

THE SUPERMEN

A FEATURE TREATMENT by BEN TEDDS

Based on a TRUE STORY

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Burbank, January 2006. In a Warner Bros. mixing room, a pair of men watch a 30-year-old screentest for *Superman* (1978). The actors are CHRISTOPHER REEVE and MARGOT KIDDER, auditioning with the scene where Superman and Lois are about to fly together. As they finish, the director, RICHARD “DICK” DONNER (46), praises their performances. One of the men watching the video laughs at Dick’s large glasses – he’d forgotten how big they were. This is Dick Donner, now 76, peeping into his past: to the movie that changed his life, and the sequel from which he was fired.

Dick’s companion, editor, and producer MIKE THAU (45) is wary of his reaction. Does he have an agenda, showing this to Dick? He’s pulled him away from directing his latest movie, *16 Blocks*, specifically to do so. Mike explains the new Superman movie, *Superman Returns*, will use footage that was shot by Dick for his version of *Superman II*. When the studio found the footage, this screentest was part of it. Mike shows him more of the recovered footage, which features MARLON BRANDO. Dick comments on the beauty of the dialogue, written by Tom Mankiewicz, and the disgrace that so much of Mank’s *Superman II* script was rewritten. He asks Mike if he and Tom have ever met – Mike vaguely indicates they have, but only in passing. Dick invites Mike for dinner, as he and his wife Lauren are having Tom over that night. However, after Dick leaves, Mike makes a phone call to Tom. They’re clearly on friendly terms, and plotting something with Dick at the centre...

That night at the Donners’ house, relationships are revealed: LAUREN SHULER DONNER (55) is a movie producer who has worked with Mike before – in fact, on the very movie where she and Dick met, *Ladyhawke* (1985). Along with Dick, she is an enthusiastic animal rights activist. TOM (64), meanwhile, is a screenwriter, a long-time collaborator with the Donners, and a particularly firm friend to Dick. Tom and Mike give no indication they’re anything more than old acquaintances. During a house tour, Dick shows off artefacts from his career. Mike finds the original script for *Superman*, which Dick is hesitant to touch. It transpires that Lauren helped to heal him after the humiliation of being fired from *Superman II*, and the existential crisis he suffered as a consequence. Lauren jokes that, like Clark Kent/Superman, Dick did have to dispose of his glasses to make her fall for him.

At dinner, future projects are discussed. The Donners have recently adopted shelter dogs; inspired by this, their next movie will adapt the book *Hotel for Dogs* to campaign against animal euthanasia. But, Dick won’t direct - *16 Blocks* will be his last movie in the chair, and he will only be a producer from now on. This will give him more time to spend with Lauren in his twilight years. After Tom and Mike have left, Lauren catches Dick reading the *Superman* script, a great sadness in his expression as he finally lets the day’s emotions get to him. Lauren takes the script away, coaxing him to let the past go.

Back in **June 1976**, Dick looks to the future. A television news featurette explores the recent box office success of his movie, *The Omen*. Yet in a bar in Hollywood, Dick tears poor reviews out of newspapers. A 35-year-old Tom attempts to dissuade him from paying heed to the critics. But Dick claims he’s doing it in defiance, as his telephone hasn’t stopped ringing with offers for him to direct. He’s even thinking about having a phone put in his bathroom, so he doesn’t miss any calls. However, he hasn’t accepted anything yet. When Tom inquires why, Dick explains that in *The Omen*, he found ‘verisimilitude’ – an ability to create realism within the fantasy of the movie. He seeks something with similar mythic grandeur that he can apply this approach to - and nothing so far has appealed...

At the Cannes Film Festival, ALEXANDER SALKIND (55), a successful yet dubious producer, and his son ILYA (29) schmooze investors. Their next project was Ilya's idea: *Superman* and *Superman II*. But the investors laugh in their faces. Seemingly, the Salkinds have been trying unsuccessfully to get *Superman* off the ground for years. However, an impressive aerial display of blimps and planes promoting the movie, and the involvement of Marlon Brando, now have people reaching for their chequebooks. Until one of the plane's banners snags on a billboard and is torn in two.

