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### Description

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**SYNOPSIS:** Note: italicized text denotes extended scenes not from the original cut.

June 1938. The film opens to a child reading a comic book about the Daily Planet, the largest newspaper in the city of Metropolis. As the child reads, the shot dissolves to the real Daily Planet and up into the sky. The following title sequence moves through space and eventually reveals the planet Krypton, the home world of a highly-evolved race resembling humans and bearing a unique molecular density and structure, a result of the planet's gravitational strength and the radiation of its adjacent red sun. The planet is ruled by a Council of Elders, each representing a particular "clan" and bearing a crest of that particular House. The planet's greatest scientist, Jor-El, bears an S-shaped crest, the House of El. He is supervising the trial of three criminals caught attempting to overthrow the planet's government: General Zod, the planet's former defense chief; his henchman Non, a hulking killer unable to speak; and Ursa, a woman determined to exterminate men other than the man she loves - Zod. As the elders render a guilty verdict, Zod notes that the verdict must be unanimous, so Jor-El ultimately holds the key to their fate. Despite his disillusionment with the Council of Elders, Jor-El renders a conviction. The vast dome of the planet's capital city opens to the night, and a small extra-dimensional prison - the Phantom Zone - tumbles out of the sky and pulls the three criminals out of the trial room and into an eternity in dimensional limbo through space. While a frightened Ursa begs for forgiveness, Zod defiantly swears that he will have his vengeance on the House of El, even if it takes him a thousand years.

However, Jor-El's more pressing concern lies in the orbital shift of Krypton; this shift is putting the planet into the fatal gravitational pull of its

central star, a fact blithely ignored by the Council Of Elders. The leader of the Council forbids Jor-El from warning the larger populace or he will be imprisoned in the Phantom Zone himself. Jor-El promises to be silent and that he and his wife will not attempt to leave the planet. Jor-El chooses instead to construct a crystalline starship for his infant son Kal-El. Jor-El's wife Lara, however, is concerned, for the starship is programmed to take the child through a trans-galactic warp to a planet populated by primitive humans whose technological development is millennia behind Krypton, a planet that orbits a yellow sun, a planet called Earth. Jor-El, however, understands that the planet's yellow sun will give Kal-El superhuman powers, which will give him the advantage he needs to survive. Jor-El and Lara bid their child goodbye before Jor-El installs a green crystal into the ship, a crystal containing the very essence of himself and Lara as well as the knowledge of the entire universe. He then completes the assembly of the starship - just as the planet is pulled into a fatal plunge toward its red sun. The starship is launched and escapes the system scant minutes before the planet is torn open, collides with its central star, and both bodies are obliterated in a holocaust of fire and debris.

The tiny starship passes the Phantom Zone before accelerating on its journey to the planet Earth, with the voice of Jor-El providing the infant, who is aging as the ship proceeds, with knowledge. The ship finally reaches Earth in the year 1951 A.D. and plunges like a meteor into a vast wheat field near Smallville, Kansas - within sight of local farmers Jonathan and Martha Kent. Upon seeing the meteor the Kents discover the now-three-year-old Kal-El. Martha, believing the child is a gift from God, decides to adopt him. The child demonstrates that he is different when, as Jonathan is changing a tire on his truck and the jack slips, he innocently lifts the vehicle with his bare hands, saving his foster father's life.

After the truck is thus repaired the Kents and their newly adopted son drive away, leaving the meteor behind - but as its energy fades out it is clear it will become significant to the Kents in due time.

Some fifteen years pass and Clark, named for Martha's maiden name, is a student at Smallville High School. He is a water boy on the school's football team, and friends with cheerleader Lana Lang, but is frequently bullied by Lana's jock boyfriend, Brad Wilson. Clark knows of the vast power he possesses but is forbidden by his father from showing it - although, alone on a football field, he kicks a ball into orbit, then runs home by outrunning a speeding passenger train (even to delightfully jumping across its nose), and is seen by a young girl who tries to tell her parents; her mother, however, scolds young "Lois Lane" about telling tall tales.

