and themselves, or reveal itself as an open chasm threatening to tear apart the family fabric. It is on this threshold, between the security of lineage and the fragility of the individual self, that the story to come takes shape: a story of power, jealousy, seemingly inevitable mistakes, and the

— sometimes desperate search for a truth that is not always willing to reveal itself. In this first portrait, the reader already understands that each Vermeer's identity is not a mere label, but an experience under construction, a way of seeing the world that, in the course of the narrative, could unpredictably transform into the path leading to healing or to definitive fracture.

Thus, the Introduction of the Brothers sets the tone for a novel that examines, with the clinical eye of a thriller and the sensitivity of a character study, the burden of being the heir and the cost of upholding the right to be oneself in an environment that seems to demand a specific version of oneself. In these opening pages, the essential point is not to resolve who is right or which of the two identities is the more “true.” Rather, it is to present the reader with two relatable human beings, with their virtues, their wounds, and their vulnerabilities, who will confront a world that, in its eagerness to order everything, sometimes destroys what is most valuable: the possibility of freely choosing who one wants to be. And it is precisely

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this freedom that the story promises to explore, once the layers of appearances begin to unravel before the eyes of those who, like Lucas and Wouter, dare to look beyond the visible.

The scene unfolds in a dining room illuminated by an antique lamp that seems to breathe with the patience of generations past. The table is long, the tablecloth immaculate, and around it gather faces marked by years of work, sacrifices, and broken promises. In the center, the Vermeer patriarch raises his glass with a ritual gravity that seems to measure every heartbeat of the house. His words, when they finally emerge, arrive like a command steeped in tradition: “Lucas, son, you will be the one to steer this ship.” The echo of his voice reverberates through the room and, without the need for words, establishes a tacit order that was already taken for granted, even by those who observe from the shadows with eyes weary of broken promises. At that table, more than the next quarter or the next investment is decided; it is the very essence of belonging to a family that has built its identity on a blend of merit and duty.

In the distance, like a murmur that insists on remaining silent, Wouter sits at the opposite end of the table. His fists are clenched beneath the tabletop, white fingers struggling to find their footing in a world where the rules seem written for someone else. Inside, the question he doesn't dare utter opens an ever-deepening void: What about me? Just a possible spare part in a family machine that functions without my presence? His thoughts, as clear as a bright night, say things his voice doesn't dare to say: that the same blood that binds him to Lucas also separates them, that the favoritism he perceives from his father has turned his existence into a constant exercise in comparison, and that life at Vermeer Corp has become a promise he doesn't know if he wants to or can keep. "Congratulations, brother," he says, without looking, barely a murmur that seems more like an attempt to participate than a statement.

The story of Vermeer Corp, however, is not a recent anecdote. It stands as a pillar spanning three generations,

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having weathered wars, economic crises, and migrations that seemed impossible until someone made them a reality. Family stories, told at dinnertime or in the quiet of an empty office, solidified a leadership narrative that seemed unbreakable. Lucas, the heir apparent in a world that demands results, is presented here as the embodiment of a promise: the continuation of a name the family refuses to let fall. His presence is accompanied by a collection of habits that have become second nature to him: discipline, precision, the ability to transform every report into a clear roadmap. “Dad always said this company is our legacy,” he repeats to his assistant while reviewing numbers, as if each figure were a lever to support the weight entrusted to him.

In contrast, Wouter's character is revealed not as a description of failure, but as a consequence of how his environment has dealt the pieces of the game. In the darkness of his apartment, a bar has become both refuge and battleground. Whiskey, once a simple ally to withstand the pressure, has gradually gained ground,

calming a mind that finds no rest. His nights are marked by the evidence of sleepless nights and by a face that has grown accustomed to showing the weary version of the truth: the one who doesn't complain, the one who doesn't reach the finish line, even though his whole heart screams that his place should be beside Lucas, in the public version of the story, in the meetings where every decision opens one door and closes just as many. His eyes, reddened by hours of wakefulness and the fight against an invisible enemy, bear the burden of a frustration that has become an inner storm, fueled by the perception of favoritism that doesn't need to be proven to feel real.

The dinner, beyond its gestures and words, reveals the dynamics of a family that has built its identity on a balance between what it shows to the world and what it keeps to itself. The legacy of Vermeer Corp is not just a collection of assets and a history of exports that has weathered crises; it's a way of understanding who deserves to lead, who should follow, and what it means to belong. Within this framework, Lucas appears as the