EVIL'S EARLIEST DAYS...
KNOW.

LITTLE LANA LANS WITH THE FRECKLES.

"She truly is a wonderful girl, Clark."

"Who'd believe it? Little Lana long with the freckles!"

"I know. Wow."

"Your Pa's about done helping that salesman fella with his engine."

"Don't the years just fly?"

"That oughtta set you back on the road, mister."

"Anything else I can do to help? Don't hesitate to ask."

"I'll let you know, Mr. Kent."

"I'll let you know..."
I think about that day a lot.

That night...

If things had been different...

I think maybe they were different once, Clark.

You're you here and a princess in the 5th dimension?

Mrs. Naly, you transformed into something I could barely comprehend...

Mrs. Naly, you transformed into something I could barely comprehend...

I had to show you my complete face, otherwise you'd never believe what I have to tell you.

But I was right about your fortress and I knew you'd take the job at the Daily Planet, didn't I?

You said time would become... strange.

Like the memory I just had of beings... on Mars.

But I've never been to Mars.
The Mars Colony project is two years from launch. Noah Random is eight years old. But think about the way the water is displaced around a shark.

It's hard to prepare for an enemy who can strike at any moment in your life.
He's here, somewhere.

I can feel him.

Superman has nowhere left to run.

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I CAN SMELL HIS THOUGHTS!
HE’S HERE!

HE’S MINE!

I’VE WAITED LONGER THAN ANY OF YOU.
GET DON’T LET HIM GET AWAY.

SU-PER-MAN KILL!
LET HIM RUN.
THE ENTIRE CITY IS BOoby-TRAPPED WITH TESSERACT MINES.

EVERY TIME ONE EXPLODES, A NEW PREDATORY ENVIRONMENT IS RELEASED.
I thought I heard something—something shifted. As if scenery was moving around behind me.

But there's still time for a story, Clark. Make yourself comfortable first.

Why don't you join me in a toast?

A toast? I don't drink, Mrs. N.

You're Superman. A little alcohol can't hurt you. Just this once, for me.

Here's to the triumph of good over evil.
ONCE UPON A TIME, FAR FROM FOREVER AND CLOSER THAN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD, LIVED THE SAD KING-THING OF ZRFF, THE DIVERGENT COUNTRY.

SINCE THE LOSS OF HIS QUEEN, NOTHING COULD BRIGHTEN HIS MOOD.

AND WHILE HE SIGHED AND SUFFERED, THE WHOLE COURT, THE GREAT UNBOUNDED SPHERE OF ZRFF ITSELF, HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SHARE THE BLUE-BLACK GLOOM.

NOT ONE OF HIS SUBJECTS, NONE OF THE TREASURES AND WONDERS OF ZRFF...

NOT EVEN HIS LOVING DAUGHTER, THE PRINCESS GSPILNZ.

NOTHING COULD BRING A SMILE TO THE KING-THING'S FACE.
LEAST OF ALL, THE DULL FORMULAE, DRY ABSTRACTIONS, CREAKING RULES AND BONY PROOFS CONJURED BY THE COURT MAGICIAN, LORD VINDICTUX, FROM HIS BLACK CABINET.

UNTIL THAT DAY—

GDRPL!

UNTIL THAT DAY— THE ANY-ANGLED PALACE CAME A YOUNG MAN IN A TATTERED COAT OF COLORS, SEEKING HIS FORTUNE.

His name was MUXPTKL, and he could charm the sparkle out of the stars...

BPK!

His name was MUXPTKL, and he could charm the sparkle out of the stars...

TRFDBN!

His name was MUXPTKL, and he could charm the sparkle out of the stars...

WHEN HE SAW HOW SAD HIS FATHER WAS, HE PROMISED HE COULD MAKE HIM SMILE.

VINDICTUX SNEERED AT THAT.
But Mxv didn't pull numbers from his pockets or winged consonants from his sleeves—

---He pulled a universe from his hat

A rolled-up 3-dimensional universe.

For the king-thing's amusement, he'd juggle matter and time to tease and trick the pumped-up little champions of 333 different worlds.

Triceverydayso!

Sometimes all at once.

Superturtle of Jazuur, Randizullian's Elektor, Cosmicus, Professor Power, Vartox, the Weird of Woorp—

They tried a million ways to make him say his name backwards and never could.

Mister Mxvzptlk.
I'M SORRY, CLARK
5-D WORDS SOMETIMES COME OUT LIKE THUNDER.
WHERE WAS THE OTHER MAGICIAN IN ALL THIS?
YOU HAVE A NOSE FOR A STORY, CLARK
SEE, THAT WAS THE PROBLEM--

AND YOU FELL IN LOVE?

VANDKTVX

THE ENVIOUS ONE.

VANDKTVX WAS ENRAGED.

WHEN MY DECLARED HIS LOVE AND GAVE ME THREE WISHES TO WEAR, VANDKTVX WAS ENRAGED.

SUPERMAN IS CONFUSED AND DISORIENTED NOW, LOSING HIS SUPER-POWERS
WHEREVER HE GOES WE FOLLOW!

DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
HOW DID I GET INVOLVED IN ANY OF THIS?

YOU WERE MVV'S FAVORITE TRICK, AND THE KING'S

THE ONE WHO TRICKED BACK.

YOU OUTSMARTED MVV EVERY TIME

I DON'T REMEMBER OUTSMARTING ANYONE CALLED MVV.

YOU WILL FOR ME IT WAS THE PAST, FOR YOU IT'S THE FUTURE STILL TO COME

FOR MVV

IT WAS THE LAST STRAW.

DRIVEN BY A JEALOUS RAGE, HE STOLE THREE SUICIDE WEAPONS LEFT OVER FROM CHRONO-CONFlict 2

THE NOTHINGCOAT.

