

# No One Mourns the Wicked — Kerth Challenge 2

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Rated: PG

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Summary: A newly resurrected Lex Luthor contemplates his sullied reputation while he recovers his strength in Dr. Gretchen Kelly's secret lab.

Story Size: 2,405 words (13Kb as text)

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. All characters, plot points, and recognizable dialogue belong to DC comics, Warner Bros., December 3rd Productions and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise. I don't own the lyrics to "No One Mourns The Wicked" either. They belong to Stephen Schwartz, the Broadway musical "Wicked," and anyone else with a stake in the franchise.

This story is in response to the 2020 Kerth Challenge #2, which specified that the next song the author listened to is the title of the fic and has to relate to the plot in some way.

Note: The song "No One Mourns The Wicked," comes from the Broadway musical, "Wicked." The show begins with the citizens of Oz celebrating the death of the Wicked Witch of the West at the hands of Dorothy.

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No one mourns the wicked.  
No one cries that they won't return.  
No one lays a lily on their grave.  
I should know.

I am, for all intents and purposes, dead. I am, in the eyes of the public, a villain. Thanks to my traitorous, skittish ex-fiancée and her vile little newspaper cohorts, my underhanded dealings have been exposed for all the world to see, despite the pains I always took to bury anything that might link me to them. *I* have been exposed for the man I truly was.

I've been branded – criminal, villain, evil, anti-American. Suddenly I'm a thief and a shyster. I'm the devil himself, rather than the philanthropist they always admired.

Wicked.

I'm no longer Lex Luthor – person to revere and strive to be more like.

I'm simply wicked.

And that, according to the public at large, makes me worthy of the messy, hasty death I endured. As if *anyone* deserves the sinking sensation of watching their end come rushing to meet them in a single, blinding, obliterating moment of pain.

How soon the writhing, stinking masses have forgotten how they once worshipped at my feet! How easily they have turned a blind eye to all of the things I did that benefited this miserable city. The jobs I created. The homeless shelters I built. The museums that would not exist without having my name and donation money attached to them. The medical breakthroughs that Lex Labs was responsible for.

All of it to be had for a price, I admit. Nothing in life is ever free. Everything has strings attached – some more morally ambiguous than others.

I did plenty of "good" things and yet, all of that has been forgotten – erased in a split second, all because of the unsavory acts I had to commit to be who I was. Multibillionaire.

Philanthropist. Savior of Metropolis. I was a god amongst these puny, pathetic mortals and I ruled as I saw fit – often with an iron fist. The soft-hearted, gentle leaders get ground into the pavement, chewed up and spat out by life, and left in the dust by the stronger competition. I was simply the strongest of them all.

Most people think that because I was born into money, that I never had to work hard to get to where I was. They were wrong. I worked endlessly, tirelessly, relentlessly to turn a modest fortune and a respected, but not quite famous, family name into an unstoppable, vast, all-consuming empire. Success like that doesn't just *happen* by chance. It takes skill, a shrewd business sense, and a willingness to get the occasional dirt under one's fingernails – or, better yet, a willingness to let *others* get dirt under their fingernails on one's behalf. And I had no shortage of groveling underlings who would do *anything* I asked of them.

This is not confined just to the way *I* ran my empire, mind you. Not by a long shot. Find me one millionaire or, better yet, one billionaire who *hasn't* committed questionable acts and I'll show you a liar. We're all just very, very good about keeping it out of the public's eye. We're all more or less experts in exploiting loopholes in laws and buying the skeletons in our closets.

And, truth be told, the public doesn't *want* to know about our dirty deeds – not really.

No, the public doesn't want or need to know the gritty details about the gods who walk amongst them. They *enjoy* thinking that the actors and actresses, the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, the athletes, the elected officials, the musicians out there are somehow better than they themselves are. The common man *needs* to worship these seemingly super-human people. That's why they throw their money at the rich, because in their tiny little minds, owning that piece of stock, that sports jersey with a name that doesn't belong to them, that autograph, those concert tickets that cost more than their monthly mortgage payment brings them one step closer to being like the ones they so eagerly follow. The fact that they will *never* attain the same level as the rich is irrelevant as the common masses play pretend and preen around like empty-headed peacocks.

But, it happens, every so often, that one of the elite falls from grace. The CEO who is revealed to have embezzled millions. The athlete who is abusive toward their girlfriend or wife. The actor whose drug addiction is suddenly blasted all over the front page of every news source out there. The public clutches their collective pearls and immediately turns a cold eye to the fallen angel with the broken wing. Adoration turns to ash. The desire to be like the fallen noble turns to hate. No longer are they part of the untouchable, admired top tier of society. No, they are instantly villainized. Rallying cries of "Boycott!" rend the air, just as fast as the news spreads.

I'm now a part of that besmirched group of once-worshipped celebrities.

It's a role I never once imagined I'd play. Even in my darkest nightmares, hitting rock bottom the way I have – no pun intended, I assure you – never factored in. Yet here I am. Thanks to Dr. Kelly, my broken body was painstakingly reconstructed. Life was poured back into my healed and whole vessel. I am every inch the man I used to be, both physically and mentally. I have lost nothing of the man I once was. Her work was so impeccable that I bear no outward sign of the trauma I suffered. Not a scar is to be seen, not a single bone or joint has been compromised. Except for my hair.

