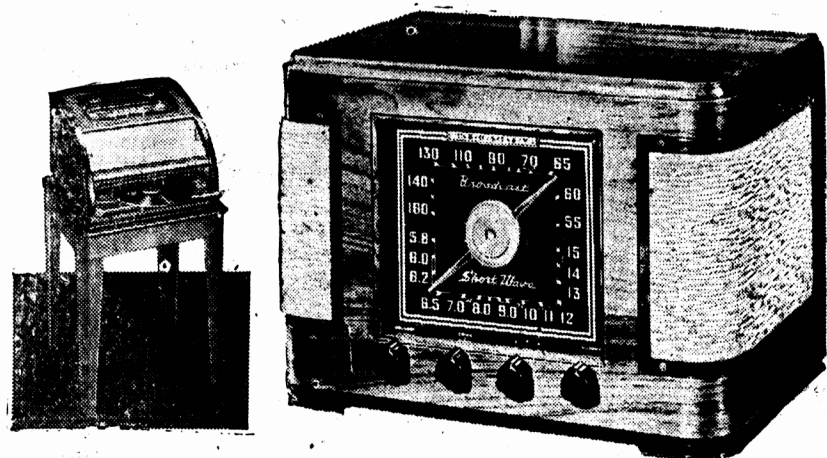


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- MODEL 674 — Reg. 134.50 — **89.50**
- FOR
- MODEL 561 — Reg. 46.25 — **35.50**
- FOR
- MODEL 752 APT — Reg. 182.50 — (Combination with Automatic Record Player)—FOR **135.00**

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- FOR

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- MODEL D837 — Reg. 67.00 — **45.00**
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- MODEL D536 — Reg. 55.00 — (Electric Record Player only) — **39.00**
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Wisdom's Gate

By Margaret Ayer Barnes

"What for?" she asked blankly. "Well you see, Cicily," he said with reluctance, "the trouble is, Gertrude—if you leave me, Cicily, I'll be bed by the eye. Lately she's been telling me that you meant to marry Avery. I think she's been counting on it."

Cicily decided to deliver the blow. "Did you know she'd told Baines that she was going to marry you?"

He wheeled on the words to stare at her fearfully. "She didn't! Who told you that?"

"Avery, Baines had told him. I'm sure it was true. I mean that she'd told Baines."

"She might have, at that," he said after a moment. "She tells him a lot. His tone was half humorous, friendly, confidential. A smile flickered fitfully in the depths of his eyes. 'My dear, it's darned awkward.' Albert's hatred of unpleasantness sounded in a sigh 'I'd like to get away—clear out of the mess.'"

"Then why don't you go?"

"Would you come with me?"

She caught her breath sharply. "You wouldn't have to stay after this thing blows over. Unless you wanted to," said Albert.

"I'm afraid," murmured Cicily stung by his detachment, "that isn't very practical. Indeed, she was certain it wouldn't be possible—a little trip with Albert, politely estranged!"

"You mean—because of Avery?"

For an instant she hesitated, checked by a flash of indignation. It was hard to keep in mind that Albert still thought of Avery as a determining factor in the grisly situation. "I couldn't leave the children," she decided to say.

"We could take them," said Albert. That surprised her again. "In fact, I thought we would."

"Move—away from Lakewood?"

He met her astonishment with the intimate reminder, "Didn't we always say we were going to?"

She capped it by another. "When you were on Easy Street." And thought, that was mean of me.

In a flash of discomfort she remembered her divicidias and wondered if Albert could possibly have heard them. For once she had wronged him.

"It's come across. Mother persuaded him," said Albert, as one who would shift responsibility.

CHAPTER XXX

"Mother's a Victorian," said Albert. "A lively one, I grant you. But she only worries over the conduct of wives. The conduct of a husband, in itself, is unimportant. What a wife decides to do about it gives it significance. If she's lost any sleep, it's over you and Avery. She's been telling me I should take you away from temptation."

"You—should take me!"

"That's her solution."

"Albert—you don't mean—she told that to Uncle Ed?"

"My dear, that is the point. He was shocked. He was shaken. Of course she was a bit about suggesting her solution. She'd convinced him that we needed a 'change.' I like that pleasant unblemish. It worked wonders with Ed. He stands ready to depart us, to keep you out of mischief."

"Will you be serious?"

"I never was more so." Abruptly, amazingly, his mocking mood had changed. "The long and the short of it is—it's my chance. I feel fairly sure I could pick up a job. And Ed, providentially, is a very pious Democrat. He's one of the regulars—contributes to campaign funds—has a lot of friends in Washington enjoying pleasant perquisites. He tells me that he's never asked anything of the Party if it turns out I need it. His drag should be good. I doubt if I do. It all looks pretty rosy—of course, it's up to you. Wouldn't you enjoy it?" Albert asked innocently.