Humiliated, the Salkinds find the poshest restaurant in Cannes. Fumbling five different passports, Alexander produces proof he is, somehow, a diplomat to Costa Rica, and wangles a table. After they have been seated, Ilya comments on how estranged he feels from France. This is where they have settled, for now, but can't get anyone to invest despite their previous hits. Alexander reassures Ilya they'll get the pictures made – he has his 'ways'. Perhaps they should focus on a bankable director...

2006, the morning after the Donners' dinner. Dick is about to drive to the studio; Lauren prepares to walk the dogs. Dick is cheerful, which Lauren remarks on, pleased he's not ruminating on the past. However, when Dick reaches Warner Bros, he's obstructed by a lorry unloading six tonnes of film cans. Dick goes to approach the driver, then catches sight of *his name* on the cans, with 'Superman II' next to it. Dick rushes to the office of JEFFREY PATRICK BYRNES (42), head of Warner Home Video. Tom and Mike are also there. Dick's already worked out why – they're going to release his cut of *Superman II*. Byrne explains that they found all Dick's footage, and Mike pitched to edit, with Dick supervising. Dick is torn. Finishing the movie is appealing, but he is afraid of dredging up the past and immersing himself back in the pain. He also points out, with distaste, Ilya Salkind would need to be a producer. Tom says Ilya has already agreed to this, approving the release. Dick immediately refuses the job – he won't work for a Salkind again. Not after what they did to him.

November 1976. There's now a phone in Dick's bathroom. He's about to use the toilet when it rings – it's Alexander Salkind, who saw *The Omen* and now wants him to direct *Superman* and *Superman II*. Dick finds his hairdressers' business card and scribbles down the details on the back – *two movies, Brando, \$1 million!!!* Within hours, he's flying to Paris to meet the Salkinds. They start on friendly terms, gushing to him about *The Omen*, and ask if he'll direct the pictures. Dick is intrigued – as a great American fable. *Superman* ticks his mythic status box. The Salkinds are reluctant to show Dick the script before he signs on, but eventually, agree to have one sent to him.

2006. The Donners are adopting another dog. However, before they leave, Lauren catches Dick clutching a mysterious cardboard box, 'Superman' scrawled on its side. Dick wants to know why it was in the attic. Lauren reveals she knows about the so-called 'Donner Cut' of *Superman II* and pleads with him not to supervise it. Being fired by the Salkinds undeniably hurt him, but will finishing the movie bring him catharsis? Maybe, Dick replies. Still, the conversation can wait; they have a new member of the family to meet. And, at the shelter, a gorgeous puppy runs into Dick's arms.

1976, and Dick opens the cardboard box. Inside, the script – a 500-page monster, completely different in appearance to the 2006 draft. He unbelievably weighs it in his hands

and remarks it's no wonder the Salkinds didn't want him to see it. Also in the box is a tacky Superman outfit with a courtesy card from Ilya. As Dick reads the script, he makes notes – *Too campy. The love story has to be at the centre. Why's Telly Savalas in this?! Finally, an inspiration that makes his face light up – Get Tom!!* He tells Tom over the phone that it is exactly what he's been looking for. Together, they can save Superman from the destructive hands of the Salkinds. The key thing is to make the Superman/Lois romance work – audiences will only care if they have real emotion to root for. Tom is reluctant, not wanting to do yet another rewrite. Nonetheless, Dick persuades him to come over for a conversation. And, as Dick ponders how to convince Tom, his eyes fall on the cardboard box...

When Tom arrives, Dick's running around the house in the Superman costume. Tom laughs, but Dick says wearing the suit has made him feel like he can do anything. If Tom tries it, he won't be able to resist. Tom agrees to the rewrite – if he doesn't have to put the suit on.

2006, Dick searches the house for the new puppy. She's sat in the box on top of the Superman suit. Dick is about to put the pup to bed, then, he hesitates and thumbs the suit, his expression weakening. At Tom's house, over a bottle, Dick confirms he'll supervise the edit. If Warner Bros are going to do it, they're going to do it right. Together, Dick, Tom and Mike can create the definitive *Superman II*.

