

**Lisa  
Logan**

# *Visions*



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**Lisa Logan**

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## *Dedication Page*

To Mike and Bri, who ever inspire and support.

## *Aknowledgements*

Special thanks to Leila Myers and Carole Burns, for indulging me with vast stores of knowledge on the local lore and horticulture used in this book.

# Prologue

**T**he vision struck Trenton Dane as he stooped over a drinking fountain to relieve the parching effects of the August Southern California sun. For that was what he considered an encounter with a beautiful woman. Perhaps it was overly poetic, he thought, but as an artist he was required to stop and revel in the study of beauty wherever and whenever it appeared.

His acting career had afforded him vast opportunity in this regard, surrounding him with Hollywood's most stunning examples of beauty. His most recent studies were conducted in the arms of model-turned-actress Giselle Roberts. Though he could not honestly say the vision now in his sights possessed the svelte, star-quality perfection of Tinsel Town's bevy, the jolt her approach caused him was enough to send a gurgling stream of water straight up his nose. And that, he reasoned, had to mean something.

A whiff of breeze fanned droplets of water on his face, providing a moment of cool relief. The sandstone building in front of him radiated intense heat, wilting the numerous visitors lined up outside. Widely spaced overhead beams offered scant protection.

*If this place insists on baking people in an outdoor oven, he*

thought, *they should at least put in a misting system.*

His attention returned to the attractive woman as he dried the dark sunglasses worn to conceal his identity. Rubbing the lenses absently on his jeans, he catalogued likely reasons for his reaction. She was not beautiful in the classic Hollywood sense, but a head-turner nonetheless. She was maybe chin height to his six feet, the virtual waterfall of hair cascading to her waist similar to the color of the custom paint job on his Porsche. Caramel Apple, they'd called it. A lacy knit top, and snug denims with tantalizing lace inserts exposing patches of newly tanned skin revealed a rounded, voluptuous array of curves quite unlike the near-anorexic condition Giselle maintained to beg the camera's favor. Perhaps most striking, however, was the way this woman carried herself with an ethereal quality he admitted was only in part due to being backlit and glowing from the late afternoon sun. Her almost-angular face wore an expression of ease with the world around her, and faceted emerald eyes seemed privy to some secret that prickled the edges of his curiosity.

The vision floated by without noticing him. He was returning his sunglasses to their proper perch when his cell phone chirped.

"Babe?" The velvety, well-rehearsed voice Giselle Roberts used on everyone, including Trenton, greeted him. "Glad I caught you, hon. I have the most wonderful news! I got the picture!"

He shifted the phone to his other ear as he addressed water spray that had found the front of his silk Armani shirt. He didn't reply, knowing Giselle couldn't be bothered with such frivolities. He imagined her sitting in the cherry red Corvette, checking the tousled Jennifer Aniston hairdo she favored of late in the flip down mirror.

"Samuel *loved* my audition. Said I was born to play Johanna. I knew that as soon as I saw the script, but I'm thrilled he recognized it. So many directors can't see past their long noses to the true talent sitting in front of them. Don't know why Lorraine Corel was ever considered, she was all wrong. Probably why she dropped out at the last minute. Anyway, I'm on a plane to Paris in two days and I've scads to do. I can't make your opening tomorrow night. I hope you aren't too disappointed?"

Typical. The opening of his biggest picture and his girlfriend

would miss it. It was the nature of the business, he knew. He felt a twinge of surprised guilt at the realization that not only was he not disappointed, he in fact felt rather relieved.

Since the pair had become a Hollywood “item” it grew more and more apparent that Giselle’s striking beauty truly ended with her looks. The self-centered starlet was obsessed with manicuring, polishing, and scrubbing the outer hull she used as the tool of her trade. Eight months of dating her had been, well, *educational*. While he didn’t pretend theirs was an ideal relationship, whose was these days? Especially around Hollywood. At least life with Giselle never circled the doldrums.

The guilt twinge subsided as she continued on. “Listen, if you’ll feel naked without some window dressing on your arm tomorrow you can call up my friend Samantha. Oh, I just pulled up at the spa; I have to have Juliette do a seaweed wrap before I go. I’ll call you from the airport before I board. Any word on the new picture before I run inside?”

