

Meet Sydney Durand

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. She couldn't possibly be serious. Could she? I opened my eyes, looked over at Louis and tried to smile. I can only imagine the look that registered on my face, but I highly doubt it was anything remotely positive. Louis had just finished telling me about his mother's latest plans for our wedding. I took another deep breath and reminded myself, yet again, that I had agreed to let her plan the wedding in its entirety (with the exception of choosing my wedding dress.) Why would I agree to something so completely insane? It might have had something to do with the fact that this would be our third wedding.

That's right, I said THIRD wedding and no, I do not have an Elizabeth Taylor complex. And I can prove it! Allow me to give you the short version. After a disastrous romantic history dating back to college, I, Sydney Bennett, was swept off of my feet by the incredible Frenchman, Louis Durand. Louis was in California on business, but following our first week together, he accepted a transfer from his company's Paris office to the San Jose office. To the great shock of our families and friends, we became engaged a few weeks later. We began planning a beautiful wedding in Monterey for the following September, only to be thwarted by Louis' unexpected job loss in January. In order to avoid his deportation, we were married shortly thereafter in my home town of Haverstraw, New York. So that my dreams of a beautiful wedding would not be crushed, we elected to have the originally planned event in Monterey as well. Everyone needs gorgeous wedding photos! The first wedding was definitely more practical than gorgeous.

One would think that two weddings would be more than enough for one couple in love, but due to Louis' status as an only child with an extremely large extended family and his mother's dream of a wedding that his whole town (population four hundred) would attend, we simply *had* to have one more wedding. Besides, a wedding in the beautiful French countryside sounded amazing, right? This way my family and I would have the opportunity to experience the wedding customs of Louis' country as he and his family would experience the customs of ours at the wedding in Monterey. (The first wedding was kind of light on customs as it was predominantly a vehicle to keep Louis in the country.) My mother and siblings were thrilled at the prospect of a trip to France, while my father bemoaned the fact that he would have to set foot in traitorous territory. He is German and likes to complain. Although I was absolutely sure that he was practically drooling at the prospect of the gastronomic experiences in his future.

While three weddings did afford a certain amount of stress, in the end, I think that it helped me. My mother had planned the first wedding (in the span of one week), I was planning the second wedding (in the span of one year) and Louis' mother was planning the third (in the span of Louis' lifetime.) This allowed for all parties to end up with a wedding they were happy with. I must admit that the idea having three different wedding dresses is kind of fun. Hey, now! There is no need to judge! The three events are very different levels of formality. The first was an informal town hall wedding, the second would be a formal evening wedding and the third would be an afternoon wedding in the French countryside. If you really think about it, you will realize that having three wedding dresses is an absolute necessity.

Now that my seemingly ludicrous statement of three weddings has been explained, we can return to the problem at hand. Louis has just informed me that his mother, Simone, has purchased an ensemble for me to wear to the rehearsal dinner. (Honestly, this is becoming comical. This will be our THIRD rehearsal dinner.) Let me remind you that Louis' mother has a very...particular fashion sense. All of the garments she wears are short, tight, brightly colored and/or bedazzled. Given the fact that she is sixty years old, my hat goes off to her. I hope that I have the guts to wear miniskirts into my sixties. She is my hero! Having said that, I have never been one to dress that....um...how do

I put this? Let's just say that my taste is slightly more conservative.

Louis was practically in tears from laughing so hard as he described the dress to me. Simone had chosen a gold sequined halter mini dress with red satin roses on the straps and red satin ruffles along the bottom of the skirt. She also saw fit to purchase red satin stilettos with matching red satin roses on the toes. I resisted the urge to strangle my husband and began to pace the room. Clearly I made a serious error in judgment when I allowed Simone to make all decisions for the wedding except for my wedding dress. In my defense, I really didn't think that her purview extended to my wardrobe choices for pre wedding events. It was becoming quite obvious that I had a lot to learn about her...

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