

Setting

Act I, Scene 3 (ACF) — 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?

Barbara's affair with William ended a month ago at William's prodding. Barbara has decided it was a mistake and moved on, blaming her indiscretion on Charles' own bad behavior. William, however, has been carrying guilt for the affair ever since. He feels that this has been going on too long and he can't bear the secret of his betrayal of his brother, no matter what Charles himself has done. Tonight he plans to confess and beg Charles' forgiveness.

Meanwhile, after the end of the affair, Barbara has been wondering more and more whether she made the right decision. She's pregnant, and, not only is she not entirely sure whose child it is, she's not sure which she would prefer. While she was in the affair with William, she could see the stability that she had given up. Now that it's over, she's left without a buffer against the tumult of her marriage. She hasn't yet told anyone she's pregnant. If she tells Charles that she's pregnant with his child, he'll almost certainly forgive her any trespass. On the other hand, if she can convince William it's his, maybe she could leave Charles and marry William - if William would even have her after the past few months.

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 doesn't know for sure about the affair, but 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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How did it come to this? What were you possibly thinking? An affair with your brother's wife?

The affair with Barbara went on for the better part of the last year. It was only a month ago that you broke it off, but it had been eating away at you since almost the beginning. Even if Charles has been a terrible husband, out drinking, gambling and disappearing for days or weeks at a time, it doesn't justify what you've done to him. That is why you need to confess and apologize tonight. No matter what comes of it, you can't live with the lie anymore.

Barbara... you love her. There is no doubt about it. But she made her choice when she married Charles. It has taken you this long to really and truly come to grips with it, but you have at last. She may regret it at times, but it was the decision that she made and you can't help her, your brother, or yourself by denying it any longer. What she needs... what all of you need is to start acting like adults and living with the choices that have been made.

Their marriage needs help, lots of it. You can't be part of the problem anymore. You just can't and won't do that now or ever again.