

## a sort of sleeping beauty

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## a sort of sleeping beauty

by [Bee\\_4](#)

### Summary

In which Oli falls out of the sky directly onto Joe, and the events that follow only get weirder, really.

### Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Joe is having a perfectly normal day, really. He's played some TCG matches, of which he's—well, he isn't winning, but one of these days he'll get this speedrunner thing down, and then he might! That, or if Beef takes his little tiny polite suggestion of making a speedrunner Beetlejhost card. That would also help him win. Or anyone running speedrunners, anyway. There are only two of them! A travesty! A—

Anyway. Point is. Joe had been having a perfectly normal day. He'd mostly just been digging a hole and playing TCG and now digging again, to unwind from the TCG. Digging is cathartic, after all. Eventually, it will even lead to his pinball machine playfield becoming real.

And, well. Maybe the universe detected things had been a bit *too* normal for Joe lately. That's what Joe figures, anyhow. Later, when asked, he'll say that has to be why this ended up being his problem, and not literally anyone else's. Grian's, for example! This whole thing had originally been his fault! Or maybe, perhaps, Gem's? Gem had been in both places, Joe will have you know. Or False. False had—to tell the truth, Joe still has strange feelings about the other False, but the other False *had existed*, and there's only one Joe, and Joe's the guy on Hermitcraft alone! It's not *his*

problem if the Rift starts to act up again, really, or his problem if someone shows up through it! He's got other things to do! Other games to play! Holes to dig! Speedrunners to workshop!

What he does not have time for is this:

Joe Hills, having a previously perfectly ordinary day, digs a hole, and then, screaming, Oli falls out of the sky and lands on him.

Joe's just glad he always carries a totem.

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Oli doesn't wake up immediately. Joe's worried at first he hurt something in the fall. Most injuries that would keep someone asleep like this aren't the sorts of things that stick around, at least on Hermitcraft. Respawn exists; if it's bad enough to leave someone unconscious, it's normally bad enough they just respawn. From time to time, Joe wonders about the sort of attitude towards death this instills in people. If death is a mere inconvenience, but a frequent one, is there truly such a thing as endings? In a world such as this, is there meaning to the time they've spent alive? Without a definitive reason why the end of the life is an end, what drive is there to fulfill the life one has? Is death a necessary evil?

Joe asks Oli this. He's unconscious. He's been unconscious for hours. It's starting to worry Joe, really. He's falling back on philosophy. He shouldn't do philosophy while tired. Tired philosophy is also very grumpy philosophy, you see, and that in turn doesn't tend to be philosophy that makes much sense.

Oli doesn't answer this either.

"You know, I was really hopin' you'd have such strong feelings on my musin' on the nature of life and death that you'd spring up and tell me about them," Joe says. "Of course, now that I think about it, I think you didn't have very many opinions on the subject. I shouldn't go attributin' things you care about."

Oli is eerily still. Joe tucks him into bed. He feels like electricity and something far away. Joe's not sure what to make of it. He should probably ask someone about it.

He should probably...

This shouldn't be his problem, but out of everyone, Oli had fallen on Joe, so maybe—if someone comes looking, they might blame Joe. And Joe doesn't think he's doing anything wrong? Oli's still breathing, he's just... *still*.

It's odd. It makes Joe's head spin. It's odd.

"If you have an opinion on the nature of death, feel free to talk about it sometime! Personally I'm not a fan," Joe says, and Oli doesn't respond.

Joe leaves Oli where he is.

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There's something weird about the air, Joe decides the next day. He's not sure what it is. Oli still isn't awake and Joe is nervous and really trying to decide if he'll tell anyone. Like, that's probably mostly what it is. He has OrionSound in a bed in his base and he's unconscious and he fell out of the sky. He should try various waking tactics. He's going to be blamed. He's vibrating out of his skin.

He loses in TCG to Doc, who only gloats, like, a little bit, which is also weird. Maybe Doc can tell something's wrong. Maybe Doc's also got someone who fell out of the sky on him. Maybe everyone from Empires is about to show up and fall out of the sky and *then* what? Joe doesn't know how to handle people falling out of the sky.

"You seem distracted, man," Doc says.

"What, me, distracted? Nooo. When have I ever been distracted?" Joe says.

"Well you don't have to be so sarcastic about it," Doc says.

"I'm never sarcastic," Joe says.

"Sure, man," Doc says. "Want to lose again?"

"I'm as not-sarcastic as you are gracious in victory!"

"Is that a yes or no?"