Mike shows Dick, Lauren, and Tom the Warner Bros restoration facilities, where the *Superman II* materials are being prepared. As they pass huge scanners and ovens, Mike explains the plan. They don't know precisely how much of Tom's script was shot, but they've recovered everything Dick filmed before he was fired; this will all be assembled under Dick's careful eye. For the gaps, Mike has secured a small budget for some extra filming, FX, and maybe ADR with the surviving actors. Lauren is still sceptical, but upon seeing Dick's optimism, says she won't get in the way. Nevertheless, she briefly takes Tom aside, as Dick's close friend, to warn him of the potential harm to Dick if the edit doesn't turn out how he likes it. When Dick asks how much the budget is, Mike doesn't give a precise number though claims it's enough. Dick remarks he heard a similar story before...

The Salkinds' Paris office, **December 1976**. After shooing away a LAWYER, Alexander invites Dick in to present Tom's work. Though Ilya is unimpressed with the two new revised scripts, Alexander is more reticent, particularly when Dick describes the shooting process: they'll film both *Superman* movies simultaneously. The explanation is visualised through comic book-esque panels: a crew film Clark Kent at the Daily Planet for *Superman I*, then suddenly the Kryptonian villains are on the same set for *Superman II* – all in one day. Concluding they'll save money, Alexander is delighted and accepts the scripts. Dick wants to know the budget; Alexander vaguely implies that he'll get one soon. Outside the office, Ilya warns Dick to keep production costs low as he doesn't like his father's ways of raising funds. Dick argues that the movies will be expensive if they are to sustain his vision. Ilya reminds him they are the Salkinds' movies too – in fact, *his* idea; he wants to make a great contribution to American culture and cinema. Nonetheless, they can now get to work.

In **February 2006**, the edit of the Donner Cut begins, with a November deadline. Dick, Tom, and Mike sit together in an editing suite clutching Starbucks and scripts. The first scene to be cut together is the start, where Margot Kidder's Lois Lane throws herself out of a window to force Christopher Reeve's Clark Kent to change into Superman and save her.

Mike has separated each scene from the script onto their own pages, with 'to-do' and 'complete' piles on the desk. Fairly soon, with Dick's input, the first scene is done, and some pages land in the 'complete' pile. Dick is enchanted with the results of the scene. When he asks what's next, Mike tells him even though they're still waiting for lots of asset restoration, he thinks they can put together the sequence where Lois succeeds in getting Clark to reveal his secret. Dick's perplexed – they never shot that. But Mike has a clever idea.

Between **January and March 1977**, production of the movies looms. In an intercut montage, the various initial problems facing the crew and creatives are seen... In Shepperton Studios, Dick's dissatisfaction with the flying effect tests (a dummy being thrown from a roof, a radio-controlled 'aeroplane', animation) and Ilya frantically working with a calculator as Dick requests better results. In New York, casting Superman is going abominably – Dick wants to cast an unknown, to tap into his 'verisimilitude', but nobody is right for the part at all. Practically every actor in America is auditioned, even Ilya's wife's dentist. Then, in Paris, Dick gets wind of Marlon Brando's 7-figure-salary, leading to a row between Dick and Alexander, who *still* hasn't given him a budget.

Following this, Dick encounters the same lawyer he met earlier, this time accompanied by his client, director RICHARD LESTER (45). Lester warns Dick to get out from under the Salkinds whilst he still can – they owe him vast amounts of money for directing the *Musketeer* movies. Every time he sues them, Alexander moves their business to another country!

At an audition, Dick has his head in his hands when the casting director passes him a profile of a young man named Christopher Reeve. Dick initially rejects it because Reeve is too thin but is convinced to give him a shot. Christopher auditions for Dick on camera, using the scene where Lois tricks Clark into revealing himself. It's a knockout for Dick and Ilya, particularly the beat where Christopher alters his posture and manner to 'transform' from Clark to Superman.

In **2006**, the audition is suddenly paused on Mike Thau's computer. He says that he also has Margot Kidder's original audition for Lois, which used the same scene - they can be cut together. The continuity errors are huge, and the camera work is shoddy, but the scene is, somehow, beautiful.

That night, at the Donners' home, Lauren observes how happy Dick is. Feeling a little frisky, he pulls her away from her work on *Hotel for Dogs* and they retire to the bedroom. Before they fall asleep, Dick admits part of his motivation for working on the edit was the chance to see Christopher Reeve acting again, as if he's still working with him. Christopher's passing still affects him.

