

Vision of Destiny

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Rated G

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Summary: Lois meets an old woman who has some unbelievable things to tell her.

Acknowledgements and Comments: This is story one of a possible three or four story series which came about completely by accident. One little germ of an idea was supposed to easily turn into a short one-part vignette. I laugh when I remember my naiveté. It turned into a five part story that has a slight mystery in it (to the reader). This four part prequel explains that mystery. So, I guess, it won't be a mystery when you finally get story two of this series (which has since grown to seven parts and is still not finished). Thanks to my beta readers KenJ and Morgana who pointed out my silly mistakes and gaping holes, corrected my spelling and grammar and basically gave me little comments that assured me I'd be getting the correct reactions from my readers.

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Chapter 1

Lois was staring across the road at the imposing building when she first heard it. A strange, deep, whirring kind of sound.

She'd been reading a paperback while basking in the warm summer sun, taking sips from her coffee, but her mind kept returning to the application form in her bag.

Summer internship at The Daily Planet.

The paperback was now closed and sitting on the table, discarded. Lois wanted to walk across the road, to stride into that building, and thrust the completed form into Perry White's hand, but nerves held her back. Plus, she actually wanted to return home for the summer, make sure that Lucy was all right, try to sober up her mom, and there was little chance she could fit an internship around that, with the time and distance. Never mind the fact that the editor of the campus newspaper wouldn't give her a reference if his life depended on it due to their falling out about the teacher/student sexual harassment story she'd submitted.

So ... little chance of her getting the position. And much too hard work if she did.

It was just after a particularly deep, wistful sigh that Lois heard the whirring sound. She raised her head to look for a helicopter, but nothing passed overhead. Not that anything should, as she was sitting in quite a dense district of skyscrapers. Any helicopter overhead would be too high for her to hear anyway.

She glanced around as the sound grew louder. People were passing by on the sidewalk. Another bistro customer was sitting at the far end of the sidewalk seating area, reading the Daily Planet. Nobody seemed to notice. Or they were purposefully ignoring the sound and getting on with their own insular lives. She shifted around in her seat to try and determine the source of the sound. Behind, and to her left, was an alley. Now, not only could she hear the odd noise, but she could see odd lights. She stood and pushed away her chair, peering over the barrier that

indicated the edge of the bistro seating area.

The sound and light show faded and Lois looked warily down the alley, but then turned to sit back down. The sound of a struggle stopped her.

She rushed around the barrier and stood at the entrance to the dark alley. People were still passing by, but no-one else seemed at all interested.

The sounds of a struggle became more pronounced. She waived over what to do. She'd only just started self-defence classes. They were free on campus, and she really enjoyed them, but they were not very easy. Should she call for help, or should she brave the darkness?

A shout of exclamation and a deep 'oomph' spurred her into action. As she ventured into the dark she called out. "Anyone there? What's going on?"

"Well, now. Isn't this amusing," came a sarcastic sounding, masculine voice. "Of all the people to run into ... it's little, naïve, impressionable—"

Another 'oomph' sound came down the alley and the man groaned. Lois heard shuffling and she called out again. "Is everything okay?"

"Of course." A mature lady stepped out of the dark and smiled. Lois frowned. Something about her seemed familiar. Her silver hair was cropped into a bouncy pixie style. She wore a soft-pink, tailored blouse and slender, black, pencil skirt with a split all the way up to her thigh. Although, on closer inspection, it seemed that most of the split was not natural. Dangling from one hand was a pair of black high heels.

"What happened? And I heard a man's voice."

"Everything is fine, Lois. Don't worry. I've dealt with him."

"Dealt with him! What do you mean? I'd better call the police."

"He's tied up in the sled and can't do any more harm. No need to call the police."

Lois noticed the older woman's nervousness when the police had been mentioned. That very thing convinced her that the police were, in fact, necessary. "I heard a struggle, I think there is a need," Lois replied.

"Please, believe me. It wouldn't help. I'll be gone by the time they arrive, and then you'll be in trouble with the police and I don't want that. Please, Lois."

Lois folded her arms and glared. "How do you know my name?"

"If I explain that, will you drop this ridiculous idea about calling the police?"

Lois nodded.

The older lady strolled past Lois and straight into the light of day. "Ahh, how lovely. The perfect place to have a coffee while I explain everything to you." She walked around the barrier and placed herself at Lois' table. Her book, coat and handbag were still there. Either this stranger was ... rude, or odd, or strange ... or she knew this was Lois' table.