Joe thinks of Oli alone in his base. On the one hand, Joe really needs more TCG tokens. On the other hand, Joe doesn't want Oli to wake up alone. On the other, other hand...

"I don't really want to lose again," Joe says.

"Pity," Doc says.

"Hey, if someone fell out of the sky on you—" Joe starts.

"Don't break your elytra over the perimeter, Joe," Doc says, and he wanders off. Joe watches him go to argue with the largely out-of-stock booster pack machines.

Joe considers the merits of asking more, but like, how long can Oli actually stay asleep for? He's probably already awake, having somehow wandered from the bed to inside of Joe's spider farm or something, desperately in need of yet another rescue. That sounds about right in Joe's experience with Oli. Joe can't expect anything...

A shudder goes down Joe's body.

"Doc," Joe says, a bit urgently. "Doc, has anything odd been happening lately?"

Doc ducks his head out of the card shop. "I don't know, man, nothing I'm not causing myself."

"Oh, okay," Joe says. "Cool. Thanks."

"No problem man," Doc says.

Joe goes back to his hole in the ground in a worse position than he'd been in previously, which about checks out for him, really. Oli is still lying in exactly the position Joe had left him in. He's... really pale. Something about being near him makes Joe's heart race.

Joe sits down and decides to talk to him about TCG tokens. It's something to do.

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"Right. I've made splash potions of instant health and splash potions of regeneration, now," Joe says. He's holding a collection of very thin glass bottles. He's always wondered why these things are made in smashable glass bottles instead of something less dangerous. Sure, the glass is meant

to shatter into little cubes instead of shards, but just because it's tempered doesn't mean it isn't sharp! Joe's had potions thrown at him and then had to pick glass out of his skin and it's not fun, let him tell you, not fun at all! It's awfully good that splash potions work just as well poured out of the bottle onto a target, otherwise the potions might just heal the glass and nothing else and that would be no good.

He'd taken far longer than he'd thought to make the potions, mostly on account of the fact he couldn't remember what the ingredients for them were. He isn't normally a healing potions kind of guy. Totems, sure! Invisibility? He's made so many of those he could do it in his sleep! But healing potions? Perish the thought. Mostly because they're not that useful compared to just, like, eating a stack of carrots, or popping another totem. Healing's easy as long as you're conscious.

Oli's not conscious.

Joe uncorks the potions and unceremoniously coats Oli in them. He watches the particles float around him for a while. Some of it splashed onto Joe as well, and he finds himself feeling a bit less nauseous, which is wild, because he hadn't even known he'd been feeling nauseous before. Now he feels less that though! Thanks, instant health!

The particles fade. Oli still doesn't wake up. Joe frowns.

"Here, take a totem," he says, placing one between Oli's fingers. It doesn't do anything.

"Wake up," Joe says, and he doesn't.

Joe sits there a while. This is getting beyond concerning. He's not sure what's happening, but whatever it is, it can't be good for Oli. He needs to do research. He needs to get help. He needs... he needs Oli to wake up, really.

He sits down next to Oli's bed. "I'll figure this out," he promises. "Don't worry. I'll figure this out."

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Cleo is doing about as well as usual these days, which is to say that even for a zombie she looks exhausted. Joe knows that's because she's doing a lot of things right now. That's alright. He doesn't want to interrupt her too much. It's just that, when it comes to people who know how to help, he tends to trust Cleo is one of them.

It's also cold. Joe wants to point that out. It's oddly cold. Joe doesn't know why. He's grabbed a coat. It's draped over his shoulders, so that as he continues to feel cold and tired, he doesn't feel even worse.

It's not helping.

He's shivering, holding his sides and trying to figure out why it's so cold in a place that isn't normally cold by the time he sees Cleo. They're also wearing a jacket. Joe is glad. It makes him feel slightly less like he's going mad than he usually does, and even more less like he's going mad than he does right now, in this precise moment. Cleo's restocking dye in their shop. They're counting out colors to make the world a more wonderful and colorful place, which is a quality Joe appreciates in a person.

To tell the truth, it's what he'd liked about Oli, the first go-around. When it comes to people who make the world more colorful, Oli is definitely one of them. Sure, he'd needed constant rescuing, but he'd been a lot of fun. It's not often someone's able to outdo Joe's ability to keep things weird, but Oli most definitely had, and it was great fun to watch happen. He'd even been making the

world more colorful *here*. In this very dye shop.

“Cleo,” Joe says, rather than think about that too much longer. “Cleo, you’re an expert in waking people up who don’t wake up, right? That’s the whole zombie thing, right?”