That was the cue to sum up his life in one minute or less. “Wardrobe fitting next month, shooting starts in January. I’m out in Buena Park doing a little character research right now.”

“That’s great. I know you’ll do fine in the role. Talk to you before I leave. Kisses!”

The call clicked off and he strode toward the growing line in front of the Knights of the Round Table Dinner Theater. The female vision stood at the end of the line, now herding inside with the urgency of a cattle drive before a tornado. A group of people started past him, spawning an inexplicable urge to run...and claim the spot in line behind her.

His determination to catch up with the line spurred him into a near run by the time he ducked inside. *Damn, it was dark inside!* He was halfway to snatching off his sunglasses when he bumped into someone, hard.

“Sorry, I—” The automatic-pilot apology stopped short as a tingling jolt coursed down his spine. The darkness melted away... into a series of images flashing before him.

He saw the womanly vision from earlier, bent over a sewing machine. Somewhere deep inside himself he heard a whisper. *Success.*

Another image flashed into place over the first. It was the same woman, laughing and clapping with a child. *He sounds just like Elvis, Mommy!*

The images receded as fast as they came, leaving one final, indelible echo behind...a woman, crying out Trenton's name. In passion.

As he came back to the darkened room, he realized with some discomfiture that he was pressed against his unintentional victim, hands grasping her shoulders. What happened? Had he hit his head somehow?

The sound of his own voice seemed distant. "What the hell was *that*?"

"I believe *that* was you plowing into me," the caramel-haired woman replied over her shoulder.

"No, not that—I meant...never mind. Sorry about that. Really." Despite the embarrassing proximity, he was surprised to note neither of them made any move to extricate themselves. He was keenly aware of the woman pressed against him; the shock of contact still coursing through him was almost as jolting as the vision itself.

"No problem," she said. The voice was satin and cautious, matching that of the echo still tingling along the outer edges of his mind. "It's so dark in here I almost did the same thing myself a minute ago." Her voice was calm, but he could hear the note of trepidation floating just beneath.

*Move*, he ordered himself. *Before she thinks you're a creep and yells for security.*

As if in answer to the silent command, the line started forward again. She fell into step, and they separated. Then, almost in afterthought, she added, "Oh, and that knight you're looking for? You won't find him here."

The casual statement—delivered in a matter-of-fact tone one would attach to a comment on the weather—seemed to startle her as much as it did him. She snapped her peach-glossed lips together and spun around, picking up her pace in line.

He rushed to her side, grabbing her arm. "What did you say?"

She yanked away, clearly rattled. "Nothing! Forget it."

The line again halted, leaving her no place to go. He waited her out with an uncomfortable stare.

“I’m sorry,” she said at last, hugging her purse tight enough to squash appreciable cleavage. “I know it’s crazy, but sometimes I get weird ideas about things. I just kind of blurted this one out. Feel free to ignore me.”

He pushed several locks of hair off his forehead. “Not a chance. Tell me about this knight?”

She shook her head. “It doesn’t make sense, anyway. I don’t even know you, so I shouldn’t have seen anything.” She looked flustered, like a nervous filly ready to bolt.

*She saw something, too?* He was intrigued. “You *saw* the knight? Like a vision or something?”

The enchantress sighed, and as the line pushed forward yet again he feared he wouldn’t get an answer. Instead, she looked at him from under a sweeping lock of hair and explained. “Sometimes when people touch me I see...flashes of things. Just now I saw a knight and felt you are looking for him, but he isn’t here. You’ll find him inside yourself. When you do, it will bring you great success.” She stopped for a moment, eyeing him as if to gauge his reaction. “I know, pretty crazy.”

The conversation took them to the front of the line. First the woman, then Trenton stuck tickets at a young man dressed as a knave, who took them and ushered the pair through a curtained doorway with a wave of his feathered cap. Inside the amphitheater they were herded past rows of stadium seats, each fronted by a long wooden table. Everything overlooked an oval arena with a dirt floor and tall, colorful banners. Large wrought iron chandeliers provided dim, but serviceable light.

A woman in lusty medieval attire waved them over to a seat.

Trenton stayed close behind and slipped into a seat beside the woman. “So you can see the future...like a gypsy?”

