

# But I Get Up Again

by repmetsyrrah

© 20-Jun-08

Rating: K

Disclaimer: All publicly recognizable characters, settings, etc. are the property of their respective owners. The original characters and plot are the property of the author. The author is in no way associated with the owners, creators, or producers of any media franchise. No copyright infringement is intended.

---

Ryan Sandler had worked at the *Daily Planet* for four years and ten months when he was handed the story that changed his life.

It came in the middle of one of what had to be, in Ryan's opinion, one of the worst days in human history. His girlfriend of six years had 'officially' moved out last month and taken with her everything that Ryan had lived for. The diamond ring that Ryan had been planning to give her tonight still sat in his bedroom draw. It had cost him almost a year's salary but Susan had been worth every penny. Or so he'd thought.

Then she had left. Given some vague excuse about being tied down and wanting to live a little. Next thing Ryan knew she'd been on a plane to Italy with another man, leaving Ryan to pick up the shattered pieces of his heart. She had broken up with him three months ago, slowly removing her belongings from what used to be their home. Now it was just his apartment. His friends had been trying for months now to get him over it but...Every time he closed his eyes he saw her face and he couldn't ever imagine being with anyone else.

A loud boom overhead pulled him out of his self-pity. The now-familiar cry of "Superman!" was shouted enthusiastically by two young boys on their way to school. They both started talking excitedly about the superhero's latest rescues and how jealous their friends would be when they heard.

*Must be easy, Ryan mused, to be so untouchable, unable to be hurt. Bet Superman was never kicked out of his apartment because his girlfriend left and took half the rent.* That's right, if only to top off the disaster that was his life, Ryan's landlord had politely asked that he be out by the weekend. He still hadn't found a place and it was already Thursday.

"Morning, sir," a short man in a long coat and dark glasses greeted him as he approached the *Planet* building. "Are you a journalist?"

"Yes," he replied. It wasn't technically a lie, he was a computer programmer for the *Planet*, he worked on the website and had never actually *written* a story in his life although he had put them on the internet. But this man didn't need to know that.

"Good." The man nodded and produced a small video cassette, like one that you would find in a handheld camera. He pressed it into Ryan's hand. "You must put this on your website, television can be controlled, but the internet is free." Then he was gone, lost in the crowd.

Ryan wasn't at all bothered by the man's sudden appearance and disappearance. He wasn't a journalist but one didn't survive in the news business for long without acquiring contacts, many of whom preferred to remain anonymous. This wasn't the first time Ryan had been given something this way and it most likely wouldn't be the last.

Dumping his briefcase on his desk and nodding to several people, he made his way to one of the small store closets that had been converted into a makeshift film editing room. The *Planet* was a newspaper as Mr. White was forever telling them. A website was all very well for keeping up with the times but spending actual money on video equipment? Out of the question.

"Well then," Ryan muttered, closing the door and pushing the cassette into the video player. "Let's see what you've got." He pushed play.

By the time the video ended Ryan had forgotten his girlfriend, his financial issues, his living crisis, everything. He even forgot to breathe for a moment, gasping for air as the full impact of what he'd seen hit him.

He lunged forward, almost knocking over the TV, and hurriedly rewound the tape. He had to see it again; just to be sure it hadn't been some strange hallucination.

The tape clicked, indicating that it was ready. Ryan leaned forward to press play with a shaking hand and the tape started again.

Thunder boomed quietly out of the speakers and Ryan turned it up slightly. The image on the screen was shaky, clearly being filmed by hand. It showed an alien landscape of huge, dark crystals covered in seaweed and dead fish. In the middle stood the familiar figure clad in red and blue.

"I see an old man's sick joke," the strong, deep voice of the superhero rang out across the bleak landscape on the screen, answering some unheard question.

"Really?" The cameraman had moved now, giving a clear view of the bald-headed speaker. Lex Luthor, who was still America's most wanted, continued his speech, "because I see my new apartment and..." Another crash of thunder drowned out his next words. On the screen Superman began to ascend the steps towards Luthor. "But you know maybe you're right," he continued, "you know, maybe it is a little cold. A bit, a bit, what's the word I'm searching for?" He turned back to Superman who had reached the top steps. "Alien." The camera angle made it hard to see Superman's reaction to that word.

Ryan leant forward and turned to volume up very slightly, the cameraman was still at the bottom of the steps and the next words were harder to make out. "It lacks that human touch," Luthor finished as Superman stepped up level with him. Ryan bit the inside of his cheek, he knew what was coming and yet in some crazy way he almost hoped that in the minute and a half since he first played the tape it may have changed.

"You have something that belongs to me," Superman's voice wasn't as loud or as strong as before. Ryan muted the TV quickly, the next part was better to watch without sound. The camera didn't give a view of what happened next but suddenly Superman went crashing down the steps, breaking off bits of rock as he fell.

The camera shook a bit as the person filming it went forward to get a better shot of the invulnerable Man of Steel as he struggled to get up. Ryan turned the volume up to very low and Luthor's gleeful voice came from off-screen, "Krrrryptonite," he announced. "You're asking yourself," he continued as he came back into view, walking towards the fallen hero. "How?" Luthor yelled, kicking him brutally in the ribs. "Didn't your dad ever teach you to..." He drew back his leg again and punctuated each of his words with another kick. "Look. Before. You. Leap?"

Ryan flinched with each blow. Any envy he'd felt for the hero earlier was now gone. Luthor leaned towards him and opened his mouth to speak but the cameraman had moved away and Ryan couldn't make out the word. He wondered if he wanted to. Luthor kicked him

again after he'd finished and muttered something to himself before attempting to kick him again but Superman caught his foot before he could bring it back down.