Shooting commences on *Superman* and *Superman II* in **April 1977**. Dick is tense – he complains to Tom that he only has 11 days to shoot Marlon Brando thanks to the Salkinds' deal – a big problem given Brando is, by reputation, a difficult actor. Indeed, Brando is uncooperative, suggesting that his character, Jor-El, should be a green bagel. Brando's cue cards, stuck everywhere from props to people's foreheads, get in the way of Dick's direction and add immense stress to the ticking clock – but Dick powers through, even with all his curses to the Salkinds. As Brando wraps his final shot, Dick thanks him, then, back in his own trailer, stomps enthusiastically on a pile of the cue cards.

Following this, Dick views a new reel of flying tests. They're embarrassing POV shots with a pair of dummy arms. Ilya tries to convince him to compromise. Dick ignores him and demands they scrap the work and create something believable. When Ilya raises cost as an issue, Dick snaps back that he remains without a budget and marches to set. Ilya takes Richard Lester aside and promises that he'll smooth over all their problems if he'll look after the flying unit to keep Dick in check.

On the Fortress of Solitude set, Dick is in his element. With no need to rush to stay on schedule for Brando, he can be a perfectionist. Which pisses off Alexander no end – every second wasted is thousands of his dollars. As Dick takes his time laying dolly track, Tom warns him that this might bite him in the ass. But Dick pokes him on the shoulder to point out that Christopher Reeve has just arrived on set in full costume. It's an incredible moment, and Dick and Tom drink in the majesty.

March 2006. In the Burbank studios, a tiny piece of the Fortress has been recreated, and Dick directs a partially obscured Christopher Reeve stand-in. Jeffrey checks in, and Mike explains two continuity errors need to be fixed. If they don't reshoot, they'll have to scrap two huge chunks of the movie. Whilst Dick has a blast, Tom is concerned that a shoot is eating into their budget. Can they afford Margot and Gene Hackman for ADR? Especially given he has doubts the project will make any money at all. Mike, unconvincingly, tells Tom he'll speak to Jeffrey, who has vanished.

That night, Dick is up late trawling fan forums on the internet. He reads comments aloud to Lauren – comments supportive of him, and derogatory towards Ilya. Lauren expresses concern about this as Dick is revelling in the nastiness. She reminds him that he's only working on the cut because Ilya is permitting it and suggests that Ilya wanted to extend an olive branch over what happened between him and Dick. Dick dismisses this, but not immediately. Could she be right?

May 1977, *Superman* shooting has moved to the Daily Planet set, and once again Dick is taking his time. Clapperboard after clapperboard is whipped in front of the camera for the same shot, over and over again – Take 2, Take 9, 16, 40... Alexander and Ilya try to intervene, stressing they're already a week behind schedule. Do they really need another go? But Dick once again ignores them. Take 41...

And so begins a montage, intercutting between past and present. From **1977-8**, clapperboards indicate changes in time, **May** through to **March**. On set, the Kryptonian villains murder astronauts on the Moon, Clark and Lois get mugged in an alleyway, Ma and Pa Kent find a spaceship on their drive home – yet the little boy playing Baby Kal-El will only come out for candy. All the while, the Salkinds lurk, annoyed and afraid of the rapidly lengthening production schedule and increasing budget. When arguments break out, Lester mediates between Dick and the Salkinds.

'Simultaneously', from **March to May 2006**, as the edit progresses, time passing is indicated by reams of script being marked 'complete', and the shrinking 'to-do' pile. Marlon Brando's floating head is composited into the Fortress of Solitude. Dick shoots close-ups of Mike's hand against greenscreen to fill gaps. The trio of Dick, Tom, and Mike chuckle over General Zod's lines in the White House. *16 Blocks* premieres and Dick uses the press junket to promote the Cut.

At one point during the edit, Dick receives a call from Lauren. It turns out he's missed an important meeting for *Hotel for Dogs* he was meant to be at. Dick apologises, and though Lauren forgives him she somewhat peevishly reminds him he must walk their dogs that evening.

