

## Sydney's Drunken Airplane Episode

Boarding the plane was an incredibly slow process, which did nothing to calm my nerves. There were many screaming, overtired children accompanied by their harried parents who were allowed early passage to the plane to allow extra time for them to settle. When we finally got to our seats, I wondered if I would feel better if I screamed along with them. Granted no one would allow me the courtesy of looking the other way and trying to ignore my tantrum. You lose that right when you turn five or six.

After an hour of trying to keep myself calm with magazines, I decided to get a glass of wine. Louis had fallen asleep promptly following takeoff (he forced himself to stay awake until then so that he could hold my hand) and was quietly snoring against the window. I was glad that at least one of us was getting some rest. I had not slept much last night and was hoping that the wine might ease me into a well needed nap.

The wine was pretty gross, but since it provided me with a degree of calm that I so desperately needed, I ordered another glass. As I sipped the wine, I idly flipped through the channels on the in-flight entertainment system in an attempt to find something to take my mind off of the worry. Unfortunately for me, crazy Sydney was still in residence. The wine had gotten her to quiet down a little bit, but not enough to allow me some much needed relaxation. I decided that a little more wine might help...

“Syd? Sydney, can you hear me?” Why was Louis shaking me? And more importantly, why did my head feel so heavy?

I opened my eyes to find an unnecessarily bright light shining flooding the room. I immediately winced and closed my eyes.

“What is going on, Louis?” The sound of my voice seemed much too loud. Something was terribly, terribly wrong.

Louis spoke very slowly and carefully. “I woke up just before the plane landed. You were passed out next to me.”

Upon hearing this, I sat bolt upright, which was a HUGE mistake. The amount of pain that surged through my body and ended up in my head was indescribable. For a moment, I thought that I was going to hurl, but thankfully I was spared that humiliation. I wasn't sure that I would continue to be that lucky, so my goal immediately became changing locations.

I slowly opened my eyes and looked around. We appeared to be in some kind of exam room. How had we gotten off of the plane? Oh my God. I had a really, really bad feeling about this. Slowly, some rather unsavory memories permeated my mind. No. That could not possibly have happened. I could not have been that stupid. Sydney! What have you done?

I looked at Louis. “Um...Louis, how did we get here?”

He bit his lip. That was a really bad sign. He only did that when he had something unpleasant to tell me.

He exhaled slowly. “You were put on a stretcher. The EMT’s couldn’t wake you, so you had to be taken off the plane as quickly as possible.”

I put my head in my lap. I have done some pretty embarrassing things in my time, but this incident was now number one on my list. God help me when Maya finds out. She will hold this over me for the rest of my life.

Louis cleared his throat. “Syd, you have been cleared to go home. We should go down to the baggage compartment now. They are holding our luggage.”

I looked up at Louis in horror. “How long have we been here?”

He looked at the floor. “About two hours.”

Oh shit! My parents were picking us up from the airport. They must be freaking out right now. I started looking for my purse so that I could call them quickly and tell them not to worry. I am such a total freak! I cannot believe that I did this.

Louis took my hand. “Calm down, Syd. I have already called your parents to let them know that we are fine.”

I buried my face in my hands. “What did you tell them?”

“What could I tell them? I told them the truth.” A small chuckle escaped him.

I slowly removed my hands from my eyes to find that Louis was desperately trying not to laugh. The amount of anger I felt towards him at that moment was astronomical. I slowly stood up, felt completely nauseated and promptly sat back down. With no other viable options, I settled for fixing my deadliest stare on him. I was prepared to tear him a new one, when the floodgates opened and he dissolved into hysterical laughter. I was so shocked that I didn’t know how to react. I just stood there, watching him completely lose his composure and wondered what I was supposed to be feeling.

For the moment, my anger won out. “Louis! How could you tell them what really happened? You are supposed to protect me! Even when I do stupid things; especially when I do stupid things! You were supposed to cover for me. My parents must be so worried...”

Louis pulled himself together long enough to tell me not to worry. What a shocking response for him!

“Syd, your parents are not worried. Your mother just wants to take you home so that you can rest. And your father....your father...” He was starting to dissolve into laughter again. “He....what is it that you always say? He laughed his ass off.”

And that was it. Louis laughed so hard that he fell onto the floor. That was my fiancé; the man laughing on the floor of the airport infirmary because his lovely bride-to-be couldn’t hold her liquor. In all of the scenarios that I had imagined with regards to Louis meeting my family, this had never crossed my mind. It just goes to show you that no matter how old you get, you can still shock the hell out of yourself.

“OK, Louis, I think that it is time to get you out of here.” I smiled weakly and got up from the cot. The room swayed a little bit and I sank back down involuntarily.

“Don’t worry, Syd. I got you a wheelchair.” He gestured to the huge brown wheelchair in the corner of the room. It even had a long pole with a bright red flag shooting out of the top of one of the handles.

I closed my eyes and exhaled slowly. “Great.”

Louis helped me into the wheelchair and handed me my purse. “Are you ready, *mon coeur*?”

I looked up at him. “To face the endless humiliation that my father will heap on me for this? Not really, but at least it will distract him from grilling you for a little while.”

It was then that I realized that some good would actually come from this situation. I may have felt like complete and total shit and I may have embarrassed myself within an inch of my life, but if it meant that Louis’ first time meeting my parents would be easier for him, then it was worth it. I had essentially sacrificed my dignity for him. Though it probably would have meant more to Louis if I had actually done it on purpose....

My parents were waiting in the car outside the baggage claim exit. I would later find out that the airport police gave them a break (since they had been waiting for nearly three hours due to my....medical issue.) When they saw us, they both got out of the car. The difference in their facial expressions was almost comical. My mother looked incredibly worried and my father had an enormous grin on his face. Something about this juxtaposition struck me as ridiculously funny and I dissolved into fits of giggles. As soon as I started, my father and Louis joined in. My poor mother didn’t know what to do; I am sure that she thought that we had all lost our minds.

I slowly got up from the wheelchair once we reached the car. My mom came over and hugged me gingerly.

“Are you alright, honey?” She looked really worried. I suddenly felt really awful for my burst of laughter.

I smiled at her. “I’m fine, Mom. I’m so sorry for worrying you.”

“Duck! You always know how to make an entrance.” I turned to find my dad reaching out to hug me. I threw myself into his arms. I really missed him; even if he was about to make my life hell.

“Thanks, Dad. You always know just what to say.” I pulled back to face him and grinned. “Now come and meet Louis.”

I introduced my parents to Louis and everyone was silent for a moment. Then my dad turned to Louis and slapped him on the back.

“Well, now that you are engaged to our daughter, it is clear that you have your hands full, isn’t it, Louis? Why don’t we get you something to eat so that you can keep your strength up?”