



Bernadette

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Nora has discovered her husband, Robbie, in extramarital affairs three times, and each time, like the articulate but emotionally distant couple they are, they have talked the matter out and gone on with their relationship.

Bernadette, their French-Canadian servant, is a simple woman who never quite understands what her terrifying, well-meaning employers want. The story begins with Bernadette's knowledge that she is pregnant, having had several casual sexual encounters with strangers she met in town on her days off. Bernadette reflects little about life and asks for no more than a place to live and a job to do.

The Knights give Bernadette books by writers such as D. H. Lawrence and André Gide, which she puts in a drawer for a few days and then returns. However, Nora, blithely unaware, brags about Bernadette's elevated reading habits to guests at a party she gives. When Nora finds out Bernadette is pregnant, she suspects Robbie and is shocked when she realizes she is mistaken, for it undercuts her moral superiority. The Knights remain in their usual emotionally detached state, considering it their responsibility to pay for Bernadette having the baby at a home for unwed mothers in the United States.

The story ends with Bernadette sitting in a movie theater, watching a musical comedy, which she enjoys because she believes in uncomplicated stories of love. When she feels her baby move, she thinks of the child as alive, something to be given a name, to be clothed, fed, and baptized. However, because of her own lower-class background, she feels sure that the baby will die; all she can hope for is an angel of her own to pray for her in heaven.

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