Finally, in **March 1978**, Alexander is at his wit's end. He plays the piano in Lex Luthor's lair in an attempt to calm himself but sets off on a rant to Ilya about how they budgeted for 7 months of shooting - they've just hit a year in production. He's begging, borrowing, and stealing every which way he can, but it's never enough for Dick's demands, particularly where the flying effects are concerned. With the movies at risk of collapse, Ilya steps up and decides they make some tough calls.

June 2006. Tom checks in on Mike, prepping the first cut to show to Dick the following morning. Mike says Jeffrey denied the budget increase. Tom recognises there's a strong, upsetting chance they might have to use Lester's footage to fill in the 20% of the movie that wasn't shot. Mike doesn't think this is a huge setback, but Tom knows full well that it will hurt Dick. Tom repeats the warning Lauren gave him. Nevertheless, Mike responds that every director must compromise eventually.

In **March 1978**, shooting at the Fortress of Solitude continues with the Kryptonian villains, played by **TERRENCE STAMP**, **SARAH DOUGLAS**, and **JACK O'HALLORAN**. They're hooked up to wires so they can fly towards the entrance. However, Dick doesn't recognise the crew who prepared the effect. Nor those working on the lighting rigs. The Salkinds have fired the crew and replaced them with cheaper workers! Dick is furious. The crew have made the lights so hot they're turning the studio into an oven, and he doesn't trust the new flying harnesses. Despite that, Lester reminds Dick he's shooting pick-ups with Gene Hackman that afternoon, so Dick must call action. The villains soar towards the entrance and crash to the floor as their cheap harnesses snap. This is when Dick discovers that the Salkinds' squeeze has also cost the safety mats for the actors. Then the sprinklers go off.

Dick storms to the Salkinds. He berates their cheap, dangerous practices whilst Ilya chastises Dick for his dissatisfaction with the flying effects, the insistence on 'his' vision of 'verisimilitude', and the endless costs the Salkinds are sinking into the movie. Lester suggests suspension of filming *Superman II* scenes until the first movie is released. Dick agrees but bans the Salkinds from the set in return.

Dick is in a foul mood when he leaves the office, however he's suddenly grabbed by Lester, who pulls him over to one of the other stages. A technician, **ZOREN PERSIC**, has finally cracked the flying. He demonstrates the effect - a rear projection that is dynamically synchronised with any movements the main camera will make - then shows Dick a reel of Superman and Lois flying. Dick is overcome. It's beautiful. The love story *works*. The movie's going to work. Everything's going to be all right.

2006. Mike screens the first cut for Dick and Tom. It ends just as Superman flies away from a tearful Lois Lane, with the story incomplete due to the missing footage. Dick is unhappy. After receiving a stony look from Tom, Mike must tell Dick that the rest of the budget is going into completing the VFX. The rest of the movie will be Lester's footage, even the ending.

And Dick loses it.

All along, he concludes, this has been Ilya's final revenge. The inevitability that the movie could never be finished without being tainted, stained, by the footage that hurts him so much. It's not just compromising, it's poisoning. Ilya must have approved the cut to humiliate Dick one more time. Mike pushes his luck by saying Dick must have known this was a possibility, and Tom pleads Dick to find a way to divorce himself from the past - but Dick flees. He's not in his right mind, the lights seem to be dimming, there's a high-pitched sound in his ears reaching a horrible crescendo -

December 1978. The TV special *'The Making of Superman: The Movie'* shows Superman premiering in America and London to huge critical acclaim. However, Alexander is absent from all of them. He camps in a shabby house in Mexico, reading magazines for reviews of the movie. One night Ilya is on the phone to him, stressing Alexander – he's trying to lie low for some reason. Ilya wonders if they were too harsh on Dick. They did manage to make an amazing movie together after all. Except Alexander has turned beetroot red. He's just read something awful. And it's Dick-related.

