

Sun Tzu and the art of plotting... 1287 words, and a GOOD stopping point for Friday

written by Holly

May 28, 2021

By Holly Lisle

Things went well this morning. Granted, I was already up and showered and coffee'd and at work by seven AM (nice when I can manage that), but I'd left myself in a good, conflict-y place yesterday, and today I had a lot of fun making messes and blowing things up and then, at a key point in the chapter, when my characters were about to take a particular definitive action, asking myself, "What would Sun Tzu recommend?"

I have loved Sun Tzu since I was 27, when my then-husband told me if I thought I was going to divorce him, it was going to be a war.

I considered this, went to the library, looked around for books on war and divorce, and ended up taking home both Sun Tzu's tiny red *The Art of War* and some lawyer's *Divorce for Men* from the Laurinburg library.

I read Sun Tzu first, and from his advice, and by reading *Divorce for Men* to understand what a man's divorce lawyer would expect from the woman's divorce lawyer, I informed my husband that I wanted a divorce – but that I didn't want anything out of the divorce but my car, my computer, my books and clothes, and joint custody of the kids (I had a job as a weekend Baylor RN, so I would not need either alimony or child support). I would use his lawyer (he'd already talked to one before I'd even thought of getting a

divorce, and I'd discovered the one he'd talked to, Terry Garner, was by general consensus the best lawyer in town).

I then waited. Barry called me from either work or his lawyer's office, and told me he'd pushed for full custody of the kids for himself, but that his lawyer had told him – and Barry quoted, "Shut up and sign."

And after his lawyer (I was foraging on the enemy's resources by not having my own—a Sun Tzu tactic) wrote out what I wanted, and when I read it and saw that what was on the paper was just exactly what I'd asked for, and nothing else, I signed.

Walked away with my stuff, 50% of my kids' time, and I was **out with no war**, which further research had told me would have been destructive to the two kids.

When it turned out half a dozen years later that Barry was a child molester abusing his own children (he was convicted – I have the right to say this), I damn well went to war then. **BUT** in doing that, I was not the woman who had previously gone to war over the goddamned wedding dishes.

So today, writing my MC finding herself caught in a small, personal war started by someone better armed and better funded and more experienced in warfare, I again turned to Sun Tzu.

And I'll say this: *He does not disappoint.*

I got my guidance, and the precept that guided today's scene, and that will fuel next week's upcoming twist.



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Today's words funded by my Ko-Fi supporters.

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