

Sydney's Extraordinary Mother-in-Law

Introduction: Sydney spends her first morning in France in the clutches of Louis' mother, Simone.

I closed my eyes, took another deep breath and got out of bed. I followed Louis' example and got dressed, assuming that his parents were waiting for us to have breakfast. I had taken a quick bath last night (his parents were old school and did not have a shower), but I still felt the travel grime on my skin. Further bathing would just have to wait until later.

As I was putting on my shoes, Louis told me that he was going to check in with his parents. I nodded and grabbed my watch off of the nightstand. I put it on quickly, opened the door and was immediately met with his mother's smiling face. I nearly jumped out of my skin.

"Simone!" I smiled like a complete lunatic.

She smiled back at me, handed me a wicker basket with a cloth in it and promptly ushered me outside. Never mind the fact that I really had to go to the bathroom or that there was already a stubborn rumbling in my stomach. I exhaled slowly and counted to ten. Just relax, Sydney. Once I had a modicum of control, a very important question occurred to me. Where could we possibly be going at eight-thirty in the morning? With wicker baskets no less? (No, that is not considered to be a second question. It is simply an essential extension of the first.)

As the myriad of possible scenarios raced through my mind, I noticed that she was leading me around the back of the house. I also noticed that she was dressed in sweats, old shoes and had a kerchief on her head. This was not the way his mother normally dressed. Something was very, very wrong.

I let out a sigh of relief as I caught sight of an enormous vegetable garden. There were endless rows of lettuce, tomato plants, pumpkins, grapes and eggplant. It was amazing! Well, it was to me. I couldn't grow anything. All of my houseplants died shortly after I brought them home. To my great disappointment, I had not inherited my mother's gift for gardening. I smiled as I realized that Simone and my mom were going to have some serious bonding material. It was easy to see them spending hours out here together.

Suddenly, Simone pulled me away from the beautiful garden and into a side building. What were they growing in here? A flash of feathers accompanied by rapid clucking and flying poop answered that question fairly quickly. One of the chickens had jumped up in my face and pooped down the front of my shirt. Apparently they don't like strangers. Simone laughed so hard that I worried for her safety. She kept saying what sounded like "chicken shit" in French. Sadly, the profane words are the ones I understand the best and we all know that I will NEVER forget the word for chicken. EVER.

I grinned at her and followed her back to the house. I knew only too well that this story will be told over and over at every event that we attended this week. In fact, I would not be surprised in the least if this incident made it into Louis' father's wedding toast.

We entered the living room of his parents' house to find Louis and his father drinking coffee and watching the morning news. His mother immediately pointed to me and launched into the story. Louis and his father laughed until they had tears streaming down their faces. As I stood there watching them, I reminded myself that I was an amazing wife. Not every woman would put up with this kind of shit. Pun absolutely intended.

Eventually, Louis came over to me and put his hand on my shoulder. "Syd, I am so sorry." He paused to catch his breath. "Are you ok?"

I smiled indulgently at him. "Bluey, I desperately have to pee, I am ravenously hungry, I need coffee and I am covered in chicken shit. What do you think?"

Unfortunately for me, that made him laugh even harder. Well, at least I would have a good story for my dad. This kind of thing is right up his alley. He is always telling me how funny I am. And it is usually during moments like these. Moments of humiliation. Louis and my dad are alike in the most annoying ways.