At an afterparty, Dick and Tom drink at the bar, toasting their success. Then, Alexander finally appears, accompanied by Ilya. Alexander causes the room to fall silent as he bellows Dick's name. As he crosses the bar, he reveals the truth about his whereabouts: Alexander has been hiding from Interpol in Mexico because so many investors, crew, and banks have been demanding their money. Money he doesn't have because Dick spent it all for the sake of his verisimilitude. Then, Ilya shoves issues of *Cinefantastique*, *Variety*, and *Starlog* in Dick's face. It turns out Dick has been badmouthing the Salkinds in the press. Tom tries to get Dick to back down, but Dick mocks Alexander's height and calls him an asshole for the budget woes and for impeding the shoot. Ilya accuses Dick of trying to steal his movie, and xenophobically believing he had to 'rescue' Superman from a pair of Europeans. With back-up from Ilya, Alexander fires Dick from the sequel, daring him to sue them for it. Crushed, Dick yells at the hushed, observing bar to mind their own business, then staggers away in a stupor...

A *Superman* poster is torn down. A script gets ripped in half. Action figures fly through the air – into the bin. It's **2006**, and Lauren comes home to find Dick discarding all Superman paraphernalia, the suit given to him by Ilya clenched in his fist. She tries to stop him, explaining Tom called and told her what happened. But Dick doesn't care. He insists on knowing what the point of the movie is if they can't properly finish it. Can't anyone see how important it is that they do this right? Every movie is expensive, so why bother skimping at the cost of its quality? Aggravated, Lauren proclaims this is exactly how he was on *Ladyhawke* and that turned out fine.

Dick challenges Lauren as to why she didn't fire him then; Lauren snaps back that it was because she was in love with him. Sarcastically concluding that she just took pity on him, Dick stomps into the backyard, taking the Superman suit with him. He tosses it down, and slumps onto a swing seat.

June 1981. *The Making of Superman 2* shows footage from the premiere – and reveals that Richard Lester took over as director. No mention of Dick. In **1982**, Dick shoots his first movie after being fired, called *The Toy*. It's a miserable experience, topped off by catching

RICHARD PRYOR reading the *Superman III* script. The Salkinds are trying to poach him! During that day's shoot, JACKIE GLEASON deliberately drives a golf buggy into a swimming pool as a prank, and Dick storms off set to kick furniture in his trailer, demanding from the universe to know if he still has a future in movies.

2006. Dick wakes on the swing seat to the doorbell chiming. Dick realises he has a blanket on him. His face falls with shame and sadness – perhaps Lauren put it there? The puppy dashes to his side, urging Dick up. When Dick finally opens the front door, he's open-mouthed with shock.

It's Ilya.

Dick correctly concludes that Lauren called him over. He bitterly strides to the backyard, Ilya in pursuit. They argue – Ilya wants to make amends, but Dick is certain Ilya is somehow getting off on his continued misery. Eventually, Dick snatches up the Superman suit. He recounts how when he put it on, he felt like he could do anything. That was a *gift* Ilya gave him. A hope that together they could make something great. Ilya, pressed at last, retorts that they *did* make something great.

After calming himself, Ilya asks Dick whether it would make him feel better if he knew that he hasn't produced a film since he fell out with his father 14 years ago, even going as far as to sue him. Ilya never did reconcile with Alexander before he died. It appears Ilya loses everyone - his father, his career, three wives, maybe even his children one day.

This rings true with Dick after his recent quarrels with Lauren. Begrudgingly, he concludes that from both of their perspectives, it was always someone else's fault when they couldn't get what they want. But all blaming does is push people away. Dick acknowledges that his singular vision overrules his common sense – often to the detriment of everyone, even his movies. Following this, Ilya confesses he might have been wrong to try and impose himself into American culture through the movies.

The two acquaintances sit down on the swing seat together, and, after a quiet moment of reflection, Dick asks if Ilya ever put the suit on. Despite some resistance, Dick persuades him to at least wear the cape. Ilya cracks a small smile, which Dick uses as a way in to praise Ilya for his producing skills, even if they fell out. He's wearing the cape – does he feel the same sense of limitless potential that Dick did? Maybe it's time he started up again. Ilya says he'll think about it. As Dick waves goodbye to Ilya on his front porch, he offers him a ticket to the premiere, confirming he'll finish the movie.

After, Lauren approaches Dick. She apologises for what she said the previous night, but Dick thanks her for it, and for calling Ilya – they both had some truths he needed to hear. Most particularly, he's been focusing on the wrong love story the whole time, neglecting his and Lauren's in favour of Superman and Lois. Once they have made up, Lauren confesses she listened in, saying she knows Dick still hasn't forgiven Ilya. Dick doesn't deny it, although says that he's going to make things right one step at a time. Starting with compromise.