Clark returns home as Brad, Lana, and other students drive by, surprised that he arrived home so quickly. Jonathan, however, reassures Clark that he is on Earth for a reason and that he should not let others bother him. Clark thus feels better, but as he starts to play with the family dog, Jonathan suddenly stops, having lost feeling in his left arm. He then falls to the ground, victim of a heart attack. After Jonathan's burial the grieving Clark blames himself, "All those powers, and I couldn't even save him."

Some time later Clark is awakened early one morning by a mysterious noise, emanating from the barn. Clark enters the barn and finds the remains of the meteor, and with it the now-activated green crystal of Jor-El. Later that morning, Clark tells his mother that he must leave and head north. Martha, having known this day would come, urges her son to always remember her, and the tearful Clark vows to do just that as they embrace for one final time.

Days later Clark reaches the North Pole, where he takes the green crystal and throws it miles into the distance, where it melts into the ice and begins construction of a gigantic crystalline fortress, a Fortress of Solitude. Inside Clark finds a matrix table of crystals; placing one into an aperture, he activates a dimensional communicator that reveals the preserved consciousness of Jor-El, his true father. Jor-El provides the youth with his true identity of Kal-El and takes his son on a journey through time and space to complete his maturation, educating him on the universe and on his purpose in life. When the journey ends, Kal-El has aged twelve years to the age of 30, although in the time-twisting of inter-dimensional travel the Earth has aged 22 years to the year 1978 A.D. The scene reveals the now fully matured Kal-El dressed in a red-and-blue costume with a long red cape and bearing his family symbol, ready to fulfill his purpose of protecting his new homeworld.

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Metropolis, the greatest city in the world. At the skyscraper home of its largest newspaper, the Daily Planet, photographer Jimmy Olsen is shooting photos of a typically kinetic day in the life of the Planet, including ace reporter Lois Lane (who despite this status has a problem with spelling, frequently being corrected for misspelled words). Lois and Jimmy are introduced by the paper's grumpy editor, Perry White, to its newest member, a tall shy bespectacled news writer named Clark Kent. Lois is initially puzzled by the man's shyness and mild social clumsiness, and is particularly struck when the two of them are held up in a back alley by a gunman. Clark faints when the thug opens fire on Lois (the fainting is cover so Clark can catch the bullet in his bare hand, which causes the gunman to run), and in defending himself to Lois rattles off a listing of all the items in her purse.

As Lois and Clark hail a taxi, walking past them is a white-dressed heavysset man munching on snacks and carrying a copy of the Planet. The man is tailed by Harry and Armis, two undercover cops, for he is Otis, an assistant for criminal genius Lex Luthor, and he is on his way to Luthor's secret hideout. The cops tail him to Metropolis Grand Central Station, where Harry sends Armis to get backup while he tails Otis onto subway Track 22 leading out of the station. Otis eventually finds an indentation in the underground tunnel and waits for a train to arrive. A doorway opens under the cover of the passing train, and after it is gone Harry goes to the doorway to try and figure out how to open it - a fatal mistake, for monitoring the scene from hidden security cameras is Luthor himself, who activates the doorway and violently pushes Harry into the path of another train.

Luthor's moll, Eve Teschmacher, is appalled by the scene, but Luthor arrogantly and condescendingly reminds her that it is an inevitable by-product of his status as the greatest criminal mind of the latter 20th century, a status to which he takes egotistical delight. He tells her how his father (a cruel man who disowned Lex as a child), once told him that even if governments and economies collapse, people will still need land, and will do anything to get it. This has guided his criminal career ever since. When Otis arrives in their underground lair he is reminded of his clumsiness in allowing himself to be followed again. Thus he is given the unglamorous task of feeding "the babies," a group of unidentified unseen creatures in a vast pit used to dispatch intruders. Luthor's more pressing concern, however, lies in a story in the Planet that two nuclear cruise-type missiles with hypersonic speed are to be tested using live multi-megaton warheads soon. Luthor intends to use the missile test to

fulfill the greatest real estate swindle in history.

