

All Fallen Down

By [JadedEvie](#) <evie.l.jade@gmail.com>

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Summary: Drama. Grief. One-shot. Sometimes only one thing had to go wrong to change your entire world. This one is just a little walk through a decimated park.

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And if you're someone that's surviving the passing of a loved one and living through your grief, you're not alone. They'll always be with you.

That said, there is light at the end of this particular tunnel.

The dust hadn't settled yet.

It hung in the air like grief.

Even for him, the dust made it hard to see. Bits of lead were scattered amongst, well, quite literally everything else.

While he couldn't see the world around him, one thing was all too clear.

He'd failed them.

He'd endured through the thick blackness of space, and he'd hit the asteroid exactly on target. It had sent him careening back into Earth's atmosphere, unconscious as he fell in bright white conflagration toward the planet, toward the city that he'd set out to protect.

But they must have made a mistake in their calculations. While he'd successfully broken the asteroid into pieces, those pieces had maintained their catastrophic trajectory. They'd hit the spinning planet over the course of twenty hours or so, from what he could piece together based on the damage. The two major meteors that he'd created by splitting the original had hit the planet the hardest.

And they'd decimated it.

His breath hitched in his chest.

Why had they sent him so late? They'd tried the Asgard rockets nearly a week in advance, aiming to nullify the nuclear effect on their planet of any smaller, manageable meteorites that landed. But then, when Asgard failed, they'd waited until the asteroid had nearly been on top of them all before sending him. Earth's last line of defense.

He'd met humanity's ultimate foe on its expansive, unbreathable field of battle, and he'd been rebuffed, knocked unconscious for days. For weeks? How did you tell time when there was...nothing?

He'd awoken to silence. He'd been buried under layers of rubble from multiple buildings. The silence had been so all-consuming it had made him think that his powers had again fled.

They hadn't.

The silence was real.

It was tangible.

And it was worldwide.

A sliver of renegade sunlight had made it down to him, its glow diluted. Maybe the lack of sun had been why he'd been out for so long. For too long. Maybe the darkness had been why he hadn't healed more quickly. Nevertheless, that one unsteady but unwavering beam had fallen across his face. Slanted, fluttering sunlight had brightened the darkness, insistently tugging him into hazy consciousness. And he'd woken to his new, permanent silence.

As he'd pulled himself free of the rubble, he'd recognized finally that his powers hadn't fled.

When he'd made it to the surface, he'd realized the cold calamity of what had happened. The incomprehensible reality had overtaken him like a tidal wave.

His was the only heartbeat left.

Before the shock could even wear off, he'd been in the air, without any of his usual landmarks, racing toward her on muscle memory. She had been at the Planet when everything had fallen down around them. Even then, he'd been able to sense where she was. Not her presence, exactly. But another kind of quiet, unmistakable, unshakable magnetism.

He'd used his vision to check, briefly, what he'd already known.

He wished he hadn't. He didn't want his last image of her to be dusty, buried and broken, even if she had been huddled close together with Perry and Jimmy.

Now he hung here, immobile above the Planet, tethered to the stratosphere, neither able to drop down to the doomed planet that he couldn't save nor travel upwards to the lost planet that had sent him here in the first place.

The silence was loud.

He should find his parents, he realized absently.

He felt the vague urge to help gently tug at him.

Perhaps he should clear the rubble. He couldn't repair damage on this scale, but he could at least give people proper burials.

Then again, his stunned mind realized, they were already buried.

Six billion graves.

A graveyard planet.

His heart stalled.

Another graveyard planet.

His heart continued to slow under the heaviness of the now total emptiness that surrounded his life, in every direction, even across the vastness of the stars.

Without direction or purpose, he eventually let himself drop down to the surface, sitting on a large, fractured slab. The concrete was bisected by wrecked, twisted metal rods that had once been the globe of the Planet's masthead. The remnants of the broken metal globe surrounded him.

He didn't feel the impetus to get up again, even as time passed, as the sun set and rose and set again, all at an odd angle.

Instead, he stayed near Lois.

For a long time.

His mind began ticking forward eventually, haltingly at first, in a fragmented way, as it started to work past the shock and into true grief.

How long would he sit here, alone and in a living purgatory?

How long would it take until Earth had no survivors at all? After all, he was invulnerable. There was little chance of starvation for a super being who didn't need to eat or drink. And even if the kryptonite had survived intact, there were no mad nemeses left to hunt him down. His once piercing worries over Luthor's manic plans had evaporated. The fears of mere weeks before seemed like they were far

off, from unreachable worlds and eons away, washed away by the uneasy tide of this new, unending silence.

The Earth's rotation was slower. He could feel it.

...Was it also off its axis?

He tried to focus his mind despite the comprehensive numbness.

Was he actually feeling the improper tilt of the Earth, or was he just still reeling from this misshapen reality he'd woken to? If the planet had been pushed far enough out of its orbit, would it become like the meteor itself, an albatross for yet another planet? Or would the destabilizing orbit follow its logical conclusion and eventually meet with its logical end?

He wondered if falling into the sun would hurt.

Or would it merely charge and recharge him, healing him instantly to keep him from suffocating in the airless vacuum of space, and trapping him in a bright but unending stasis of misery—without her?

How long would he be forced to sit alone in silence, contemplating his loss?

The sun rose again, as if in answer to his question.

It had been days since he'd moved, since he'd taken a deep breath or spoken.

Now, he looked out across the pillaged, jagged horizon line, his heart collapsing in his chest, as he breathed out her name.

"Lois."

* * *

A whirring noise broke the silence.

He couldn't quite connect it to reality at first.

It was disorienting, to hear an intentional, mechanical sound after so long, outside of the erratic winds and distorted ebbing tides.

And was that...

He extended his hearing for the first time in months.

Were those footsteps?

Lois! His heart lurched impossibly hard, his head snapping up.

Her name had become an endless litany in his mind.

But, no, of course it wasn't her.

It would never be her again.

Besides, he could still sense her non-presence far below him.

He blinked as a little man in a smudged brown coat and beaten bowler hat stood suddenly in front of him, holding a handkerchief over his mouth and turning slowly in an astounded circle, surveying the overwhelming decimation around them with a shocked face.

He finally came to a stop facing Clark, and his expression withered further, turning to sympathy.

“Oh, dear,” he said.