THE IMAGINATOR.

THE MILLION-POINTED MULTISPEAR

THEIR DRRTFN! ZBRTQ!

THEN, WEARING THE NOTHINGCOAT, HE CREST THROUGH THE PALACE UNSEEN TO KILL MVV AND TAKE ME

BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY.
My touch will twist this reality.

I just want to see him throwing us poisoned out.

Blue K radiation can do more damage than both of you combined!

Let me through!

I gave you a chance to change your ways, Erik!

I still have enough power to superheat the boilers beneath those buildings.

Unh!

Run!

Run all you want!

There's nowhere left to hide, Superman!

Hope I still have enough strength for this—
I hope you can hear me.

They gutted the Arctic Fortress, but my Krypton base is still here.

The second of three B.D. weapons was the multitude.

The third is some kind of demon in a box.

This is Superman calling the Legion of Super-Heroes on the time wave!

This is Superman calling Comet and the Wanderers!

Superman... calling Krypto.
VVNXTVX saw only the shadow on the drapes—the familiar derby hat of his enemy. He raised the multispear bristling with fractal points.

My father was laughing, trying MRR's silly little hat on his head... then he struck.

230 worlds died instantly.

But on two of those worlds, the multispear encountered unexpected resistance...
The feedback nearly killed us all.

Vandal Savage would never recover his sanity.

He barely noticed his ruined arm, the shattered spear, the broken coat.

He had killed not his rival, but his king, and the penalty for regicide was eternal imprisonment.

He would lose it all.

lose everything.

Unless he could frame my father and seize control of Earth.

This Multispear—

My father, Jor-El, repelled something called the Multitude.

Together, in different times and places, you and your father both found a way to hurt and anger a little God.

And now he's taking his revenge on your whole life at once—
NO ONE EVER ASKED ME TO DANCE BEFORE, LANA.

THAT'S THEIR LOSS.

THERE'S A LOT MORE TO YOU THAN MEETS THE EYE, CLARK KENT. IT WAS ALWAYS YOU AND ME AGAINST THE WORLD.

NOW THEY ALL WANT TO BE US.

LINA, I...

SHH...
I won't forget the sounds of screaming and breaking.

And MK! Telling me to run--

So I ran--shedding dimensions as I went.

I was here, on Earth, almost 60 years ago.

I had to get her, almost 25 years into it. I used up my first wish to bring us back together, here on Earth.

It was sweet, but it couldn't last long.

Flattened down, exiled, completely vulnerable.

All I could do was wait for MK to get in touch.

25 years into it. I used up my first wish to bring us back together, here on Earth.

It was sweet, but it couldn't last long.

That was your marriage to "Mystic Mr. Triple X"?

I'm not sure if I've got a chance to use it...

But I die, Clark.

Revealing myself to you was like setting off an alarm in the 5th dimension.

Then you used up your second wish to erase Clark Kent's apparent death from history.

The third wish could save us, Mrs. N.

Maybe--if I got a chance to use it...

But I die, Clark.

Revealing myself to you was like setting off an alarm in the 5th dimension.

Before I get the chance to make my last wish, I die.

Vindicta wins.
For my next trick...

Sholly Fisch - Writer
Chris Sprouse - Penciller
Karl Story - Inker
Jordie Bellaire - Colorist
Taylor Esposito - Letterer
Wil Moss - Associate Editor
Matt Idelson - Editor

Superman created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster
But I'm getting ahead of myself. Or maybe behind.

Once there was an imp made of wishes and mischief.

His tricks were the delight of the land of Griff — and especially its King.

Ouch! How did that get in there?

My greatest trick? Oh, no!

Myztik, you've outdone yourself! Surely this must be your greatest trick of all!

This isn't my greatest trick.

Try, you really must clean out your ears more often, Your Majesty!
Once there was a princess made of giggles and sunshine.

I have had many suitors, you know princes and centaurs and dragons on horseback, all of them treated me like royalty.

But you, my marvelous, magical...—

...you treat me like me.

And you make me laugh.
Once there was a romance made of moonbeams and rainbows.

BRAVO! BRAVO!

Now this, MXZFTLK - this must be your greatest trick!

Well... this is all pretty good, I'll admit.

But no, it isn't my greatest trick.
Once there was a villain made of spite and malice.

Wyndknot took himself so seriously that the imp couldn’t resist giving his nose an occasional tweak.

Perhaps he shouldn’t have.

The magician was determined to tear everything away from the imp. His love --

-- his freedom --

-- and even his greatest trick.

But the joke was on the villain. Because the Man of Steel was the imp’s favorite trick --
Once there was a three-dimensional couple who lived an ordinary life. They stayed connected, even when it felt like they were worlds apart. They made a home.

And, though they knew nothing lasts forever, they supported each other in sickness and in health. Until finally, in time...
Once there was a baby made of music --

-- a clear, strong melody of purest joy

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? IS IT ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR ATTACKS?

IT'S NOTHING ..

-- NOTHING COMPARED TO HIM

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HIS NAME SHOULD BE? PLIXINK? RTISTZY?

HOW ABOUT "PLATYPUS"?

I THINK FERLIN LOOKS LIKE A FERLIN

WHY, HE DOESN'T AT THAT?

YET WHATEVER HIS NAME, I KNOW WHAT HE'LL ALWAYS BE --

... MY GREATEST TRICK OF ALL
Once there was a princess aged by regret and sorrow. She'd been flattered to be at the heart of her imp's greatest trick. Deep in her soul, she prayed that his greatest trick was still to come. But now, she hoped he was wrong. Because, more than anything else, what her dear, beloved imp needed now — was an escape act. The end.