She stiffened, but remained silent until a waitress donning a wench costume finished serving pewter mugs of iced tea. “Not like that. No crystal ball, and I can’t make it happen. I only see things I will know myself later, like my memory fast forwards. But it only happens with people I know well, and rarely at that. So this shouldn’t have happened. I’ve never met you.”

The volume of conversation and clatter increased as the auditorium filled and waitresses began the efficient process of serving a multiple-course meal of crusty bread, steaming bowls of spicy beef soup, and huge legs of turkey.

“Maybe not officially,” he conceded, “but you might know who I am.”

She was in the midst of assuring him otherwise when he removed his expensive Oakley sunglasses. He noticed a pulse pounding for attention along her delicate throat as she took in the features hailed just last week by *Star Facts* magazine as his “chiseled jaw, smoldering brown eyes, and thick mane of jet black.”

Though not a mega star yet, it was more than enough. Her eyes flew open in recognition. “Oh! Mr. Dane? I didn’t realize.”

*Is she blushing?* He had bet himself this beauty couldn’t get any more nervous than she already was, but as he watched softly sculpted features zoom through an admirable range of emotions, he knew he’d lost that bet. He hadn’t intended on letting himself be recognized here, but the temptation of seeing what effect he could have on her got the better of him. The experiment had been worth it; he was quite certain the results were far more entertaining than the show he was about to see.

Yes, he was enjoying this far too much.

“So,” he said, “since you *do* seem to know me, that would account for this, right?”

“I . . . well no, actually. “I don’t *know* you, just of you. I have to know the person fairly well.” She shifted in her seat as far away from him as she could get, poking a finger through one of the tantalizing panels of lace on her jeans to scratch her calf.

Though her proximity bordered on intoxicating, warning klaxons sounded in the back of his mind. She’d been skittish *before* she knew who he was; he didn’t want his celebrity status sending her into a fit of schoolgirl hysterics. Still, he wanted answers. “But you *did* see something,” he said.

She shrugged and gave him a helpless look. “I can’t explain it. It was probably nothing.”

He stared into those amazing green eyes. “I wouldn’t call my career *nothing*, though some of my critics might argue the point.

Maybe you should come to the movie premiere, see for yourself if this premonition turns out to be real.”

She held his gaze for a long moment and he marveled at the sensation. Her eyes reached deep into him, as if searching his very soul. His heart skipped one—no, two—beats before she broke contact, suddenly preoccupied with her mashed potatoes.

The whole thing was ludicrous, yet it had to be true. How else could she know he was here to “find” a knight? She seemed confused by the thought, but he knew what it meant. After all, he’d come to find inspiration for his next character—a knight. It could be a hoax, but she seemed genuine about not having recognized him. More importantly, his casting in *Seven Days and a Knight* had not been announced yet. She couldn’t have known.

Besides, there was the little matter of the images *he’d* seen; she couldn’t have faked that. Her gift must extend both ways. Did that mean that he would have other visions when he touched her?

The thought intrigued him.

“What about the people you touch?” he said. “What do *they* see?”

The last half of his question was drowned out by a loud fanfare trumpeting through the theater. The house lights dimmed as dramatic spotlights shone on the arena, and a clop of galloping hooves heralded the entrance of gleaming knights on horseback. The show was on.

Trenton did his best to follow the action and study the knights’ movements. He was particularly interested in how they managed to ride—and fight—in all that heavy armor. The woman’s vision was correct in that he didn’t find particular inspiration, but he couldn’t be sure whether that was because he hadn’t tried as hard after hearing it, or if somewhere between Caesar salad and seven-layer cake he’d become more interested in his ringside companion. She was an enticing distraction, not only for her looks and candor, but also because of the mysterious connection they’d made. Her jasmine scent wafted to him; her laughter stood out from the crowd’s. In short, her presence made it all but impossible to concentrate. In the end, their team’s Red Knight won the battle, and the hand of the fair maiden princess, drawing raucous cheers

from Trenton as well as the crowd.

She said the visions were rare, but the thought of eliciting more gnawed at him. He wanted to brush against her, touch her, just to see. She'd been so skittish that he'd resisted, keeping a polite distance during the show.

Now, however, as crowds poured into the aisles toward the exits, the urgency to do it or lose the chance won out. Rising from his seat first, he extended his hand to help her up. The touch of her hand stole away his breath, replacing it with a wave of near-simultaneous imagery.

