

## Sydney & Louis Take a Lamaze Class

**Introduction: Sydney and Louis have met the least friendly labor nurse ever and are currently watching a video about the joys of childbirth.**

Louis put his arm around me and I did my best to smile up at him. I couldn't let him see how freaked out I was. The new, mature Sydney was the one having this baby, decidedly not the old insanity-riddled Sydney. This shit was way too tough for her. She simply couldn't handle it!

Louis leaned down and whispered in my ear, "Are you alright, *mon coeur*?"  
Time to lie. I whispered back, "Absolutely fine, Bluey."

Saffron's friend, Magenta, popped onto the screen next to announce, "It's time to have your baby!" With beads of sweat pouring down her face, she outlined the essentials of pushing—different positions, when to bear down, etc.—and told us this stage of labor could last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. Between the flower child names, the perky attitude to pain and the idea that I could be spending HOURS pushing another human out of my body, I felt like I might vomit.

I fought valiantly to calm my racing heart by breathing deeply and reminding myself that knowledge is power, but when the pain began to register on the mothers' faces, I crossed my legs tightly. I'm guessing this is a woman thing. You know what I mean—when a guy gets kicked in the balls, all the other guys in the immediate vicinity groan in pain. They can't help it; they're well aware of how much pain the poor guy is in.

However, let us keep in mind that all the women in this room KNOW this pain is coming their way. There is no question. The baby must exit your uterus in some fashion. Sure, you could end up needing a caesarean section and get out of the act of labor, but this procedure comes with its own level of pain—coupled with a huge scar.

I tried so hard to pay attention to the screen, but there was so much pain, fluid and...hair. And I'm not just talking about on the babies' heads. I told you this video was old! Let me be very clear on this. I don't believe in waxing. (Hot wax is not going anywhere near my delicate parts, thank you very much.) But there are many ways to keep your lady parts groomed these days. *No one* needs to see a 'fro in your nether regions.

As I was white-knuckling it through the atrocity of watching another woman experience the pain of labor, the video shifted to a THREE MINUTE montage of babies exiting birth canals. (Not exaggerating in the least! I *wish* I were.) It reminded me of passing a car accident—you don't want to look, but you can't pull your gaze away. The screen had been transformed into a massive tennis cannon of lady parts.

"Pew! Pew, pew, pew!"

I felt a hand grip my arm. Oh no. Did I say that OUT LOUD? Not even the horrific images on the screen could justify such a wildly inappropriate outburst. I closed my eyes in defeat, realizing I had sunk to a new low.

After a few deep breaths, I opened my eyes and slowly turned my head to find my husband doing everything in his power not to laugh. From what I could see, things didn't look good for him. A cross between a major cackle and a botched throat clearing escaped his lips followed by what looked like some sort of leg spasm. What a pair we made.

I willed him to regain his composure, knowing I wouldn't stand a chance if he gave in to his laughing fit. A death glare from Bertha silenced us quickly. Properly chastised, we settled back into the scary video. Where were we? Oh yes, we were in the middle of the *mechanics* of labor.

Lest you think I'm a total wuss given my reaction to the graphic nature of the video, let's remember when this particular act occurs, I'll be viewing everything from the OTHER end. I've seen enough diagrams to know how everything works, OK? I have no need to see the human exiting from my body. I certainly don't need you to install a mirror to enhance my perspective OR to have me lean forward to see the baby's head popping out of my hooaha. I will be FEELING everything with enough intensity to ensure the memory will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I swallowed slowly and took stock of the room. The wives all appeared to be severely traumatized by the carnage, while the husbands were baffled. Even my recently giggle ridden husband looked a little green. The only person who seemed perfectly fine was Bertha. There was a particular smugness to her now, as though she were well and truly satisfied that she had knocked us down to size with the fear of labor.

Excerpt from *French Fry* by Glynis Astie, Copyright 2015

