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Cynthia Knew What She Wanted, But —

## EVEN CYNTHIA MAKES MISTAKES

(Written for "The Listener" by Jean Boswell)

"I THINK," said Cynthia, dreamily, "that I will have a church wedding — a big church wedding, after all."

I gulped just in time; otherwise my heart would have popped out of my mouth. What frightfulness was threatening me now?

"But, my sweetest," I said, earnestly, "you know you promised we'd have just a simple tie-up. You know what a shy sort of goof I am! You know what a stuttering, knee-knocking flutther that sort of thing gets me into! You know.. What's that you're looking at so intently?"

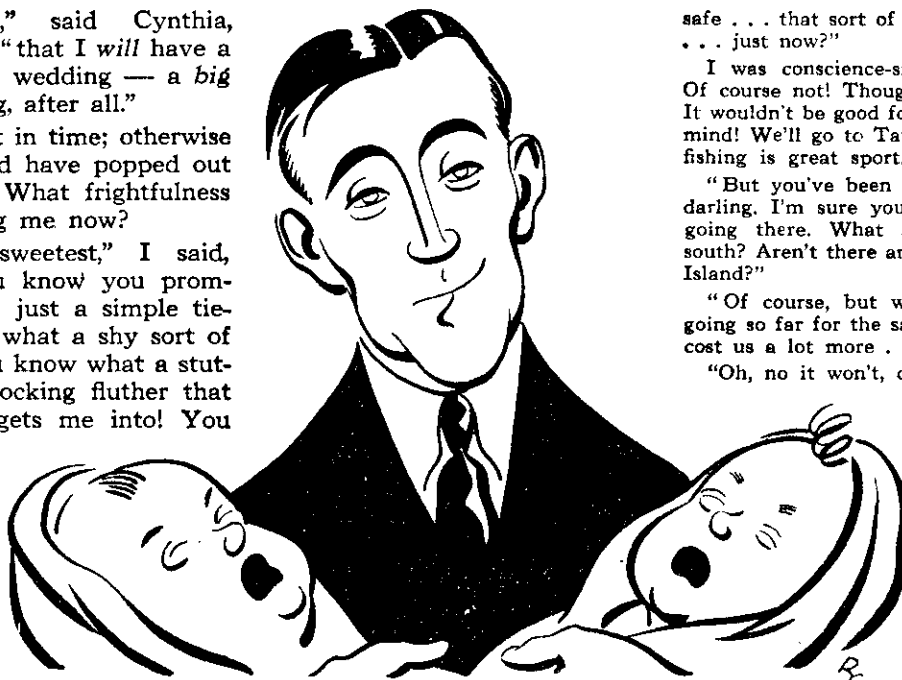
"It's Maisie's wedding-photo," said Cynthia. "Such a beautiful group. I just got it this morning. You know I wasn't able to attend her wedding—she was married in Christchurch. It must have been a marvellous turn-out. Six bridesmaids...! And just look at that glorious gown!"

I didn't need to look. I could see it all: magnolia satin—misty tulle—lilies—bridesmaids to burn—confetti—pushing crowds—and speeches! Speeches! Speeches! What appeal would avail against that! Still, I made one more effort.

"But we don't want a public show like that, do we, sweetest? We're different, aren't we? We want simplicity—we want..."

"I know, darling. I did feel like that about it, too, but I've been thinking. I don't think it would be fair, darling. You know, some day my daughters will be wanting to see their mummie's wedding-photo: they'll compare it with Maisie's and they'll want mummie's wedding to be ever so much more beautiful than anyone else's. I simply can't disappoint my little girlies, can I, darling?" and Cynthia dropped the photograph, transferred her arms to my neck and peeped shyly up at me through her drooping lashes.

I goggled. I wiped my perspiring brow. I was speechless. Wouldn't that put any man in a jam? Cynthia's very



CYNTHIA'S MISTAKE

presence is intoxicating: her hair is like corn-silk, golden and fragrant, and her eyes...! Did you ever lie on the earth and see a summer sky through the delicate tracery of young beech-boughs? Well, that's Cynthia's eyes... but of course you're familiar with all that sort of blither... What I want you to understand is that I might stand a chance against any of those charms singly, but when they are concentrated in one great barrage of persuasion, then my defence collapses like a tent in a gale. It did now. I knew I was beaten. "Capitulation" is the word these days, isn't it?

Cynthia was right. It was a big wedding. One of the highlights of the season. Too, too marvellous, my dear! Absolutely gorgeous, darling!

\* \* \*

"DARLING," said Cynthia. "I want you to say just where you'd like to spend your holidays this year. It was so sweet of you to take me to Sydney for our honeymoon last year, and to Rotorua for Easter, and now it's your turn. I'm sure you have some place you'd like to go this year."

I was touched.

"That's awfully decent of you, my pet," I said gratefully. "Let's go up among the big fish, then, in the Bay of Islands. Always wanted to give it a go. Corker place, they tell me, and wonderful sport. You'll enjoy it."

"Oh darling! That would be lovely, I'm sure," Cynthia spoke radiantly, and then suddenly looked grave. "But... but... do you think it would be..."

safe... that sort of fishing... for me... just now?"

I was conscience-smitten. "Sweetest! Of course not! Thoughtless brute I am! It wouldn't be good for you at all. Never mind! We'll go to Taupo instead. Trout-fishing is great sport, too."

"But you've been so often to Taupo, darling. I'm sure you must be tired of going there. What about going down south? Aren't there any fish in the South Island?"

"Of course, but what's the sense in going so far for the same fishing? It will cost us a lot more..."

"Oh, no it won't, darling, because we shouldn't have to pay board. Maisie would be delighted to have us stay with them. She told me so. I had a letter from her only this morning."

Maisie! Dawn broke upon me... albeit a grey dawn, with rough seas and a deep depression coming over Cook

Strait! Very bad fishing weather!

"Maisie's a snob and her husband's probably a boulder and we wouldn't be a bit comfortable there," I protested.

"Oh, you mustn't say that, darling! I'm sure he looks the nicest man, and every inch a fisherman. Didn't Maisie tell me about the lovely gold-fish pond he built for her? It would be a wonderful holiday, and such a change for you, too. Still, just as you like, darling. It's your holiday—only I thought—I'd like to see Maisie once more. I might not see her again—in this world. I might die, you see, when..." and Cynthia's voice faded away in the soft music of harps and the faint rush of angels' wings. I'll swear I even saw a circlet of light above her golden head.

I took a hard right-hander from Terror—below the belt, too, and there was nobody to call a foul!

"Don't—for pity's sake, sweetheart! Don't say—don't think such things!"

"But women do die, you know, darling," said Cynthia, still in the same hushed, holy tones, "and you musn't let it grieve you too much. I wouldn't have mentioned it—only—I just thought—I'd like to see my life-long friend again, and tell her about the baby and all." Her lips quivered pitifully. "It's hard—not having a mother..."

It was the knock-out, and I took the count.

Cynthia was right. It was a wonderful holiday, and a decided change—especially as I did no fishing.

\* \* \*

"HER name," said Cynthia, meditatively, "is to be either 'Nancy' or 'Margaret.' I think I incline to 'Nancy' myself."

(Continued on next page)