Later that night, Lois Lane is scheduled to fly via Planet helicopter to Metropolis International Airport to greet Air Force One, but on the Planet's helipad she boards the chopper and when the chopper begins takeoff, a light cable breaks free of its bracket and in the updraft caused by the chopper snags its landing skids, breaks, and plunges the chopper out of control through the helipad's control shed and crashing onto the ledge. As police hustle panicking bystanders on the streets below to safety, Lois tries to crawl out of the chopper, but the ledge begins to crack and the chopper sags violently toward the street and Lois falls through, hanging on by a seat belt in the air.

But amid the panic in the streets, Clark Kent emerges from the Planet and notices a yellow rain hat on the sidewalk. Upon recognizing it as one Lois was wearing, he sees the stricken chopper, and while those around him run for safety, Clark keeps his head, even while finding a suitable hiding place to change takes a bit of hunt in the vicinity. Running to another building down the street, Clark opens his shirt to reveal his emblem and then whirls through a revolving door at super speed to become effectively invisible and changes into Superman - to the awe and confusion of a nearby pimp.

Superman takes off, just as Lois loses her grip on the seat belt and plunges towards the street below. Superman safely catches her and carries her upward. The chopper now breaks off the ledge and falls, but Superman safely snags it out of the air with one hand and carries it back to the Planet's helipad to the astonishment of the crowd below. When the awe-struck Lois asks who the stranger is, he merely replies, "A friend." She faints from pure exhaustion and disbelief.

It is but the beginning, for Kal-El undertakes numerous feats of heroism - stopping a cat-burglar using gigantic magnets to scale the Solow Building, intercepting a boatload of bank-robbers, rescuing a cat from a tree, and rescuing Air Force One when a lighting strike shatters its portside engine and wing.

The next morning, he returns to the Fortress of Solitude and consults the spirit of Jor-El to convey the emotions he felt upon making his full power known. Jor-El urges him to be circumspect in his power and praises him for what he has learned so far.

After that busy night, Superman dominates the news about this astounding man doing his good deeds with seemingly impossible abilities. Watching the news about the stranger, Lex Luthor sees his arrival as a natural challenge, considering that Superman would surely have the inclination and the power to interfere with his scheme, and the criminal mastermind vows to destroy all that the stranger represents. Perry White, for his part, makes discovering the red-and-blue stranger the #1 priority of the Planet and sends his entire staff scurrying to find any scrap of information about "this flying whatchamacallit." Lois, however, scoops everyone when she gets a note requesting a dinner date at her penthouse from "a friend."

The dinner date takes place and as part of the interview, in which Superman astounds the cynical reporter with his sincerely kind, courteous and altruistic personality, Kal-El gives Lois a ride in the sky - a flight that becomes almost a romantic dance as the two begin falling in love. Kal-El returns Lois to her apartment and the two bid reluctant goodbye. Lois quietly dubs him a true super man - and uses the term to identify the stranger in her subsequent front-page story. Luthor reads it and remembers a scientific theory; Superman's homeworld would be of a molecular construction that would be affected by the unique radiation of a yellow sun, and that meteors from Krypton upon landing on Earth would be affected to the point of emitting a radiation that would affect only Kryptonians. Such a meteorite was found in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Miss Tessmacher is skeptical, as even with "the rock," Superman could see them coming from miles away. But the interview hints at another weakness: Superman has difficulty seeing through lead. With their plan in place, they plan a trip to Ethiopia.

Later, Luthor's gang go to work intercepting the two missile convoys used for the big upcoming test; using a variety of guises, they divert attention away from the effort to reprogram the missiles' directional vectors; Otis, however, misprograms one of the missiles, attributing this mistake to his arm not being long enough to write down the coordinates. Luthor violently attacks him for gross incompetence, but Miss Tessmacher calms him down while keeping the car they are in from crashing.