“What did you do, Joe?” Cleo says without turning around.

“I resent the implication that I did *anything*,” Joe says. “I’ll have you know the unconscious man showed up that way, and that I’m being good and responsible and trying to wake him up without causing a scene! It’s a perfectly normal situation for us to have ended up in and I won’t hear a word otherwise.”

Cleo stops. Cleo closes the chest they’d been working on refilling. Cleo turns back around.

“Joe. The unconscious man?”

Joe laughs nervously. “He fell out of the sky onto me and hasn’t woken up. It’s Oli. You know? The guy I had to keep rescuing? I mean, I say had, but I guess I’m still doing it? Like, when it comes to rescuing, arguably, this is a situation that contains it.”

Cleo searches Joe’s face.

“He’s not supposed to be here,” Cleo says.

“I know,” Joe says.

“Have you tried checking Grian’s place?” She pauses, presumably seeing the expression Joe thought he’d done a fairly decent job hiding but apparently had not. “Joe, you need to go check Grian’s. I can go try some of my... did you want me to raise him like he’s undead?”

“It could work!” A pause. “And you believe this wasn’t my fault when I said so, so, you know—”

“Yeah, you know what, I get it,” Cleo says. “That’s fair. Do you want me to get anyone else’s help?”

Joe figures Cleo will be able to ask without getting in trouble or managing to cross any invisible lines, so he starts to nod his head. That’s about when something strange happens. Joe shivers. He’s cold. He’s...

“Is there—you’re also cold, right?” he says instead of telling Cleo to get help. Cleo looks at him.

“Yeah. It’s unusually cold, isn’t it?”

“I’m—has anything weird been happening lately?” Joe says.

“I mean, not other than the weather?”

“I’m probably just paranoid,” Joe says. “I’ll go check Grian’s place.”

“You do that,” Cleo says.

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There is absolutely nothing helpful at Grian’s base. If anything, it’s warmer. The Rift is still seemingly closed. Grumbot is still Grumbot. Grian isn’t around, which is good, because Joe doesn’t really know how to answer questions when Grian asks them. It is, however, a problem.

Joe feels like he's being watched. It's not the Rift. He'd know if it were the Rift.

He hurried home.

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Cleo is outside of Joe's hole in the ground. She's grimacing. "Yeah, I don't know how to wake him up," she says seriously. "How did you *find* him?"

"I told you, he just... fell on me," Joe says helplessly.

"Well, none of my undead or living techniques worked. Also, I can't stand to be in that room much longer, so..."

Joe blinks. "What?"

"There's something *wrong* in there," Cleo says.

Joe shivers. He thinks about how Oli had felt when Joe had been holding him, like lightning and something else entirely. Of course, that hadn't driven Joe out of the room. There's something strange in the air today, sure, and Oli fell out of the sky, and Joe's heart is beating loudly, but he thinks he'd go back in there every time. After all, Oli fell onto *him*. Sure, there are many other, far more qualified people. Scar and Cleo, for example, already knew several of the Empires people. So did Tango and Impulse, from that game they play occasionally. Grian is the one with the Rift. Gem and False are the ones who are halfway from Empires, even if Joe doesn't really know how that works. But Oli fell on *Joe*, and therefore is Joe's responsibility.

"That's a rude thing to say about Oli," he finally says.

"Maybe I'm complaining about your decorating," Cleo says.

"You helped me with that, you don't get to complain," Joe says.

"Look, I know you need help. Like, just in general, but also right now. But..."

Joe pauses. "Just tell me if you find more stuff about how to wake up people who are mysteriously sleeping," Joe then says.

"Will do," Cleo says. "You know, when you phrase it like that, it sounds like a fairytale. Have you considered True Love's Kiss?"

Joe feels his face heat up. "I mean, I wouldn't know how to find one of those," he says.

Cleo snorts. "Yeah, good luck with that," they say, and they light a rocket and fly off. Joe watches after her until she's small in the sky, then he finishes climbing into his hole in the ground. Oli is still pale on the bed. It's cold, and the air tastes of ozone.

It's entirely possible, Joe thinks, that he's slightly in over his head. He's tried reaching out for help, though! He realized he couldn't do it alone and reached out for help! It's hardly *his* fault the help wasn't able to be particularly helpful. He's not sure he'd claim it to be Cleo's fault either, mind. He can see the remnants of them using whatever methods they could to wake Oli. It just... hadn't worked. And that's fine! Sometimes, you try, and it just doesn't work! Like the face in Mt. Hermitmore that Joe had made—that too just hadn't worked! And such life continues onwards, with things that don't work, and things that do.

