

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

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Barbara's garden party birthday is going to be difficult this year. Tensions are running high, and her marriage to Charles has been going through a rocky time.

Barbara and Charles Gardener have been married for nearly two years now. There have been many ups and downs: periods of fiery passion, followed by periods of heated arguments, distance and tearful making up. Right now they are in one of the hard times. They still love each other deeply, but they have been fighting, mostly about trivial things: where to go to dinner, whether to have friends over on a given night, how often to see Barbara's mother Virginia, or Charles's brother William. Sometimes the fights have been more serious: money and Charles's spendthrift habits, whether or not they are ready for a child.

When they are fighting, Charles frequently disappears: usually for the evening, occasionally for the night, once for almost a week. Barbara fears that he is cheating on her, but he denies it, and she has found no evidence. With Charles gone, Barbara has been spending more time with her brother-in-law, William. William has been offering her comfort and reassurances, while worrying about the degradation of the marriage. At the same time, some of the old spark has kindled between William and Barbara. Seeing the problems in her relationship with Charles, Barbara has begun to wonder if she would have been better off with the reliable William.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching Charles and Barbara's deteriorating relationship with great concern. While her marriage had its problems, she believes in the sanctity of marriage, and wants her daughter to try to resolve her own marital issues. At the same time, she is very worried that Charles might be off with another woman. If things must come to a head, she wants it to happen before children are involved.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

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You have been very concerned lately about Barbara and Charles. They've been fighting too often, and you're afraid of where it's headed. This summer, Barbara ended up at your house in tears after Charles disappeared. He didn't come back for almost a week. She's afraid there's another woman, although she doesn't know who.

What's really important here is their marriage. You know that Barbara and Charles still love each other. There must be a solution here. Marriage is sacred, and the marriage vows are not to be broken lightly. It is still possible for them to reconcile. They have their problems, but they still have the basis of a good marriage.

Maybe what they really need is a child. Barbara has been worried about having children because money is tight and things are unstable, but Charles really wants kids. Maybe if they had a child, that would be enough to hold him there and keep things stable. You've seen it work for some of your friends.

On the other hand, you remember what happened to your marriage after Barbara was born. Things were going well before, but while you were so focused on your daughter, your relationship with Frederick fell apart. If Charles has been seeing someone else, this could drive him further into her arms. You don't believe in divorce, but if this marriage is not going to survive, it would be better if it ends before children are involved.

If there are issues, they need to be resolved. If Charles is seeing someone else, it doesn't have to be the end. Forgiveness is important in a marriage, and both Charles and Barbara need to remember that. However, if there is someone else, Barbara needs to know, and it needs to end, so their relationship can heal.