

Situational Ethics

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Rated PG

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Summary: The death of Johnny Corbin leaves Clark questioning his actions.

Story Size: 421 words (2Kb as text)

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Author's note: Set near the end of Metallo, after Superman disables Metallo but before he visits Lois. #31 in the At First Sight series.

This story is part of a series that includes "[1. At First Sight](#)," "[2. A Matter of Time](#)," "[3. Evil Lurks](#)," "[4. Invisible](#)," "[5. Gratitude](#)," "[6. Unprofessional Behaviour](#)," "[7. But For the Grace of God](#)," "[8. Vulnerable](#)," "[9. Decisions](#)," "[10. A Terrible Mistake](#)," "[11. Facets](#)," "[12. Terrified](#)," "[13. A Remarkable Woman](#)," "[14. The Aftermath of Illusion](#)," "[15. Black, White and Shades of Grey](#)," "[16. Tainted](#)," "[17. Betrayal](#)," "[18. Brothers](#)," "[19. Saving the Enemy](#)," "[20. Aching](#)," "[21. Healing](#)," "[22. Defending Myself](#)," and "[23. Euphoria](#)," and "[24. Family Ties](#)," and "[25. Two Steps Forward](#)" and "[26. Vigilante](#)" and "[27. Friendship](#)" and "[28. Life Or Death](#)" and "[29. Ramifications](#)" and "[30. Christmas Magic](#)" and "[31. Situational Ethics](#)."

A man died in Metropolis today.
That's nothing unusual; after all, people die every day.
The difference is that this time it was my fault.

I've always said that I could never take a life, that that's not how I work, and I believed it. And technically speaking, I didn't kill anyone.

It could be argued that he wasn't even human; I doubt that the courts have any sort of ruling about the legal status of cyborgs. It could even be argued that Johnny Corbin died the moment his head was attached to the robotic body that sustained him. And I could plead self-defence; after all, his threats to kill me were widely known.

But none of that justifies what I did.

I still rendered him completely helpless. I left him to the mercy of his makers, people that I knew were unscrupulous enough to turn another person into a cyborg for sinister purposes.

What makes it worse was the way I did it. I didn't even think twice about it; I spent more time thinking about the smart-ass quip I directed at his creators. I was callous, and cruel.

It wasn't until I saw Lucy Lane's grief that I realised the gravity of what I'd done. Metallo was a thing, a criminally inclined robot bent on my destruction.

But Johnny Corbin was a man.

Not a good man, it's true. By all accounts he was a loser, a deadbeat petty criminal. Still, he had hopes and dreams like anyone else... and someone who cared about him. The Vale brothers had no right to do what they did to him and I certainly had no right to do what I did.

Being Superman carries its own burden of guilt. Guilt at hiding a secret identity from the people you care most about. Guilt

at constantly lying to everyone around you, at not being there when your friends need you, at not pulling your weight at work. Guilt at missed rescues. I've learned to deal with it. I've had to.

This... This is different. This was my fault. And nothing is ever going to change that.

THE END