The Planet learns that an unknown figure is buying up hundreds of acres of seemingly worthless desert in the southwest. Suspecting land fraud, Perry sends Lois and Jimmy to investigate. Had Clark showed more initiative and confidence, the assignment would have gone to him. As Perry shares a story about a "worthless meteorite" being stolen from an Ethiopian museum, Clark is struck by a piercing signal, a high pitched hum followed by the sound of every dog in Metropolis barking at once- it is Lex Luthor on a radio frequency only Superman (and the dogs) can hear. Luthor warns Superman that a poison gas pellet containing propane lithium compound is to be released into the air and kill the city's population unless Superman confronts him alone. Feigning a migraine, Clark sneaks away from his co-workers and jumps out a window, where he changes into Superman mid-flight and traces Luthor's signal to the street. He spins himself around and manages to drill through the ground and into Luthor's hideout, where he is attacked by the hideout's automated defense system - a wall of machine guns, then a wall of fire, finally a wall of liquid nitrogen that freezes the area. None has any effect on Superman, who casually walks through it all unharmed.

Once inside the hideout, Superman demands knowledge of Luthor's gas pellet. Luthor lets the truth be known that it is a hoax, it was the only way to gain an audience with him. Luthor reveals his true plans for the stolen missiles; the first will destroy the San Andreas Fault, which will collapse the Western coastline of the US (namely California and its major cites) into the ocean and thus make the seemingly worthless desert of the west into multi-billion dollar windfalls. The second missile is designed to be a cover. Luthor boasts that nobody, not even Superman, can bring down both of them, and if necessary, he can detonate either warhead via remote. Superman notices a box made of lead which he assumes hides Luthor's detonator. But when he opens it he is struck by a massive weakness, for the box contains the Ethiopian meteorite - Kryptonite, fitted to a chain necklace that Luthor drapes around him. He takes great delight in reminding Superman that despite his aura of invincibility, a normal human has found a way to beat him. Superman asks if Luthor even cares about the second missile's target (the one misprogrammed by Otis) which is revealed to be Hackensack, NJ, before Luthor drops him into his pool to drown.

Luthor, however, has made a fatal mistake, for due to Otis' misprogramming, Eve Teschmacher's mother lives in Hackensack. While Luthor and Otis monitor the errant missiles on their hypersonic flight, she pleads with Superman to stop the Hackensack missile first on his mission; he

agrees and she frees him. Regaining his power, Superman blasts through the mammoth ceiling of the lair, into the sky, and on a direct course west. He tries to stop the first missile over Kansas but it dodges him, and he must overtake it and force it into space - just as the second missile detonates the San Andreas Fault, setting off an omniscidal quake that is like the destruction of Krypton all over again, a nightmare that doubly drives Superman as he flies underneath the Earth's crust to stabilize the land.

However, the aftershocks prove no less deadly, and Superman flies all across the area rescuing people from the ensuing disasters. But amid his enormous feats of heroism, one person in particular needs help. Amid the aftershocks, Lois's car runs out of gas in the middle of a desert, and is swallowed by a massive fissure, effectively burying her alive. Superman eventually senses she is in danger. He finds the car and pulls it out of the ground. He quickly takes Lois' body out of the car, but is too late. She has suffocated and died. Superman tearfully kisses her, and then lays her body down. He stands over it silently for several moments. Superman finally screams a thunderous roar of anguish and then rages into the sky. He hears the voice of Jor-El, which reminds him that he must not interfere with human history. Recalling his failure to save Jonathan ("All those powers, and I couldn't even save him"), he becomes absolutely determined to save Lois. Pulling together all of his power and strength, Superman flies around Earth's perimeter faster and faster eventually reversing the planet's rotation and pulling time back with it. He soon fixes it back to its original direction and uses the extra time to get to Lois before her car is buried.

As revenge for her betrayal, Luthor and Otis are preparing to drop Miss Teschmacher into the pit of "the babies." Superman, however, rescues her, and pointedly notes to Luthor that Miss Teschmacher's mother sends her love.

Afterward, Superman delivers Luthor and Otis to a maximum security prison to hold them pending trial. Luthor shouts his defiance (mirroring Zod in the opening moments), but he is comically interrupted by Otis. As both men are led away by the guards, the prison warden thanks Superman for his good deeds. Superman humbly dismisses the praise as just his contribution to their mutual effort for the good of society even as he takes off into the high atmosphere to resume the patrol of his adopted home planet. Once there, Superman, happy that his self-appointed never-ending battle has had a satisfying beginning, looks to the audience with a wink and a smile as he flies off for more adventures.