

Setting

Act I, Scene 3 (ADF) — Two years later

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Barbara's marriage to Charles is well and truly on the rocks this time. The question isn't simply whether the marriage will survive long term. The big question is: will their marriage even survive tonight's party?

Since the fight over Karen, nothing has gone well for them. Barbara hasn't really trusted him since, but she's never dug up any evidence that he did cheat on her. Charles has only grown more distant. They barely talk except when they're fighting. Sometimes Barbara almost wishes she had found evidence of an affair. Then at least there would be someone to blame it on. As it is, everything is falling apart and neither seems to know why.

Meanwhile, Barbara has been wondering more and more whether she should just leave Charles and try to start over. Recently, however, that option has gotten more complicated: Barbara is pregnant. She hasn't yet told anyone she's pregnant. If she tells Charles that she's pregnant with his child, he'll almost certainly do everything he can to make up with her. At this point, she's not sure she wants that. Maybe she could still leave Charles and patch things up with William. William has his own problems, but at least he's stable.

Meanwhile, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. However, with Barbara so upset, Charles has become ever more volatile. He doesn't understand what's going on with her, and he can't fix it, which just makes him angry and frustrated. All he wants is to resolve things, but sometimes he thinks it's not even worth it anymore. He feels like he doesn't even know his own wife, and doesn't know what to do.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will their marriage survive all the betrayals?

William Gardener

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Your brother has ruined the best thing that ever happened to him: his marriage to Barbara. He's gone more nights than not drinking, gambling, or just out making trouble. You don't know if you can ever forgive him for what he has done to Barbara. You've been as supportive of Barbara as you possibly could, but you don't know how much more she can take. At first you thought he must be having an affair, but if so, you haven't found out about it. He's just this irresponsible, even without any distractions.

You plan on calling out Charles for his bad behavior tonight and challenging him to shape up. You hate to ruin Barbara's party, but something needs to give. Better to take the time now than to see this drag on any longer. They're both suffering, and if neither of them will take action, it will have to be you.

You get the feeling from talking to Barbara that she realizes this as well and that some kind of breaking point is necessary. Over the past several weeks, she's been so... quiet. You think she's finally realizing, just as you have, that things can't go on without a real change. Tonight is the time for that change.