Oli's chest rises and falls.

“One of these things will work,” Joe says. “Here, I’ve got leftover potions. We’ll try that one more time.”

They don’t do much. Joe pulls his own bed over to grab the blankets to curl up under, so that he gets less cold, and it isn’t long until he accidentally falls asleep himself. He doesn’t mean to. If asked later, he’d fully admit sleeping next to the guy who won’t wake up feels, like, a little inauspicious? A little bit like a bad idea? But he hadn’t been *trying* to take a nap, he’d been *trying* to get warmer.

It’s really cold. The air tastes like ozone. Joe’s out like a light.

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Joe can’t quite remember what he dreams about. It could prove to be important later. He’s not sure. He just knows it involves a dragon, and Oli, and so much snow and ice that the whole world freezes around it. Or maybe it doesn’t, and it’s just something else entirely.

Joe’s not sure. He’s pretty sure dreams aren’t *supposed* to be important unless you’re a character in a story, though. The fact that it feels like this one might be is a little confusing, really. Bad sign overall. Generally the sort of thing that causes poor vibes. All of that, you know?

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When Joe wakes up, he can see his breath.

He takes a moment to marvel at this. Despite being underground and underwater, Joe’s hole in the ground tends towards being slightly brisk but normally reasonably warm. This makes sense to Joe, because he lives in and out of it, and because the ocean they’re under is a warm ocean, not a cold one, and because even in the cold biomes the weather on Hermitcraft tends more towards being mild than anything else. Joe doesn’t see his breath that often. He can see it now.

“You know, we probably shouldn’t be sleeping down here,” Joe says as though it’s some great revelation. “We could get hypothermia. Maybe that’s why you won’t wake up.”

Joe sets about making a campfire. “I don’t have much better a place for you to sleep, mind. The pinball machine back is open to the elements and phantoms if you’re not paying attention. And, like, I guess phantoms won’t be a problem for you? You’re already asleep, after all. But Scars might be, and let me tell you, that’s probably worse than the phantoms, because he’ll be weird about it. Oh, right, Scar! That actually gives me an idea.”

Joe places the campfire down and watches it crackle to life. It feels like it gives off no heat at all, which is weird, because those things normally give off enough heat to do things like cook meat if given the opportunity (albeit much slower than a normal furnace or smoker would). Joe watches the campfire warily. It’s not soul flame. It should, by all rights, be warm. Why isn’t it warm?

He turns to his ender chest. His Scar-based idea. Right. He fishes out his goat horn.

“Sorry if this is too loud for you,” Joe says, “but that’s the point.”

He blows into the horn as loudly as he can. It makes an appropriately loud goat sound. Or, no. Horn sound? Not a goat sound. Goats don’t sound like horns. Goats don’t even know their horns can be used for sounds, Joe’s pretty sure. If they did, would that be wild or what? Goats picking up their own horns and blowing through them to make calls to each other. It would be like if skeletons attacked people with bones or if piglins played pork like drums. Entirely unrealistic, unlikely, terrible, but also somehow fascinating. There would probably be goat wars over the whole thing. Joe knows that there have been player wars over less. Maybe Doc would know something.

All of this is a moot point anyway. The horn doesn't wake Oli up. The campfire still isn't heating up the room. Joe is still shivering.

"Maybe we go outside after all," he says. "Let me make sure..."

He goes up the stairs and his eyes widen. There's a snowstorm outside.

Joe goes back into the cave.

He sends on his communicator: *hey, there's a snowstorm. I think there's something wrong.* It takes several times; he makes a lot of typos on a good day, and this is a bad one, his hands shaking from the cold weather. He waits for a response. For a moment, he fears he'll get none, then slowly, people start to point out unseasonable coldness where they're from too.

At least it's not just a them problem.

Joe settles down. Maybe it'll go away now that someone else has noticed? Maybe he should mention Oli? Maybe he should stay right here?

"The thing is, Oli, I don't *actually* want you to get kicked out for causin' blizzards or something," Joe says. Oli doesn't respond. "You may have required a lot of rescuing, but I like you a lot, you know. It was fun—I felt like I made a new friend, when it came to hangin' out with you! And you helped me out too, back on Empires. You're sort of crazy and funny in a way that I'm not, which is unusual. Really, I'd prefer if you just woke up."

He sighs. He looks at his communicator. "Oh, Oli," he says, watching the list of messages about people who feel something weird in the air go by, "we're really in it now."

