

Did Sydney Make a Mistake?

Introduction: This excerpt details Sydney's first real fight with Louis, her seemingly perfect husband, who has recently lost his job. Sydney ran to her sister's house after the argument and spent her first night away from him since they got married. She now faces the firing squad in the form of her family at the breakfast table...

I hung my head and tried not to cry. I thought that my father liked Louis. Now he was telling me that I had made a mistake in marrying him.

"Duck!"

I snapped my head back up and looked at my father.

He smiled at me. "I am not telling you that you made a mistake."

My eyes widened. When did he become a mind reader?

He put his hand on the side of my face. "I am just saying that you have a lot of hurdles to get over."

Kate spoke to me gently. "We think that you can do it, Syd. Marriage just takes a lot of work."

I felt the tears forming in my eyes and tried my best to hold them in. I was sure that my eyes were becoming very glassy and red. Big shock, Sydney! Once again, you are showing yourself to be the weakest link in the family.

My father took my hand. "Syd, I am sure that Louis is struggling as much as you are." He sighed. "He is a French man who grew up in a very traditional household. Being supported by you is really hard for him to deal with."

A few tears rolled down my cheeks. "I know, Dad, but I am having a very hard time being understanding when he is acting like such a...."

Charlie volunteered. "An asshole?"

Zoe wrinkled her nose. "A jerk?"

Kate chimed in. "A dumbass?"

My dad settled it for all of us. "A fucking prick."

We all erupted into peals of laughter. My father has such a way with words. His comment was exactly what we needed to ease the tension of the conversation.

"Listen, Duck. We all love Louis. None of us envy what you are going through right now, but we all have faith that you two kids can work it out." He leaned in to me. "Right now you are coming to terms with the fact that he is showing signs of being human."

What? I know that he is human! I used to think that he was perfect, but that ship sailed once I started living with him. But if I really thought about it, until the last couple of months, he had been perfect in all of the important ways. He had never let me down when I really needed him. He had talked me down from the ledge on a number of occasions. He had taken really good care of me.

Suddenly, I felt like *I* was the fucking prick. That's right, Syd! As your mother always says, save profanity for a special occasion. Like letting yourself know how badly you had let your husband down. Again. When was I going to learn?

I exhaled loudly and decided to share my revelation with my family. "I think I'm the fucking prick."

Five pairs of eyes turned my way quickly, but no one said a word.

"What, no comments? No questions?" I smiled weakly.

Zoe looked around the room. "I'll ask the question. Why?"

I put the back of my head against the chair. "Because you all know what a complete nut I am." Five heads bobbed up and down. "And Louis has put up with all of my craziness since the very beginning. He hasn't complained." Uh oh...here come the tears. "He has only told me how much he loves me. And here I am...crumbling when he is having such a hard time."

Kate came over to me. “Syd, you have a lot on your plate right now. It is totally understandable that you are having...um...a little bit of trouble. It’s ok.”

I shook my head. “No, it’s not. A wife is supposed to take care of her husband. I have to stop being so selfish.”

My dad wiped my tears away with his handkerchief. (I tried really hard not to wonder when he washed it last. My mom was in New York running the store and Kate had a baby to take care of...)

“Duck, just stop putting so much pressure on yourself. Take one day at a time and TALK to your husband. Just be honest with him. You two can figure this out together.”

Excerpt from *French Toast* by Glynis Astie, Copyright 2014