

## Sydney's Dilemma

The scream was so deafening I feared my eardrums would burst. The guttural moan which followed was just as alarming and caused me to feel intense sympathy for the injured party. Rather shocking, and most unfortunate for me, was the fact that the source of the scream was my own raw and aching throat. I closed my eyes and leaned my head against the cool wall of the hotel bathroom, secretly wondering if anyone had called security. It wouldn't be the first time. But we can return to my long list of indiscretions later.

Right about now I would be thankful to be dealing with something as simple as a ruptured ear drum. Granted, it had been one of the most excruciating experiences I had ever been through; I would still gladly have dealt with the pain instead of the daunting task ahead of me. (And this is saying a lot considering I nearly passed out *twice* from the pain during the four-hour wait I endured in the emergency room.)

I took a deep breath and willed my hands to stop shaking. How in the world was I going to explain this to Louis?

I closed the toilet lid and sat down with a heavy thud. As I buried my head in my hands, I accidentally knocked the offending article onto the marble floor. I peered up and watched it skid across the length of the room, coming to a stop right next to my fluffy hotel slippers. A hysterical giggle escaped my lips before I could stifle it. Louis had been trying (to no avail) to teach me to skip stones all week and I managed to skip the pregnancy test across the room with an unintentional nudge of my elbow. At least I had remembered to put the cap back on and, therefore, hadn't splattered a trail of urine around the room. This simply would have added insult to injury.

Take a deep breath, Sydney. Everything is going to be fine. When Louis comes back from his Jet Ski run, you're going to sit him down and tell him. Just like that. With no preamble.

I got up and started to pace the room. How did this happen? I mean, I know how it happened, but HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? Everything had been going so well! Louis and I had finally gotten back to a good place...and now...I have to scare the crap out of my husband on the last day of our honeymoon.

It's not as though Louis were easily spooked. He had lived a life filled with considerably more adventure in his twenty-four years than I had in my, ahem, twenty-eight years. (Yes, I robbed the cradle.) But we had known each other for barely a year. We needed more time to be the two of us, rather than the *three* of us.

I went into the bedroom, crawled onto the bed and promptly curled myself into a fetal position, my long brown hair forming a protective curtain around my face. Maybe the test was wrong. There *is* such a thing as a false positive, right? Though I hadn't had my period in seven weeks, this could easily be the result of the pre-wedding stress rather than an actual pregnancy. We *had* pulled off two weddings in the last five weeks. The first of which encompassed a trip to France to meet Louis' very LARGE family as well as every single resident of his home town. (Population: four hundred.)

Something tells me I need to back up a little. (You know, so you might have a chance of understanding what I'm babbling on about.) OK, maybe more than a little. Here's the breakdown: just over fourteen months ago, I locked eyes with the incredible Louis Durand for the first time. He had come to the Bay Area for a short-term assignment in the San Jose office of his Paris-based software company and I was lucky enough to meet him in a bar, of all places. We spent the evening flirting and buying each other drinks. Six weeks later we were engaged!

I don't blame you for being surprised. I shocked the hell out of myself by proposing to HIM. Prior to meeting Louis, every decision in my life had been carefully considered and painstakingly analyzed. The concept of "flying by the seat of my pants" was something I would *never* have considered. But then he came into my life and something clicked. I knew my waiting was over. I knew I had found the one.

I'm not going to say life with Louis has been easy. It has been tumultuous and more than a little scary, but it has been worth it. So what if he was laid off from his job while I was planning my, I mean *our*, dream wedding? So what if we had to get married in a civil ceremony to avoid his deportation? And did it really matter that our actual wedding ceremony took place in the most hideously decorated town hall in existence? (Picture any room in the Brady's household – on steroids – and you'll have a small inkling.)

In the end, we had three, count 'em, THREE weddings. The aforementioned civil ceremony in my home town of Haverstraw, New York, the French wedding in Louis' home town of *Le Caylar*, France, and our originally planned wedding in Monterey, California. We had somehow managed to get through his lengthy job

search, the endless series of hoops to jump through for his mother's dream wedding in France and the countless mishaps associated with my dream wedding in California. Only yesterday, as we sat watching the sun set over the beautiful island of Oahu, Louis and I had been discussing how much we were looking forward to settling into a quiet married life.

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