*Her voluptuous Botticelli form lay naked beneath him, lustrous hair spilling over a pillow. The silken echo of her crying his name returned, tightening his stomach in a strong male response. He glimpsed a crescent-shaped birthmark on the outer curve of a breast as he lowered his head, lips sampling the hollow of her throat. He felt an urgent calm, if such a thing existed. A rightness.*

Then her hand dropped his and it was over.

He let out the breath he'd unconsciously been holding and caught her staring at him with open curiosity. He'd been engulfed by an emotional whirlpool, but she appeared quite untouched. Clearly, it had not been a shared moment. The vision had been his own.

She gathered her purse and started up the aisle.

In his hurry to catch her before she joined the mass exodus, he forgot about his disguise. "So," his voice lagged a mere step behind her, "you see things about a person's future. What does the other person see? Is that the future, too?"

She turned her head and frowned, but kept moving. "Other person? They don't see anything."

He snorted. "I did."

"Not possible." She picked her way through the crowd faster as if intent on a quick getaway. One he was equally intent on stopping.

"Better read that crystal ball again, because it happened."

She turned back to him, bright emerald eyes flashing. "That's only happened when I—if we'd been..."

"If we'd been *what*?"

“Nothing.”

Her face flushed such a profound shade of pink that no fortune-telling abilities were necessary for him to intuit that “if we’d been” carried a rating higher than PG.

An opening appeared in the throngs of people, and she darted toward the exit. He stopped chasing, opting for a different approach. As the gap between them grew he called, “Well, best of luck with the sewing thing, then.”

This piece of news brought her up short. They remained that way, her back still to him, for a long moment. When she swivelled around to face him, he knew he’d won.

That is, until a curious smile twitched at the corner of her mouth.

“Trenton Dane? The movie star! Can I have your autograph?”

“What?”

His momentary confusion was long enough. Several heads that were pointed toward the way out whipped around in his direction. His sunglasses! They were still tucked away inside his shirt pocket.

A group of primarily female fans shifted like a flock of birds changing direction mid-flight, and within seconds he was surrounded in a hopeless frenzy. He’d been sold out.

Over the heads of the crowd his eyes met a pair of familiar green, now brightened by a victorious twinkle. He couldn’t help but laugh at her self-satisfied expression, and offered a shrug of defeat as she turned away. *No matter*, he thought toward her retreating back, *I can catch up with her later. I’ll just look her up and—*

Her name! He’d never gotten it. And she was almost to the exit.

“The opening! Come,” was all he managed to shout before succumbing to crowd duty.

She threw him a brief look that told him there was about as much chance of *that* as there was for a knight on horseback to levitate. Then she was gone.



# Chapter One

Trenton glanced at the LCD time display on his dashboard and pressed harder on the accelerator. The limo was due at his house soon. With the premiere of *Seven Days and a Knight* two hours away, there had been plenty of things on the day's to-do list. He started with a pre-dawn call for an interview on *The Morning Show* to promote the film, and rushed from there to a meeting with his agent to go over the contract for his next picture.

Next came a visit to Raul, the only stylist in town Trenton trusted not to go overboard on his hair. The last time he'd used someone else, Raul had been on vacation. A girl with an over-processed black bob and eyebrow piercings had managed to make him look like two-thirds of a three-ring circus, which to this day raised suspicions that it was his "do" rather than a lack of talent or chutzpah, that had cost him a role in a major Art Fielder film. Trenton had since learned to be wary of Hollywood stylists, many of whom were all too eager to turn people's heads into a frenzied pieces of art. Raul now operated on strict orders never to vacation without prior notification, and today he was on hand to tame Trenton's long waves into his signature look of polished

rebellion.

Satisfied, Trenton headed off to the Beverly Center for lunch at Steven Spielberg's Dive with a friend in town for the week. After Cobb salads and promises to meet up at the after party, he slipped the parking valet a twenty and sped off for a number of short-hop errands, including one at the dry cleaner's to pick up the crisp white linen suit he'd decided on for the premiere. By the time he made the turnoff from Sunset Boulevard, stripes of deepening afternoon shadow from palm trees snaked over the hood of his Porsche. He was running a full hour behind.