When Dick returns to Warner Bros, he apologises to Tom and Mike for shouting at them. They forgive him, and Dick says that he's had an idea that they should take to Jeffrey's office, Dick, again in that comic book panel style, walks Jeffrey through the options for the film's ending. In Lester's ending, Clark Kent kisses Lois to make her forget his identity. Tom

was staunchly against this – it goes against the love story; Lois is in love with Superman, not Clark, so they should never kiss. And in Dick and Tom’s original ending, Superman turns back time to undo the events of the movie (something then placed into the first film to create a more complete narrative, rather than finishing with a cliff-hanger). But if they promise they’ll use Lester’s footage for the remainder of the missing scenes, could they have just a little more money to recreate the original ending? Jeffrey, after admitting they were never going to make money on the film anyway, approves it.

Dick, Mike, and Tom return to work. They edit. They colour-time. They sound mix. In his spare time, Dick attends meetings with Lauren for new movie projects, walks the dogs, relaxes by the pool. The night of the premiere, Lauren helps dress Dick, and he thanks her for all her support. Not just now, but all the way back when. This is the second time she’s helped him get over *Superman II*. Ironic that they’ve turned back time again! For Lauren, it’s all in a day’s work as the best producer-wife in the world. It’s her job to solve the director’s problems. It’s why they’ve worked so well as a couple and a team for so many years. Dick is wearing his glasses, but Lauren takes them off him – tonight, the world should see Dick Donner the *man*, the one she loves most. She also reminds him he has a responsibility for Ilya and how he is perceived that night.

Superman II: The Richard Donner Cut premieres, with eager fans, cast and crew in attendance. Dick enjoys the evening, speaking to the press about his joy in finishing the film. From a distance, he spots a visibly uncomfortable Ilya – people are whispering about him and giving him side-eye.

The film commences. The crowd goes wild for Dick’s directing credit. They love the new scenes, they love Marlon Brando, they cheer for Superman turning back the world (again!). After, there’s a Q&A with Dick, Tom, Mike, and some of the cast. However, there are a lot of disparaging remarks towards Ilya from the cast and fans. At last, Ilya has heard enough and gets to his feet to leave. Dick tries to press on with answering a question, however, catches a disapproving look from Lauren. He swallows his pride and interrupts the Q&A to make a speech in Ilya’s defence. Dick praises him for being the one to bring Superman to the screen at all, and thanks him for permitting the Donner Cut to be released despite his mistakes and arrogance. Ilya smiles gratefully, but sadly, and walks out.

Dick gives chase, finding Ilya outside. Ilya thanks him for his defence, and states how happy he was to see the final film. Dick admits he was stupid not to completely forgive him. He’s also sorry for not standing up for him earlier. Ilya brushes this off and tells Dick that he loves him. After Ilya leaves in a taxi, Tom pulls Dick back into the premiere. Along the way, Dick asks Tom if he’s ever thought about writing another script for him. Tom says no – the last time he did, it was so good that Dick ended up marrying the producer. How could he top that?

In **1983**, in a Los Angeles hotel room, Dick meets with Tom and Lauren Shuler. Dick wants Tom to do a rewrite of Lauren’s script. Lauren is open to the rewrite, but with certain casting conditions. Dick jokingly says that they’ll have to see about that. There’s a definite flirtation between the two. Tom interrupts it and takes Lauren out of the hotel room, on their way to dinner all together. Just before he follows, though, Dick catches sight of something out on the balcony.

It's Superman.

Dick doesn't act surprised. He simply puts on his glasses, folds his arms, and shakes his head. *Not today, pal.* Then, Lauren comes back into the room, asking if Dick is going to join them. Dick looks outside again - just like that, Superman has vanished. Dick hurriedly removes his glasses, emulating a reverse-Clark Kent. Unconsciously quoting Lois Lane, Lauren asks if there are any more at home like him. Dick finishes the line – not really, no. They leave the hotel room together.

Through the balcony window, the sun sets. And against the blazing orange, the silhouette of a caped figure flies up, up, and away.