"No," she said tersely. "I can't say I would."

"You mean because of Avery?" he asked, as before. Then, rather as if he didn't want to hear the answer or as if he thought the next thing he had to say might modify it. "If you're thinking of Gertrude—"

But she cut him off in a rush of angry words. "You're perfectly willing to play me for a fool. You don't care at all what anyone thinks of me. You've let Aunt Muriel tell Uncle Ed that Avery Caldwell was actually my lover. That's what you know—"

"Cicily, be fair," he remonstrated temperately. Then, "Cicily," he whispered, making of her name a confession of uncertainty. It hung between them for the instant that suspense struck them motionless. "Did you turn Avery down?"

Her eyes must have answered him.

For, "Why?" he asked quickly. She found her voice then, but she made foolish use of it. "I—just didn't want to marry him."

He looked at her sharply. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"What chance did you give me?"

"I—well, I don't remember. Was I a fool?"

"I think you were, rather."

"I often am." Then he said, with a curious breathless simplicity: "Because I've been a rotten husband, you think I don't love you. But for once you're wrong, Cicily. You're the solidest thing in my life. And the dearest." And rested his case without further protestation.

It was his tender stress on that unstudied word, "solidest" that carried conviction and broke down her resistance. No appeal he'd ever made to her had moved her so profoundly.

"Sweet—?" he risked softly, still breathless, still motionless.

How long since she'd heard that foolish endearment? "Oh, my dear

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— she gasped brokenly, quite melted by the sound of it.

He dropped to his knees in front of the armchair. She bent over him, tears on her cheeks. He caught her in his arms. He held her. He kissed her. Laughter broke through her tears. "Ah, sweet, you're mine again!" Albert whispered huskily. But she could only cling to him, inarticulate with emotion, while the melting proceeded to complete dissolution.

She never knew afterward just when he had released her, or how the intense little crisis subsided. But presently she found herself settled in the armchair with Albert on the arm of it, clasping her tenderly. She was facing a future that seemed, perhaps erroneously, tremendously simplified.

But then she remembered something important. "Albert," she said quickly, "my bank stocks going to pay?"

"It is really? Who told you?" He looked warmly pleased.

"Uncle Albert told me. Dad. The rate's been reduced."

"Much?"

"Well—two-thirds."

He took it philosophically. He wasn't in the least the refined, money minded. Finance meant very little to him. He really never bothered with it. He merely liked the comfort that money always brings.

"But, anyway Albert," she hastened to assure him, "along with your salary I'm sure we could live on it—well, more than adequately—any foreign country with a decent exchange."

"Oh, no, we couldn't," he dismissed the idea as a feminine fantasy. But still with indulgence. "Besides, it's your money. You should keep it to blow. Especially if there isn't very much of it left. You know, sweet, I always hated to spend it on the household. And now we won't have as long as good old Ed for him it was so simple."

"Albert, I won't allow it. You'll have to explain to him."

He bent a little nearer on the arm of the chair. "Sweet," he said quickly, "would you call me a jealous husband?"

She gave an instant's thought to it. "Yes, I think you are, Albert. Of course you don't say anything. Darling—why do you care?"

"I don't care, of course. But really when I think how you've run around with Avery—those luncheons and matinees and concerts and teas—every evening when I came home from work I'd find him in this armchair toying with my gin. Did I ever say a word?" he demanded indignantly. "Would you call me a jealous husband?"

"I said you didn't speak."

"Dearest, you do."

He rose to his feet. "Have I asked you a question about what when on?"

"No. But I'd tell you."

He stepped to the armchair and caught up her hand. "Sweetheart," he said, "in a minute we'll be quarrelling. Do you know it's after midnight?" His voice was faintly threaded by a note of self-consciousness.

Color flooded her face. But in answer to the pressure of his fingers she rose. Then his arms were around her. "Precious," he whispered, his lips close to her ear. "You were kidding me, weren't you? I mean about Avery?"

"Yes. In a way."

"You never really cared for him?"

"No. I care for you."

She could feel his lips smile at the deliberate understatement. "When I find what it means to me to know that's true," he said very earnestly. "I'm terribly penitent. Sweet, you must believe me. I'm going to keep you happy—"

"Man's facile promise! However, it moved her."

"Never again—I swear it, my darling — Are you laughing, Cicily?"

She had been, hysterically. Even as she held him close in her arms she was not deluded by his self-delusion. He'd meant what he'd said. But it would not be so simple.

Nothing was simple, but the fact that she loved him. To that simplicity she must confide her future.

"No," she said, "I'm not laughing."

But she answered his smile.

THE END

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Footwood	22%
Pulp and Paper Mills	17%
Miscellaneous	6%

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