Lois headed back to her table, never taking her eyes off the older lady, who was currently reaching down to slip her shoes back on. Now that she was in the light Lois could see the fine, gentle wrinkles covering the other woman's face; smile and laughter lines spreading from her eyes and mouth. Coupled with the silver hair she might have placed the woman's age in her sixties, but the tailored outfit, the slim, shapely body, and the confident voice confused her. Possibly her silver hair was a choice, and not due to age.

"So, Lois," she began, clasping her hands together and leaning on the table. "I'm guessing you have a lot of questions. But let's begin with how I know your name."

"That would be a good place to start." Lois tried to interject as much sarcasm as she could.

"Well, yes." The woman smiled and leaned back in her chair.

“I know your name because ...” She took a dramatic pause and Lois nearly rolled her eyes. Theatre had never been her thing. Dramatics were ... well, dramatic. Pointless. “because it’s *my* name.”

“Pardon?” Lois coughed, having just reached for her coffee and taken a gulp, the liquid now spluttering out.

“My name is Lois Lane. Well, actually it’s Lois Joanne Lane-Kent, but that’s beside the point.”

“But ...” Lois was frozen in place, the coffee cup still half way from her mouth back to the table.

The older woman picked up the paperback which Lois had discarded earlier and shoved it into the handbag which was currently on the floor at her feet, then she leaned back onto the table.

“I know what you are thinking. Lois and Lane are both common names, it’s just one of those things. Even Joanne is common too. But no, this is not an example of two random strangers having the same name. If it were—” she laughed “—then that still wouldn’t explain how I *knew* that we had the same name.” She paused and frowned, then started to babble. “Unless you suspect me of being some kind of crazed stalker, which I’m not, I can assure you. I know all about stalkers and I don’t have any of the psychological markers ... oh!” She trailed off when she realised that Lois was looking rather worried. “Sorry. Ran away with myself a bit there. Yes, you are still doing that when you get to my age.”

“Your age?” Lois parroted. She finally found the presence of mind to move and placed the coffee cup down.

“You don’t want to know, Lois. Suffice it to say, you are going to have a long, prosperous, wonderful life.” The smile on the older woman’s face was warming.

“When ... when I first saw you I thought you looked familiar.” Lois spoke slowly and quietly. “Do I? Are you a family member?”

“Kind of,” came the non-committal reply. “Lois, don’t beat around the bush. You have natural reporter’s instincts. Trust your gut. You already know who I am.”

“Who?” Lois gulped as she asked.

“I’m you.”

Chapter 2

“You’re me? That’s impossible. Don’t be ridiculous.” Lois reached down for the handbag which the crazy woman had kindly stuffed her book into. She stood and yanked the bag over her shoulder.

“Lois, I’m from the future, your future,” the silver-haired woman said quickly glancing around at the empty tables, “and if you give me chance, I’ll prove it to you.”

Lois dropped back into her chair. “Really?” she said sarcastically. “So, what shall I call you then?” She glared at the woman.

“Well, I’m not too keen on the idea of ‘Old Lois’ and Lois would get confusing. But I don’t really like Joanne either.”

“I know what you mean,” Lois muttered and the other woman smiled in triumph. Lois glared at her again. “There’s no way you’ll convince me if *that* is your proof.”

“Just one of many, Lois. Just one of many. Anyway, back to my name. How about ... Lane?” Lane tilted her head to the side, in question.

“I guess that will do.” Lois reduced her glare and allowed herself to settle into the chair, rather than perch stiffly. “So, what proof can you offer?”

“Well, I could talk about your parents. Your father’s affairs, your mother’s drinking. Or maybe Lucy’s terrible choice in boyfriends.”

“Lucy hasn’t got any boyfriends,” Lois challenged.

“Not yet. She’s only ...” Lane paused. “How old are you at

the moment?”

Lois crossed her arms and smirked. “Why do I have to answer that when you wouldn’t?”

“Touché,” Lane nodded and smiled. “I’m ninety-seven.”

Lois barked out an unbelieving laugh. “You have got to be kidding. With your silver hair I could believe that, but the rest of your body ... no way. You move too gracefully, you speak too clearly. There’s no arthritis in your fingers, no loss of hearing, and your wrinkles ... while clearly you have some, and are past middle age ...”

“Lois. It’s true. I know it seems unbelievable, but it all comes down to the man you marry.”

“Marry? Well, now you really have me convinced. Lady, you are really barking up the wrong tree here. Your ‘proof’ is so way off. I’m never getting married. And if you really were a future me, then you’d know that.”

“Yes. I know that’s how you feel *now*. But that will change. When you meet him, he’ll change everything. He’ll change your life, your work, your heart. And he’ll change the whole world.”

Lois scoffed.