The phone and doorbell kept his housekeeper, Ada, busy throughout his process of shaving and applying the skin care products Raul made him swear on his mother's grave to use. Never mind that his mother was alive, well, and living in a posh condo in Westwood. He abandoned the regimen, however, when the contents of a forty-dollar bottle labeled "skin refining toner" stung his freshly shorn skin like cheap aftershave.

Face still burning from the concoction, he stalked out of the bathroom and slipped on the silk Armani shirt in midnight blue that had been tossed—sleeves flung upwards as if a bank robbery was in progress—on his bed. He was deciding between several narrow silk ties draped over his arm when Ada knocked on the door to the master suite.

"Sorry to bother you, sir, but the limo is here. Also, the florist just left. They delivered Ms. Rossi's roses and your boutonniere, but they didn't have your mother's corsage."

He poked his head out of the walk-in closet. "They forgot?"

She shook her head. "They say it wasn't on the order but one can be sent out right away."

He sighed, resisting the urge to run his hand through his still-coiffed hair. "No time. Call and tell them we'll pick it up on the way." He reached out and plucked the boutonniere—a single red rose nested in a cloud of baby's breath—from Ada's outstretched hand. "Oh, and ask the driver to put the roses on the backseat."

*Kylie would love this*, he thought as he discarded all but the white tie into a tangled heap on an upholstered bench. She'd pestered him throughout filming about getting a personal assistant, declaring that she couldn't *live* without hers, although Trenton

noticed she spent as much time complaining about her assistant's incompetence as she did raving about the joys of having one.

A few minutes later, the driver ushered him into the back of the limousine, jacket over his arm and still knotting his tie. He had to admit that his schedule could get a bit unmanageable, but he had Ada. Besides, he felt ridiculous delegating simple tasks to someone else. He'd blanched when Kylie asked her assistant to buy a gift for her own mother's birthday. How impersonal could one get? So, if Mom's corsage couldn't come to him, he would go to Mom's corsage.

Not that this was prom night, where the oversight of a corsage constituted high drama. Still, it was tradition for him to pin his mother's favorite gardenias on her shoulder at each opening, and he didn't care to skip this on the night promising to be the biggest of his career. Her sacrifices through the early years had given him the chance to follow his dream of becoming an actor, and she'd proudly attended the opening of every play and film he'd ever done. Their little tradition was the least he could do to express his gratitude.

Glory Windsor adjusted her rearview mirror for a hasty look before getting out of her red Camry. Piercing green eyes stared back at her, accusing. *What are you doing here?*

She applied a coat of Cinnamon Frost, smacking her lips as she pondered the answer. The truth was she had no good reason at all; it had been sheer, foolish impulse. She'd spent over a year and a half trying to put Trenton Dane out of her mind, not to mention denying the reappearance of visions she'd thought long gone. As it appeared the two goals went hand in hand, this was the last place she should want to be. Yet here she sat, parked in a twenty-dollar-a-day lot a half-mile from Mann's Chinese Theater where the official Hollywood premiere of *Seven Days and a Knight* was about to begin.

Readjusting the mirror, she took a deep breath and reached for the door handle. She'd driven all the way down here, after all. There was no use sitting in the car all night wondering why.

A warm, June evening breeze greeted her as she exited the car, sending ripples through her filmy skirt and blouse. A

unique creation of her own design, the billowy, sheer blouse was patterned in abstract froths of pinks and beige, with drippy long sleeves slit open from shoulder to wrist. Tiny buckles of antique bronze adorned the slit at intervals, clasping the sleeves together yet leaving soft, creamy arms exposed. The boat neck would have been simple and modest, had it not been for a large diamond-shaped cutout which displayed a fair amount of her ample décolletage. The matching skirt skimmed gracefully along generous curves, flaring out at the ankle. More antique buckles fastened slits from mid-thigh to knee.

With the last minute decision to attend, she had foregone the usual habit of drying her hip-length hair straight. She only had time to pile the sides up in a loose topknot, letting the rest tumble down her back in its natural state of unruly curls. Strappy high heels completed the ensemble, a decision she regretted as soon as she set out. She hadn't counted on having to hike so far, but the parking situation during Friday rush hour proved formidable.

