

The Wisdom of a Fortune Cookie

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Rating: K+

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Written for the 2010 12_days_of_Clois Fortune Cookie Challenge. Prompt: #09 *Do not cut what you can untie.*

Richard White looked out of his office into the Daily Planet newsroom. It was late. The lights were dimmed and the cleaning crew had already left but several desks still had lights and computers turned on. One of those desks belonged to Lois Lane while the adjoining one was Clark Kent's.

Richard watched as his fiancée - ex-fiancée, although neither had admitted it yet - moved her head closer to her partner's, peering at his computer monitor. Richard wasn't sure what they were working on. Lane and Kent were both Metro and that was his Uncle Perry's domain. Plus the reporting team was downright secretive when it came to longer term investigations.

Queen Lois and her spear carrier.

He heard Lois laugh - a delighted laugh of joyful disbelief as though Kent had said something incredibly brilliant. Richard mentally chastised himself. He knew he wasn't being fair to the Midwesterner. Kent was a world-class journalist in his own right - Perry would have never hired him back if he hadn't been. It was just that Kent cultivated this 'golly gee shucks' persona that did a very effective job of masking a world-class intellect. Kent had every one fooled - everyone except Perry and Lois, and now Richard.

'If you love something let it go...'

The saying implied that Richard had a choice in letting Lois go. It implied she had been his. He now knew that nothing was further from the truth. Lois had never been 'his'.

Richard touched the airline ticket in his pocket, assuring himself it was still there. One ticket to Paris. A clean break. Walk away from her, away from the comfortable life they'd built together. The house was hers, and Jason was *her* son, not his. He'd never doubted that Jason was his son as well, at least not until Superman came back. Then it became all too apparent that Richard had made an easy assumption that Lois simply had never disabused him of.

Richard had to admit that it was Jason he would miss the most. He had spent five years being the father of a frail little boy. That wasn't something that was easy to give up, but it was something he was going to have to do. A clean break, cutting all ties. Richard had no doubt that Jason would miss him terribly, but Kent would be able to step in - assuming Lois let him.

Jason stirred in his sleep. The boy had spent far too many nights on the sofa in Richard's office and Richard considered bundling the boy up and heading home. The one thing stopping him was the knowledge that if they left, Lois would probably simply spend the night in the newsroom.

He looked out again and Kent was gone. On the overhead news monitor, Superman had arrived at a fire in an apartment block. Richard watched Lois glance at the screen then turn back to her work. That was a little odd in itself. When Superman first came back to Metropolis Lois always tried to be first on the scene to cover whatever he was doing. Then, almost imperceptibly, she had stopped chasing after the primary-colored superhero, seemingly content to let others get there first. Oddly enough, that was Kent more often than not.

Richard settled behind his desk and started working on his resignation letter. A clean break also meant leaving the Daily Planet, even though he knew he could get a transfer to one of their over-seas offices if he simply asked. Being the EiC's nephew did have a few perks.

He was interrupted by a knock at his door. The door opened and Lois peeked her head through. "Clark's brought Chinese."

*So that was where Kent had disappeared to. Running errands for Her Majesty. There had been a time when that was **his** job.*

Kent had brought an assortment of dishes and was loading up plates in the conference room that doubled as a dining room during late night stints like tonight.

Richard still didn't know where Kent went for Chinese take-away, except that it wasn't anywhere close to the Daily Planet - Richard knew where all those restaurants were and what their menus had. What Clark brought hadn't come from any of them.

As always, the food was excellent. Richard broke open his fortune cookie and read the inscription on the little slip of paper.

"What does your say, Daddy?" Jason asked.

"Do not cut what you can untie," Richard read aloud. He had never believed that fortune-cookie aphorisms had any bearing on reality, but oddly this one seemed to hit the mark.

"What does it mean?" Jason asked. The boy's expression was open and curious and Richard suddenly realized how cruel and selfish his plans for a clean break had been. Jason didn't deserve that.

"It means..." Richard began. Then he realized he wasn't completely sure what it meant. "It means that no matter what your Mom and I decide to do, you will always be my little boy," he said.

Jason's brow crinkled in puzzlement but Richard noted that Lois didn't even look surprised.

"We need to talk, don't we?" Lois said.

Richard nodded. It would be harder this way, untying the ties that bound them together rather than cutting them. But Richard knew that the fortune cookie was right.

Do not cut what you can untie.