“But, back to my question. How old are you now? I’ve answered. Whether you believe my answer or not, I have answered.”

“Nineteen,” Lois grudgingly muttered.

“Then Lucy most definitely does have a boyfriend. You and mom might not know about it, but she’s seeing Rob.”

“Rob?”

“Mr. and Mrs. Challenger’s son. They own the general store at the corner of the neighbourhood, back at home.”

Lois narrowed her eyes. Lane was really messing up all her ‘proof’.

“That store is owned by Mr. Green.”

“Not anymore. You’ve been at college ... what ... about eight months?” Lane raised her eyebrows. “Mr. Green sold it.”

“A likely story. None of this has proved to me, in any way, that you are a future me. A ninety-seven year old future me.”

“Of course not, because you keep butting in, or scoffing, or challenging what I say, and don’t give me the opportunity to present my proof. Nothing I’ve said so far was supposed to convince you. It was just in response to your queries. Now, if you’ll just shut up and listen.” She took a deep breath and looked up. “You once stole from that general store.”

Lois gasped in shock.

“Mom was passed out drunk, you couldn’t find her purse. Dad had been away for days, and the house needed bread, milk, toothpaste and toilet paper among other things.”

“How do you know that? I never told anyone. Lucy thinks I found five dollars in mom’s jacket pocket.”

“When you really managed to get hold of a couple of dollars a few days later you went back—”

“And explained it all to Mr. Green,” Lois finished. She recalled the day vividly. The shame at having to admit what she’d done. The embarrassment when he’d immediately known what was wrong at home. “He ... he was very understanding. And I got an emergency tab that I could use in the future in similar circumstances.”

Lane nodded. Her smile was both wistful and loving. “I’m you.”

“No! It’s not possible,” Lois whispered.

“It is. In that alleyway is a time machine. The man’s voice you heard ...”

“Your husband?” Lois glanced down at Lane’s clasped hands and the rings on her finger.

“God no!” Lane’s eyes widened in horror. “Tempus is ... well, he’s made it his life’s work to destroy my marriage, my life, my happiness ... my future.”

“Tempus? What kind of name is that?” Lois laughed.

“A future name.”

“Oh, just like you are from the future. Is he too?” Sarcasm returned.

“Yes, but from further in the future than me.”

“Further!” Lois laughed. This situation was getting more and more surreal. Although, she couldn’t deny that Lane had known about the corner store. But still, there was no way it could be real. No way at all. In fact, possibly she knew Mr. Green ... yeah. That would explain her knowing about the shoplifting, and also knowing that the shop had been sold ... a fact she could easily confirm by phoning her sister.

“Anyway. Tempus has attempted to interfere with my life on numerous occasions. This was the latest attempt. I don’t know what his plan was. Why he brought me here, to meet a nineteen year old version of myself, is beyond me. But, as it is, I overpowered him just as we materialised here. Whatever his plan was ... it’s now old news.”

“You ... a ninety-seven year old, overpowered a rather young sounding man!” Lois found herself laughing in disbelief again. “Unless he’s also benefiting from whatever youthful rejuvenation treatment your husband invented.”

Lane laughed, delighted. “That’s not how my husband has contributed to my good health. ‘Youthful rejuvenation treatments’ ... That would be daddy’s invention.”

“Daddy?”

“Oh, he’s going to try his hand at miracle cures and potions and such. Not that a single bottle ever did what he claimed it would.”

“So ...” Lois lifted her hand and waved it up and down, clearly questioning the source of Lane’s health.

“Clark ...” she smiled, gently and looked down at the rings on her fourth finger. “He’s different. He’s a year older than me, but still looks thirty. And being with him, living close to him ... his life force seems to have kept me ... like this.” Lane looked up and shrugged.

“Clark?” Lois asked. She seemed to be asking a lot of single word questions, and repeating what Lane said, but this seemed to be the most important question of them all. She held her breath and waited for the answer.

Chapter 3

“Clark. How to explain Clark?” Lane smiled, shyly, looking down into her lap. Another thing proving that this couldn’t possibly be a future version of her. “He’s ... well, he’s just everything.” She looked up and met Lois’ eyes. Lois was stunned by the love shining there.

She gulped. For a moment she was overcome with jealousy. This woman, whoever she was, had clearly found her soul mate. Lois didn’t believe in true love, or even in plain love, never mind marriage. Her parents were the living proof. Yet this woman was claiming that Lois would marry, and that man would be ... well, it seemed like he was Mr. Perfect. Lane loved this ... Clark ... with every fibre of her being. Lois could see this in her eyes. Plus he apparently looked thirty when he was really ninety-eight.