Lost in her thoughts, she stepped over pink and gold stars along the Hollywood Walk of Fame, unaware she trampled over the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, Fred Astaire, and Harrison Ford. She really shouldn't be here. For starters, she'd decided when she and Doug divorced that romance could become the domain of other women. He and his moneyed L.A. lifestyle could go to hell. All she cared about was a life to call her own and the happiness of her daughter, Jade. Harsh, perhaps, but catching ones' spouse in the back of a Lexus with an over-styled office temp had a way of grating like cheddar. But that was age-old drama, and concerns over custody and anemic, prenup-induced settlements were long past forgotten. Glory was a single working mother now and had no time to wallow.

Besides, it wasn't like the split had robbed her of a perfect existence. Sure, there had been the large home in desirable West Los Angeles, exotic vacations, and country club memberships. But there had also been manipulation, control, and obsession with success. Infidelity was merely the sprig of celery in Doug's marital Bloody Mary.

She smoothed a hand over the sheer blouse fabric covering her abdomen, as much to steady her nerves as to send a wrinkle

packing. Here was another gain she'd made by trading the L.A. hustle for a sleepy inland suburb...the ability to wear whatever she chose. Or *made*. Since she had been old enough to sew she loved to design clothing, for herself, her dolls, and once even for Skipper, the family cat. Not exactly pet haute couture, but using her own two hands to bring fashion from imagination granted her a rare sense of pride and satisfaction.

A pucker rippled her smooth brow. Her former husband had put a stop to all that during their eight-year saga. Douglas Windsor had been all about appearances, and no wife of *his* was going to make her own clothing. People might think she sewed because he couldn't afford the best, and that would never do. He himself selected her upwardly mobile wardrobe, matching it to equally upscale activities. After the wedding, entertainments like movies, theme parks, and miniature golf were forbidden. They were replaced by theater, tennis, and lunch at the club.

True, such a life didn't quite constitute Chinese water torture. Many women would be happy to tear off a limb—their own or someone else's—for such accouterments. Glory, however, preferred casual simplicity to her ex's exhausting and endless parade of pseudo-grandeur. This was what prompted her, just weeks post-split, to thumb her nose at his "rules" and visit the touristy Buena Park dinner joust, where she'd encountered none other than Trenton Dane.

Trenton. Personal love-life mandates aside, there was also the problem of her visions. Her heart pounded at the thought. Her unwelcome gift vanished long before separating from her husband...aided by avoiding anyone's touch outside her child's. Doug gave her the idea by starting the tradition himself. A bit extreme, perhaps, as she'd never had anything to fear from strangers. It was people she knew that were the problem...in more than one sense. Then Trenton came along, breaking every rule she thought she knew about her own psychic abilities.

Especially unsettling was the claim that he'd had a vision himself. There *had* been a couple instances where her gift had spilled over and washed onto her partner during...well, *during*. How could a stranger elicit something that only occurred in a select few of her most private and *intimate* of moments?

Worst of all, instead of keeping things under Trenton's radar, she'd rattled her trap louder than the chains on Jacob Marley's ghost. Her behavior that day rated about a fifty out of a possible ten on her *Lame-o-Meter*. And considering her current whereabouts, today wasn't far behind.

As she approached her destination, she saw that the turnout of fans was massive. Crowds were retained behind standing metal gates for half a city block past the theater. Those closer in stood behind stylish red velvet ropes. A small number of these held passes to view the film along with the cast, and she was—by luck or fate—one of them. An observant coworker noticed Glory keeping an eye on news about *Seven Days*, and had hit up a friend who distributed promotional materials for films. Soon after, a *Seven Days* T-shirt and a ticket to the celebrity premiere—along with a hefty stack of drafts to type—sat on her desk. She tucked the items away in a drawer, then found herself peering inside on a disturbingly regular basis.

She had no intention of using the ticket, of course, despite Trenton's invitation. *Especially* because of his invitation. Life had resumed a reasonable normalcy after he'd thrown things off kilter, and she planned to keep it that way. She even managed to pry him out of her mind after a while, congratulating herself for going a week or more at a time without reliving his smoky eyes boring into her until she felt naked, or remembering the burst of heat his touch shot up her arm.