He might've done more had Luthor not had three other men working with him. One of them reached down and grabbed Superman by the face, dragging him across the rocks. Ryan hit stop, convinced he wasn't dreaming. He'd already seen the end. Superman getting the crap kicked out of him and Luthor finishing off by stabbing him in the back with a pointed shard of the deadly green rock.

The tape was ejected from the player and Ryan took it out and placed it safely back in the case. He stood up and reached for the door but it opened before his hand had even reached it. Ryan flung out a hand to catch the shelf as he was bowled over by a tall man in a three-piece suit.

"Oh, gosh," The man stumbled back and helped Ryan up, "I'm sorry, I thought it was empty. I-I'm sorry," He stuttered.

"Oh, that's alright," Ryan waved away his apologies, "Um..." He frowned as the man's name escaped him for the moment, "Carl?"

"Clark," he corrected, pushing up his thick glasses. Ryan flushed slightly but Clark didn't look at all put out.

"Well, I was just going, it's all yours." Ryan left the closet-video room and heard some more crashing behind him.

He slumped down in his chair and booted up the computer, hurriedly opening up some random programs before the desktop wallpaper showed up. It was a picture of him and Susan on their vacation to Paris last year. The same trip where Ryan had decided to propose and started saving for the ring. He hadn't yet been able to find a picture to replace it and a small part of him was still hoping that Susan would come back to him and he wouldn't need to get rid of it.

Feeling even more depressed than he had after seeing the tape he opened up his e-mail.  
*6 new messages*

"Brilliant," he muttered when he saw the sender's address, it was from one of his friends. The same friends that were so keen for him to get over Susan.

*Hey mate*

*We're going out tonight. Usual place. I'll pick you up at 9.*

*NO EXCUSES!!!!*

*Harry*

He deleted the next three which were all from various websites he subscribed to. The last two were from other programmers and could wait.

He retrieved the tape from his pocket, took it out of the case and almost broke it against the back of his desk. Ryan closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Philip!" he yelled across the bullpen, his tone not even raising eyebrows.

"Yo, Ryan, dude," Philip Hills, the 'new guy', appeared beside his desk. "What's up man?"

"I'll tell you what's up," Ryan snapped, "What do you see on my desk?"

"Uh," Philip looked confused, "Your computer, stapler, some papers and...ummm, that's it."

Ryan raised his eyebrow, "Nothing else?" he asked.

"Nope, nothing," Philip shook his head, smiling. Ryan waited a moment before Philip's smile disappeared and a look of realization spread over his face.

"Can you tell me why there is nothing else on my desk, Philip?" he asked calmly.

"Uh," Philip started guiltily. "Because I borrowed your digital tape player yesterday?"

"Exactly." Ryan glared at him. "Last time you 'borrowed' something from my desk you broke it and almost ruined the entire *Planet* computer network. Now, if that tape player isn't back on my desk by the time I get back with my coffee, I'll expect your resignation letter in its place." He got up and stalked off to the kitchen without saying a word.

The coffee pot was actually full, which was unusual at this time of day. *Miss Lane must be late* he mused. The strong, hot caffeine flooded his system and he started to relax, the anger from Susan and Philip started to ebb away.

His eyes drifted to the TV in the corner, now showing images of Superman assisting with earthquake relief somewhere in Asia. *Maybe that's where he was headed this morning* Ryan thought, staring at the blue figure with far more intensity than usual. *He looks so...untouchable* he realized, the same word from that morning coming back to haunt him. *You wouldn't even believe it was the same guy on that tape. He just got right back up again and kept going.*

"You were a little tough on Phil back there," a voice behind him said. He jumped and turned around to see Gemma Out, the sole female sports reporter on the staff, watching him with an amused expression. "He was using it to upload the video of that Football riot in California."

"Doesn't make it okay," he muttered, Gemma grinned and Ryan felt his heart do a little jump in his chest. He and Gemma had been 'work friends', as it was termed, since she had started working there two years ago but never anything else. "Um, so what are you doing here?"

"I may live for sports but sometimes the testosterone in that room gets too much even for me," She admitted, nodding in the direction of the sporting section. Her eyes fell on the image on the TV screen. "He's great isn't he?" She asked, the question coming out naturally, without any of the usual sighing and misty eyes that other women got when referring to the Man of Steel.

"He's not always like that though," Ryan told her, "I mean Lex Luthor managed to hurt him." *And more than you know.* he added silently, unable to comprehend the sudden pang of jealousy that struck when she'd looked at Superman.

Gemma gave a long-suffering sigh, "I'm talking about that, Ry," she said, confusing him thoroughly, "Being a hero isn't all about saving the innocent and protecting the weak, sometimes it's about getting up when you fall." She looked at the clock, "I gotta get back to work, see ya."

"Wait," Ryan called, not quite believing he was about to do what he was doing, but realizing that she was right. "Um, me and some friends are going out tonight, you know, just to some bars and stuff. Uh, do you wanna come?"

Gemma looked amused and Ryan was sure she was going to laugh in his face and he was surprised by how much he wanted her to say yes. Then she smiled and his stomach flip-flopped. "Yeah, I'd love too."

"Cool." Ryan nodded and even allowed himself to enjoy watching her walk away; feeling like something big had just taken place, although he didn't know what. He finished his coffee before heading back to his desk with determination.

His computer needed a new wallpaper.