“You love him very much?” It was both a statement and a question.

“Yes.” Lane nodded and a tear rolled down her cheek. “He’s my everything.”

“Wow, I guess you consider yourself very lucky then.”

“I thank God every day for sending Clark to me.” Lane’s eyes bored into hers. Lois shivered and got the feeling that Lane meant that sentence almost literally.

“How ... how can he look only thirty?” This was just another proof that Lane was delusional. Nice ... odd ... but delusional.

“Clark is ... different from other men. He’s kind, generous, trustworthy, sweet ...” Lane shook her head as she spoke. “But he’s also *physically* different. He’s ... super.”

“Super? What the heck does that mean?”

“You’ll find out. In about—”

A large clatter had Lois and Lane turning to look into the bistro. A small waitress was standing with an empty tray dangling from one hand and the other held against her forehead in embarrassment. Plates, cups and glasses were strewn all over the floor at her feet. Some customers were even clapping in jest.

Lois turned back to Lane. For some reason she was desperate to know how Lane’s sentence was going to end.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t really say any more. In fact I should really have avoided speaking to you altogether so that the time-line isn’t disrupted. But I’ve learned, over the years and multiple time travel adventures that time isn’t so easy to change. Tempus hasn’t yet learned that, even though he’s made dozens of attempts, and been thwarted every time.”

Lois leaned forward and rested her chin on her hand. While this woman was clearly reality challenged, she was also fascinating.

“Even so, I don’t think I should say much more. And I don’t want to leave Tempus alone for much longer. He’s particularly wily and devious and somehow always manages to escape from whatever prison he’s put in.”

“You don’t think you should say much more?” Lois exclaimed. “You’ve hardly said anything, and what you have said is pretty ridiculous and unbelievable. I want to know what you mean about ‘super’. I want to know how many years till I meet this perfect man. I want to know why you are doing this?” Lois took in some deep breaths and tried to calm herself. “And where is this Clark, then? If he’s so perfect then how come you got yourself kidnapped? And why would this Tempest—”

“Tempus,” interjected Lane.

“—want to destroy your life? What kind of delusional person would want to ruin apparent perfection?”

Lane laughed. “I’m sorry, Lois. I’ve really confused you, haven’t I?” She shook her head. “Jumping in without checking the water level again. I didn’t think at all, just strode over here, popped myself down at your table and ...” She sighed. “You should just forget this ever happened, Lois. Finish your coffee.” She lifted her hand and indicated in the direction of the nearly empty cup. “I’ll be off now.” Lois watched as Lane stood and moved away from the table. “See you in seventy years ... or so,” she laughed and then headed for the alley.

Lois stared at the mouthful of coffee still in her cup.

Lane was clearly the delusional one. Tempus ... from the future ... wanted to ruin her perfect life. Life with a ‘super’ man. A man who looked a third his age. It was a fantasy. A dream. A delusion.

Thankfully Lane hadn’t seemed schizophrenic or psychotic, so her delusions weren’t hurting anyone.

Except the man in the alley! Lois swivelled in her chair suddenly. She’d heard a man call out, but Lane had been the one to exit the alleyway. And she claimed to have ‘dealt with him’. That was a metaphor for ... do away with, bump off, get rid of ... kill.

Maybe Lane *was* dangerous.

Lois stood on shaky feet. There could be a dead man in the alley. And she’d let the killer get away. And Lane had been so clever that she’d given Lois reams of dis-information so that the police would just go around in circles in their investigation.

And Lois had played straight into her plan.

On the other hand ...

If Lane was telling the truth then ... there was a time machine in that alley.

Either way, she needed to investigate the alley.

She turned back to the table, lifted her cup, downed the final mouthful, then leapt over the barrier rather than walk around it.

A low, whirring sound began and Lois knew she was about to

miss her opportunity. She ran into the alley and saw a large sled, reminiscent of H. G. Wells The Time Machine, beginning to shimmer. Sitting in one seat was Lane, next to her, slumped over and tied up, was a middle aged, dark haired man. She sprinted into the darkness of the alley, which was rapidly brightening with the light show coming from the sled. Lane looked up and caught Lois' gaze. Lane began to shake her head and mouth 'no', but Lois continued to sprint. She reached out with her arm and felt it connect with something.

A moment later she found herself on the dark alley floor. She pushed herself up and glanced around. There was no sign of the time machine, or the older Lois. She blinked and frowned, looking round and round. When she began to feel dizzy she halted her spiralling and raised her hands to her forehead. The dizziness increased and a pain began at the back of her head then spread over to her eyes. She collapsed to the ground and cried out, a thousand images burning into her mind, before losing consciousness.