Then his film hit the promotion circuit; first magazine gossip and production updates, then movie trailers. Her heart attempted to leap out at the screen in a darkened theater one afternoon as she watched a startling big-screen replay of her vision. The knight she'd seen in the mirage-like shimmer, pulling off his helmet and shaking out jet-black locks, was Trenton himself in a long wig. Or perhaps he'd grown out his hair for the part. His face was smudged with a thick layer of grime, which was why she'd failed to recognize him as the knight from her vision the day of the dinner joust. In context now, the curious message about him finding a knight within himself made a great deal more sense. Such was often the case with her visions. Though nonsensical at the time, sooner or later they righted themselves in a moment of

real-time déjà vu.

Meanwhile, the closer the premiere got, the tougher it became to avoid seeing or hearing about Trenton Dane. Still, she had been determined to try. So why was she here?

She tried to ignore possible answers as she walked past a variety of storefronts, including a souvenir shirt store, a trendy coffee house, and a lingerie and “toy” shop of questionable repute. Then she was pushing through crowds standing in front of the Hamburger Hamlet directly across from Mann’s Chinese Theater, where a majestic Chinese pagoda struck a dramatic pose against the approaching nighttime sky. Panic stabbed through her abdomen at the sight of the theater staring down at her. Making a beeline through the restaurant, she squeezed inside a ladies’ room stall to try and gather her nerve.

The whole thing was stupid, she knew. Between the scores of fans and security she wouldn’t even get a glimpse of Trenton, and he certainly would never see *her*. Even if he did, he wouldn’t remember. So all she was doing was going out to a movie, right? What was such a big deal about that? And even if she *did* see him, all she had to do was say hello, be polite for a minute, and leave. *Even you can manage that without acting like a circus pup*, she thought.

Resisting the urge to splash water on the face she’d spent an inordinate amount of time slathering with makeup, she finished at the sink and headed out past the crowded bar. Her feet throbbed in protest with each high-heeled step.

The sleek black limo swept up to the curb, its mirror-like surface reflecting a sea of faces pressed close together along the sidewalk. Each one strained forward to glimpse the celebrity within the limo’s murky depths, but the blacked-out windows maintained Trenton’s anonymity. The crowd was forced to await the good graces of the starched-and-pressed driver, who came around with a stilted gait to open the door.

He took a moment to gather himself and straighten his tie. Still alone in the back seat he said, “This is it. Switch to *on*.”

He always gave himself this pep talk before going into the public domain. Not because he feared it, but because these

occasions were the nexus of his career...the reason he struggled on through the lean years. Hidden in the faces of fans he found an extra facet of meaning to his work, like those three-dimensional art illusions in which a whole new image pops out when viewed from the right perspective. The rush of lights, cameras, and close proximity to those he worked so hard to entertain provided a dizzying euphoria that lasted hours, even days, afterwards.

Working in films didn't afford the luxury of connecting with fans the way it did stage actors. He'd done theater, of course, and the heady thrill of playing directly to an audience was an experience tough to rival. The repetition of performing the same lines curtain after curtain, however, chafed like an ill-fitting pair of Sunday shoes. Movie roles offered him a faster pace and the challenge of jumping in and out of characters. So it was ultimately on film that he'd found his niche, along with a great deal more money. Thus, events such as these were the closest he could get to reaching out to a live audience. Doing so made him feel more than alive, it virtually dialed him into the cosmos.

Along with the usual exhilaration, he noted that his palms felt damp and shaky, as though he'd had too much coffee. He resisted the urge to wipe his hands on his slacks, reaching for a napkin on the limo's mini bar instead.

*Stage fright?* He dismissed the possibility. Sure, this movie had the feel of a major hit...the one that could catapult him from recognizable supporting actor to superstar. Such speculation, however, was premature until the critics—and more important to him, the audience—had spoken. But he felt a quiet confidence about that. No, his nervousness could not be attributed to stage fright.

Then there was the fact that *she* might be here. The nameless face dancing in the forefront of his dreams for twenty-two months—not that he'd counted—could be among those waiting in the crowd. Not likely. But he *had* invited her here, and she hadn't said no. Not exactly.

Blinding flashes strobed at him before he even managed to plant his foot on the red carpet. Excited squeals drowned out a reporter's announcement of his name, but it mattered little. Here he required no introduction.

Several in the crowd called out to him, desperate for an