

# The Deleted Scene From Superman II That Made It a Much Better (and Darker) Movie

One of my early childhood memories is watching the movie Superman II on television. One scene in particular left an indelible impression.

The film's villains, three Kryptonians named Zod, Ursa, and Non, terrorize a rural town. A boy rides off on a horse to get help. Zod, the leader, sees the boy trying to escape.

At that point, I shut my eyes, because I could tell the boy was about to be killed. I didn't dare look again until after the deed was done.

Cut to today, decades later. This morning, to generate ideas for this Substack, I surveyed my childhood memories pertaining to superheroes. When I came across this memory, it dawned on me that I could not recall ever seeing that scene again, even though I've rewatched the movie several times since.

I searched the web for "superman 2 boy horse scene" and found that someone had uploaded the clip to YouTube. I watched it, and this time I kept my eyes open. So I finally saw, for the first time ever, the moment when the Kryptonians kill the boy.

Zod gestures to Non, who hurls a police car siren at the fleeing boy. This was a surprise to me, because for decades I had assumed that Zod had killed the boy himself with his heat vision. The impact is filmed from a long distance, so we only see a dust cloud and hear a boom.

"He was only a boy!" a woman exclaims.

“...who will never become a man!” answers Ursa.

From what I could piece together from comments on the video and the [Fandom Superman Wiki](#), it seems that the scene was cut from the US theatrical release and nearly all subsequent releases. It was reinserted once only for its premiere television broadcast in 1984. This means I was probably six-years-old when I saw it.

It was also a memorable broadcast for many of my fellow Gen-Xers, judging from some of the YouTube comments. Richard Thompson wrote:

“I recorded that broadcast of Superman II and watched it so many times my parents couldn’t stand it; I remember this scene more clearly than seeing the movie in the theater (which I also did).”

Another commenter replied:

“I remember seeing this scene only once and I remember it more clearly than any other scene in the film. And I saw the theatrical version many times on many forms of media.”

It’s no wonder that, for a child, even a fictional depiction of the murder of a fellow child would be so memorably frightening. For me, it is one of my earliest memories involving mortality and evil.

But it’s not the only moment from my first viewing of Superman II that stuck with me.

I also distinctly remember exulting over the movie’s climax. In that scene, Superman battles the evil Kryptonians in his Fortress of Solitude. Ursa holds Lois Lane hostage and Zod compels Superman to enter a chamber to have his powers removed. Afterward, the Satanic figure commands Superman to “kneel before Zod” and take his hand.

But then Superman crushes Zod's hand, revealing that Superman had reprogrammed the Fortress to strip the powers of the Kryptonians outside the chamber instead. Superman triumphantly lifts Zod into the air with one hand and casts him into a pit. Ursa and Non are then similarly dispatched.

The child murder scene, as unsettling as it was, probably contributed greatly to the impact of the final victory scene for me and anyone else who caught the 1984 broadcast. It established the full enormity of the evil that was ultimately vanquished by the hero. The resulting narrative arc was probably formative for my deep-seated, lifelong beliefs about good and evil, heroism and villainy.

Tragedy and evil are intrinsic aspects of the reality that all children are born into and must learn to grapple with. Only by encountering the bad can children learn to understand and embody the heroically good.

Of course, parents should protect their children from encountering too much too soon. But parents and regulators usually go overboard in following this understandable impulse. (Still other parents and creators expose kids to depravity and perversely depict it as virtue. But that's a different issue.)

When we shelter our children, we make them weak. By weakening our children, we make them vulnerable. Ultimately, over-protection is anti-protection.

So, I for one am glad and grateful that this scene slipped by the censors at least once in 1984, and that it reached six-year-old me. It probably helped me grow up to become a braver and more decent man.

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