

You Stepped Out of a Dream

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Summary: The real reason Lois was surprised by Clark asking her out in the episode “The Phoenix.”

Story Size: 1,710 words (8Kb as text)

In response to Weekly Kerth Challenge #2: Lyric challenge: The next song you listen to is the title of your fic and has to relate to the plot in some way.

The next song I heard was “You Stepped Out of a Dream” by Nat King Cole. The first thing I thought of was at the beginning of “The Phoenix,” Clark is daydreaming and interrupted by Perry. At the end of that scene, just after Jimmy interrupts them, Lois sits down at her desk. There is this interesting look on her face as she takes a sip of her coffee. That look on her face is what inspired this story.

Lucy!

Have I got a story for you! It won't have an ending yet, but I just had to tell someone and so I'm emailing you now.

I haven't said anything yet but for the past few weeks I've been having these little daydreams. Ever since he died and come back. And I know you know who I'm talking about.

You know what a mess I was then, knowing I'd never see him again, never work with him again, never give him a hard time or listen to his stupid excuses again. It's a shame it took him dying for me to realize what I'd had. And I tried to tell him what I'd realized after he came back, but the big lunk-head fell asleep.

I know you think I should have done something else, but you have to understand that given my history with men, it was obviously a sign that I should leave well enough alone. Clark and I have such a delicate relationship, strong in some areas and hesitant in others, like we're dancing this fine line. Only I didn't know we'd been dancing until it was too late. Like I couldn't see it or wouldn't see it. Until he died and then I saw it and was heartbroken. But he came back and even though I tried to talk to him about it, I never did and now these little daydreams are becoming more frequent. The only thing that really bothers me is how much I enjoy them.

Anyway, I'm telling you about them now. Well, not all of them, just this one.

So, I was at the coffee pot. I don't know how long I'd been standing there, absently stirring my coffee, staring at him. Long enough I'm sure someone saw. And I imagined him walking up to me.

“Hey Lois,” he says.

“Hey Clark,” I say back.

“Look, I've got these tickets to a play Saturday. Would you like to come with me?” he asks in that smooth way of his, like it's an everyday thing for him to invite me to a play.

And I'm not even shocked. Of course, since it was a dream, I was bold enough to say, “Only if it's a date.”

And he smiled. (Teasing, hiding something, full and beautiful. Are his smiles that way in real life or only in my dreams?) And he leaned forward and instead of backing away, I leaned forward too. I could feel his breath when he said, “I was hoping you'd say that.”

And then I snapped out of it and realized I'd never actually put anything in my coffee cup. How stupid did I look standing there stirring an empty cup? But then, while I was filling my cup and adding some creamer, Clark comes up behind me.

“Ah, Lois, I want to ask you something,” he says, stumbling over the words a little.

“Ooh, I'm gonna like it, am I?” Sometimes I wish I could keep the thoughts in my head instead of saying them out loud.

“What makes you say that?” he asks.

So, I'm stuck explaining. “You've got that tone in your voice. You know, when people are uncomfortable? Like when they wanna borrow your car, or money, or your clothes.” Why did I say that?

“Ah, okay, you got me. I want to borrow your clothes.” Leave it to Clark to put me at ease. He's always been good at that.

And from somewhere I can only imagine has something to do with that day dream I just came out of, I go and say, “I'd bet you'd look real cute in black chiffon.” I took a sip of my coffee as quickly as I could to cover my embarrassment.

“What I want to say is —” I interrupted him before he could finish because he sounded awkward and I didn't like it. So, I took matters into my own hands. (Stop laughing, Lucy. I know you saw that coming.)

“I know what you want, Clark,” I told him. And I did. Of all the reasons people start a conversation that way, only one made sense for Clark.

“You do?” he asks. I tried not to be offended by his disbelief.

“I know you a lot better than you think,” I point out. “How much do you need?” Because money is the only thing Clark could possibly need to borrow from me.

“What?” His surprise is over the top. I can tell he's nervous about asking but he says instead, “No, I don't want money, Lois, I —” And I can't take it anymore, so I interrupt him again. (Stop laughing again. He's asking to be interrupted when he beats around the bush like this).

“Clark,” I say. “You don't have to be embarrassed, that's what friends are for, just tell me how much.” And I take another sip of my coffee and turn toward my desk to give him time to come to terms with it and tell me how much he needs.

But then he says, “Lois, I want you to go out with me.”

And my heart stopped and all I could say was, “What?” Breathlessly. I nearly choked on my coffee. Did he know about my dream? Was it obvious what I'd been thinking about? Did he see me staring at him?

Suddenly, a song popped into my head. One that Dad had always listened to in the evenings. Remember it?

You

Stepped out of a dream

You are too wonderful

To be what you seem

And it's true, I couldn't believe this was happening. “You're asking me out?” I ask stupidly.

“Yeah,” he says. “You know ... like... on a date.”

The thirteen-year-old in me is squealing in delight. But you know me, Lucy, all logic and reality. I need confirmation before I can allow those feelings to take over. Not that I would...

“A date,” I restate. That thirteen-year-old must still think that making fun of someone is how you express interest... “You mean like a real date? Where I take out my good perfume that I got after I saw ‘Love Affair’, the good one, not the remake, and I put a dab behind my knee and I don't even know why?” God, Lucy, when did I start babbling? It's like I'm a big puddle of mush around this guy.

“Yeah... I guess...” And there was that smile from my dream, teasing and hiding something, not quite as full but just as beautiful. I couldn't see anything else. “That's what I'm saying,” he says with a tone to match his smile.

The thirteen-year-old in me is swooning now. She makes me stumble over my words. “Well that’s... well I ... ah... I just don’t ... I don’t know what to say.” I tried to distance myself from him, give myself time to pull it together, but it’s like he really wants to go out with me and follows me (and I have to admit, I was hoping he’d do that).

“Well, most people either choose yes or no,” he says, and I want to laugh inside about how naïve he must be to think it’s that simple.

“Well, it’s not that easy,” I tell him. But the look on his face carries disappointment and I have to fix it so I start babbling again. “It’s easy for you because you’ve had time to think about it. You’ve had time to plan what you’re going to say and what you’re going to say depending on what I say back to you.”

“Lois,” he stops the runaway train. “I’m just trying to ask you out. I’m not trying to negotiate a nuclear arms treaty.”

And there’s that smile again. And I can’t help but smile back. Who would ever say ‘no’ to this man and how on earth did he decide to ask *me*? But before I can get anything out Jimmy interrupts us with some story. Of course, I can’t yell at him because I don’t want anyone to know how excited and nervous this all makes me. And as soon as I get a chance, I sit down at my desk to think it through. I know you don’t care what the story was about, so I’ll save you those details, but once Jimmy leaves, I work up the courage to give Clark an answer.

“Clark,” I call to him, but I hadn’t really thought through how I’d say it and the swoony thirteen-year-old comes up with, “Uh... about the date.” And I make a note to give her a stern talking-to later.

“It’s okay. Take your time,” he says, all consideration, still with that smile that I never want to go away. “We can talk about it later.” But I don’t want to talk about it later, I want to finish it now.

Darn that stupid story for interrupting us. This literally just happened, and I had to say something to someone or I would explode. Especially since I’m about to be alone with him working on this story...

So, there you have it, Lucy. I can see you doing some silly happy dance. But maybe you were right. I just had to wait for Mr. Right to step out of my dream. I’ll let you know how the story ends some other time.

Tell anyone and I’ll kill you.

Your loving sister,

Lois

THE END