He decides that, on account of it being cold and Joe not really wanting to leave, he'll start telling Oli accounts of the TCG again. It's really the biggest thing he's missed since he left, after all, and perhaps it will prove to be exactly the kind of thing that would wake him up. It brought Wels back, after all. Maybe it will bring the sleeping OrionSound back as well. Joe's not sure. He just knows that he would like it if he did.

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"Maybe Cleo's right about the true love's kiss thing," Joe jokes after a while. The blizzard is getting worse outside. He's been stuck inside. Having terrible ideas while stuck inside is really normal for him. He should not be allowed to go stir-crazy. Being allowed to go stir-crazy is the enemy. Being allowed to go stir-crazy is making him think...

"Normally, I'd be rather against the whole notion, but I'm willing to try anything."

Oli doesn't respond, which of course he doesn't. He's still asleep, as he has been. It's all rather strange, this whole incident. Joe's ready to put it all behind them.

"I'll just peck your forehead then," Joe says. "A full kiss while you're asleep would be weird, but a little forehead kiss should count too, shouldn't it?"

He gives Oli a little kiss on the forehead and goes back to his deckbuilding. There. Next time Cleo asks him if he's tried that, he'll be able to say that he has, and it didn't work, so there.

There's a gasp from the bed. Joe turns around.

"Oh, who is the handsome prince who woke me from my accursed slumber?"



Joe stares.

“Oli?”

“Oh, Joe! Joe Hills, my sweet beloved prince! It’s been so long! Of course a Prince as fair and *handsome* as you would be the one to awaken a princess such as myself! Oh, it’s enough to make a man blush,” Oli says, sitting up and holding his face in his hands. “Why, I can only *imagine* the moment itself. I hope Mandy Mane wasn’t here to watch, and Egg! Egg wasn’t here to watch either—far too *steamy* for child eyes!”

“Well now, it’s a bit too cold to be steamy,” Joe says reasonably. “I can’t believe that worked.”

“How else would you awaken a sleeping beauty, king? You give them a kiss!” Oli puts his chin in his hands. “I wish I’d been awake for it. Tell me, Joe, how exactly did you kiss me?”

“Well, on the forehead, just a little bit,” Joe says.

“That’s it? That’s... that’s strangely boring, Joe, I am not going to lie.”

“Well, you were asleep. I wasn’t about to do anything else while you couldn’t say anything about it. Also, I didn’t think it would work?”

“Oh.” Oli pauses for a bit. “I suppose we stan a respectful king then,” he says. “That’s probably for the best. All’s well that ends well! Although, if you want to kiss me while I’m awake sometime, just so you know, I would *not* say no.”

Joe feels his face heating up. “Oh, uh, well, certainly! Sometime when things aren’t so weird, we can, uh, explore the possibilities. I’m just glad you’re awake. Falling out of the sky onto me was a bit rude, I’ll have you know.”

“Sorry, Joe, but it was important,” Oli says. “I came to bring you all a *terrible warning!*”

Joe feels his heart sink. “Right. What was it.”

Oli stops to think for a bit. While he does, Joe scrolls through the messages he’s been getting from the other hermits. The blizzard is getting worse. Somehow, though, there’s also thunder and lightning, streaking through the snow across the server. Everything feels decidedly odd, and cold, and thunderous.

“I don’t recall,” Oli says.

“Oh. Great,” Joe says.

“I think it had to do with a demon? Or an ice age? I’m not actually quite sure. I just knew I had to come warn you and that a curse would be upon me. And that only a sweet, true prince with a pure love could wake me up.”

“Aw,” Joe says, because that’s the sort of thing you say to that. “Shucks.”

They both sit in silence for a while.

“Is it normally snowing like this?” Oli asks.

“So, funny story about the terrible thing you were trying to warn us about,” Joe says.

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Somewhere outside, a godly force that has slipped through the cracks the rift left makes the server freeze more and more. Inside, Joe would like to stare: he'd been having a *normal day*.

(The weird one's alright enough too though, he supposes.)

## End Notes

This is what happens when you give me 48 hours to write a gift fic for an exchange while I am simultaneously trying to keep track of an eight-week-old puppy and can't get on my actual desktop. I take no responsibility for the contents of this fic, lol.

Anyway, enjoy! I hope you liked it! Your prompt was vague so I just went Weird with it! Presumably they have more adventures after this. Maybe I'd write them sometime but I only have. Checks clock. Forty-five minutes left. So you know. Another time.

(Not even close, baby.)

Anyway this is a great pairing. Joe and Oli... what a pair of guys. Loved whatever they had going on. Hope to see more of it one day!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!