Chapter 4

She came to, slowly. Gradually becoming aware of her surroundings, she also gradually remembered the circumstances which had led to her being on the floor of a dark alley. She stumbled to the edge of the alley, light streaming in. As she leaned on the wall at the corner of the building she panicked, momentarily, that she might now be lost in time. Who knew what year she was in, and Lane was nowhere to be seen, along with the means for a return trip. Panic began to well up, until she spied the table just on the other side of the bistro barrier. Her coat, handbag and empty coffee cup were still there!

Lois reasoned that she could have only been unconscious for a minute at the most. Her coat and handbag would have been snatched by an opportunistic thief otherwise. She stumbled around to her table and slipped into the chair. Resting her head on her hands, and closing her eyes, she began to breathe deeply and evenly.

While she calmed her heart, pictures began to play across her eyelids. Pictures of a man in bad ties, an old couple with loving smiles, a freckle faced young man, an apartment with steps into the living room, a house with a large fish tank ...

She rubbed at her eyes with the heels of her palms, but the images kept coming. She screwed up her eyes and took deep breaths, hoping to ride out ... whatever was happening.

If she'd actually travelled in time then she would suspect this to be some kind of side effect, but she hadn't. Or maybe she had? What if she'd travelled ... one minute into the future?

Lois groaned. "And Lane said she'd done this many times. If she's really me, then I sure hope I get used to this," she muttered to herself.

Movement at her side caught her attention. She looked up to see the waitress taking away her empty coffee cup. "Excuse me," Lois asked. "Do you have the time?"

The tired looking woman paused, put the cup back down and then looked at her wrist. "Five-twenty," she replied, then picked up the cup once more and wandered off. Lois checked her own wrist. Her watch confirmed the same time. There had been no time travel.

So what was this ... thing ... she was experiencing?

Lois pressed her fingertips to her forehead and closed her eyes once more. She'd reached for the time machine, for Lane. She made contact with something. What? Squeezing her eyes tighter again, trying to wish away the pictures of a man with soft, loving chocolate-brown eyes, she focussed on what had happened in the alley.

Lane had been shaking her head, her mouth open in denial of the circumstances, of Lois' actions. Lois reached out ...

... and touched Lane, just as the sled, Lane and Tempus

disappeared.

In that moment Lois knew. What she was seeing was Lane's memories.

And Lane ... really was a ninety-seven year old Lois.

And that meant that everything Lane had said was true.

Lois put her hand to her mouth and covered her shock.

Lane had said that Lois would marry. Someone called Clark. Someone perfect.

Lois, unexpectedly, shivered in pleasure at the thought. Clark Kent. Her husband.

She dropped her hand and smiled.

Yes. Somehow, she knew. Clark Kent was her husband, or would be. She could even picture him in her mind. Tall, broad shouldered, dark, thick, beautiful hair ... and strong arms, the strongest arms in the world. Lois could even feel those arms around her. Her heart skipped a beat.

Safe. In Clark's arms she was safe.

Loved. In his eyes she was loved. She was worth loving.

Wanted. In his heart she was wanted ... desired ... needed.

Her heart rate soared and she felt heat pool in her stomach. Her breath caught as she recalled the feeling of Clark's lips on hers, his hands on her body, his chest clasped close to hers, their feet tangled in soft cotton sheets.

Lois felt a tear trickle down her cheek at the love she felt coming from him, the love she felt *for* him.

She looked up to the sky and took a deep breath. Gazing at the darkening blue she was suddenly assailed by the feeling of soaring up above the skyline. It seemed so real, so amazing.

Lane had said that Clark was different, was 'super'.

Well, everything she'd experienced, so far, through these visions, confirmed that.

She had so many questions. But Lane was gone.

Still the only thing she really wanted to know, she so very nearly found out ... and Lane had been interrupted.

When?

How many years?

How long till Clark would come into her life?

She looked into the stolen memories, but could see nothing. All the memories seemed to revolve around emotions and feelings, not factual events.

Lois looked up into the early evening sky. The sun was behind the tall Metropolis buildings and one building stood out in stark relief. The revolving globe called to her.

One thing she did know. Somehow.

She met ... would meet ... him there. The Daily Planet.

Lois smiled. The Planet was a dream, a vision, a goal she had nurtured for so long. Well now she had even more reason to work there. And the sooner, the better. She rifled in her bag and pulled out the internship application form. Full of purpose and inner strength she stood, hitched her bag over one shoulder, folded her coat over her forearm and headed across the street for the Daily Planet lobby.

THE END (or is it?)