How odd it is that, out of all of the things that didn't survive my suicide and subsequent resurrection, my hair is the one thing that didn't make it through my ordeal. And when I questioned it, what did that babbling woman give me? Excuses. I'll see to her incompetence yet, just as soon as I am certain that nothing else is going to go wrong with my Lazarus-like ascension from the tomb. But not before. That is a risk I cannot take. For now, I'm forced to accept my losses. My hair is the least of my worries.

The good man scorns the wicked.

I've seen it happen, first hand, to my once unrepentant self. Fortunately, for me, the tide of public opinion turned after I was dead. Unfortunately for me, I was raised too quickly from the grave to see that flood of ill-will ebbing away. No, I wasn't so lucky. I've seen the raging torrent of hatred pointed in my supposedly deceased direction.

The wicked's lives are lonely. They live and die alone.  
And I *am* quite alone.

Where once I surrounded myself with the best of company – the prettiest women, the richest of the rich, the most powerful government leaders, I now have no one to turn to. I am the packless wolf. The solitary hunter. The singular demon in the shadows. From here on out, barring Nigel, I must rely solely on myself – on the wits and skills I've accumulated over the past few decades. I still remember how to fight on my own – the ability to do so garnered in those first early years as I set off into the relatively unknown territory of conquering entire fields of business.

I can do this. I *know* I can.

I've lost my reputation. Never again will people look fondly upon the Luthor name. The trust the public had in me is gone like so much sand slipping through my fingers. I don't have an option to try to rebuild that trust either. For now, the denizens of this miserable city must remain ignorant of my continued existence. I'm not yet ready to reveal myself to them. I'm scorned, reviled, hated. I cannot fight the charges that were set against me by Kent and his destructive, nosey little band. I have no means to do much of anything right now – with my empire and fortune seized, I am, for the first time in my life, broke. All temporary, of course. I'll find a way to access some of my emergency accounts. I *always* find a way to get what I want. But, for the time being, I can't afford to grab a cup of coffee, let alone pay off a hitman to take Kent out in my revenge.

Yes, I am alone in this fight, but I am not ill-prepared for it.

And yet, as much of a set-back as my current criminal status is, and finding myself with literally nothing to lose, I have to wonder at the possibilities that have been spread out before my feet like the notorious Yellow Brick Road to Oz.

Perhaps I should *thank* the Daily Planet reporters who saw to the demise of my once-revered name just as soon as my body hit the unforgiving pavement. They wished to imprison me. They desired to see me locked in a cage like any common street thug. But they failed. While suicide was never something I'd considered before, it was the only way to escape the fate I knew was coming. Unfortunately, I knew throwing handfuls of money at the best legal defense team in the country wouldn't make me immune from the cold, strangling hands of the justice system. I'm *only* the third-richest man on the face of the Earth. While I wield far more power than the common man or woman on the street, I lack the power of influence that a Congressman, Senator, President, or other such government official would have. The best I could hope for would be a reduced sentence and the confiscation of my sizable bank accounts.

I would spend my life in a cage if I accepted a plea-deal. I would be executed if found guilty of all the murders I'd commissioned.

The ragged band of former newspaper employees were fools to think I would allow that to happen.

Death on my own terms was preferable to a life without all of the freedoms and luxuries I've always enjoyed. As gruesome as my demise was, it was more satisfying to deny the courts the chance to imprison me in a tiny cell to while away my final days before I'd be strapped to an electric chair or pumped full of lethal chemicals in a state-sanctioned murder.

So why would I *thank* the people that tried to take me down and destroyed that which I'd built with my own two hands?

Because I'm no longer caged.

Instead of jailing me, they unwittingly *liberated* me.

As Lex Luthor, multibillionaire, philanthropist, and god of this stinking city, I always had to carefully maintain the façade I showed the public. Acting a certain way. Watching how I spoke. Creating a false narrative of my life and work and how I achieved it all. Crafting lies and partial truths. Hiding my real motives and methods behind shell companies, phony projects, and through the hands of an organized criminal circuit that I lorded over with an unforgiving hand.

Now, however, that veneer of who I need to present myself as has been stripped away. The veil has been torn. The mask has been cracked. The curtain has been drawn aside and the man behind the Great Head of Oz has been exposed.

I am finally *free*.

Wicked, they call me now.

Well, now that I'm free from the trappings I once had to wind around myself, I'll be just as wicked as anyone could wish. There's no holding back now. No pretense of being good. Just pure ambition, disregard for the law, and criminality.

Kent will rue the day he tried to cross me. His little friends too, though I know he was the ringleader. I will crush him in mind, body, and soul. He will be nothing more than a hollow, miserable shell of a man before I finally give him the release of the most painful death I can devise.

I will finish that which I started on my wedding day. Superman *will* die by my hand someday, just as soon as I find a way to secure more of the precious Kryptonite that can bring the Man of Steel to his knees. I don't know how he escaped my trap, but he will *wish* he had died then by the time I'm through with him, for I will make his suffering all the worse for having denied me that victory before my world came crashing down.

And Lois Lane. She may have run from the altar once before, but she *will* be mine, one way or another. I don't care if I have to kidnap her and keep her locked up in a bomb shelter in some remote place. Granted, I'd much rather she learn to love and respect me as a husband. But I will do what I must to get what I desire. She will be my wife and she *will* bear me legitimate heirs – whether she is willing or not.

After that, who knows? I may decide to destroy Metropolis just to amuse myself. We'll see, all in good time.

No one mourns the wicked, tis true.

But they will all rue the day the world saw it fit to give me that title.

THE END