



# **The Other Two**

*Edith Wharton*

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## **The Other Two** Edith Wharton

The scene left Waythorn deeply shaken. Shamefacedly, in indirect ways, he had been finding out about Haskett; and all that he had learned was favorable. The little man, in order to be near his daughter, had sold out his share in a profitable business in Utica, and accepted a modest clerkship in a New York manufacturing house. He boarded in a shabby street and had few acquaintances. His passion for Lily filled his life. Waythorn felt that this exploration of Haskett was like groping about with a dark-lantern in his wife's past.

## **The Other Two Details**

Date : Published June 1st 2004 by Kessinger Publishing (first published 1904)

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Author : Edith Wharton

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## **From Reader Review The Other Two for online ebook**

### **M.M. Strawberry Reviews says**

A curious and thoughtful read. It's really interesting to note the decorum and views regarding divorce in the turn of the 20th century... was this really a century ago? Wow.

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### **Savannah Porter says**

Delightful and a bit funny. Great story that highlights Realism.

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### **Kathryn Green says**

Had to read this short story for English and was a bit meh really. Nothing rly happened and it ended really abruptly.

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### **Iain Hamill says**

19/100 Glimpse of Truth Short Stories

The introduction by David Miller set the expectations high, citing such great quotes from Wharton as "Silence may be as variously shaded as speech", "true originality consists not in a new manner but a new vision" and "the American landscape has no foreground and the American mind no background"...

The Other Two was not my normal fare but I appreciated the interesting psychology of the story, and the fashions and practices of the yester-year New York scene.

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### **Shaine says**

I love Wharton. She wrote books ahead of her time.

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### **Julie says**

Read for American Lit

I had to read and write about this as we studied Psychological Realism this week. I wrote a lengthy paper about Waythorn's psych development throughout the story but for our purposes here I will just say that it took a very honest look at what goes on in our minds when we are going through a difficult and

uncomfortable change. Maybe I am just neurotic but I related to so much of the self-consciousness and discomfort that Waythorn suffered, and then his ability to adapt. I have gone through things that I thought would consume my mind forever, only to find that at some point they had become like the crack in the windshield that I had looked through for so long that I no longer even noticed.

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### **Christina says**

A masterful short story by Wharton about a Gilded Age marriage in which Waythorn, a Wall St. investor, grows to better understand the divorcee he married.

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### **Fefe says**

3/5

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### **Alexandria Steele says**

I really loved this story. I love how so much is revealed about the characters through flushed faces and neckties and lunches.

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### **Chase says**

A short story by Edith Wharton about a man named Waythorn and his new wife Alice. They have some difficulties because, through circumstance, her previous two husband's were still in the picture: one as a father to her daughter, and the other as a business partner of Waythorn.

This short story examines the difficulties Waythorn has accepting his Wife's past. He goes through jealousy, self doubt, suspicion, and more. Ultimately, he comes to terms with the situation in the end, and the change becomes normal to him.

I am glad that the story didn't end in him finding out that his wife was cheating. That was where I was expecting the story to go, and so it was a pleasant surprise to find out otherwise.

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### **Evgenia says**

This short story is a frank examination of a newlywed's psychology coming to terms with his wife's past as a double divorcee. Although published over one hundred years ago, it is shockingly resonant. Reading this, we experience the small insecurities, underlying tensions, occasional awkwardness, quiet dignity, begrudging respect, overriding love, and eventual (albeit delicate) peace so common in these situations—and it feels like reading the playbook of any number of modern romances.

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## Alex Chalgren says

“She was ‘as easy as an old show’-a show that too many feet had worn. Her elasticity was the result of tension in too many different directions.”

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## Cecily says

The social and personal problems of a partner's multiple exes: the effect they had in the past, and the ongoing effect on your life together. It's very civilised, but turns almost to farce.

The wife admits to being 35. (“Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years” Lady Bracknell in Wilde’s *Importance of Being Earnest* (my review here). She has two previous husbands, both living, one of whom is the father of her daughter. The story juggles feminist and traditional themes, reflecting the social changes of the time (1904).

The story arc is like a humorous interpretation of the 1969 Kübler-Ross model of the five stages of grief:

- \* “New York divorce is in itself a diploma of virtue.” Like one of Wilde’s contrary quips.
- \* “She was ‘as easy as an old shoe’ - a shoe that too many feet had worn.”
- \* “She reminded him of a juggler tossing knives; but the knives were blunt.”
- \* “Occupying a chair in his usual provisional way.”

## More Wharton Stories

I read this as one of twenty stories in **The New York Stories of Edith Wharton** , which I reviewed here.

Reading them one after the other made me notice her favoured ingredients, from which she selected a unique combination for each story, and which led me to concoct a recipe for **Write Your Own Wharton Short Story**, which I posted here.

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## Hila Karimov says

The novel shows an interesting role reversal (for the late 19th century) between a husband and wife. She is a divorcee of 2 marriages (pretty incredible for a woman of the time), while for her husband theirs is his first marriage. The novel follows the husband's slow-boil freakout as he realizes that his wife is (gasp!) a regular person, rather than an angel survivor of 2 brutal marriages. He is constantly thrown into the company of her two exes, and begins to understand that his wife divorced each not for reasons like brutality or flagrant unfaithfulness, but for simpler reasons - reasons that would explain why a man would divorce a woman, but that most women would learn to live with in their husband - uncouthness and unrefinement, misuse of

money. Moreover, his wife seems extremely comfortable with the situation. There are no "scenes", she doesn't bat an eye to meet one, or even both, of her exes, but is unfailingly polite to both while the husband is distraught, describing himself as hating his own "womanly disposition" that causes him distress. He thinks his wife is as comfortable as "an old shoe" and resents her for seeming to have no personality at all. Throughout the story, the husband waits for his wife in various situations, and there is not one instance of her waiting or looking for him.

The husband eventually comes to accept his wife's personality and past, and the presence of her exes in their lives, even becoming thankful for his wife's serene demeanor.

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## **Lola says**

I always forget how much I like a good Edith Wharton short story until I read an Edith Wharton short story. Thankfully, my American Lit II class has kept me in a steady stream of Wharton. I do love *The Age of Innocence*, but there is something about her short fiction that feels fresher and blunter somehow. I can just imagine her pounding out these short stories between long, dramatic novels for fun. They just have that feeling to them.

*The Other Two* explores a topic only starting to emerge in Wharton's time: divorce. More specifically, she explores the social aftermath of divorce: what a blended family might look like, how a new husband would deal with an ex, and just what a woman having more than one husband means in the long run. I really feel that only Wharton, later a divorcee herself, could have written this story in 1904. It is clever and insightful in a way that still feels modern.

Choosing to frame the story in Waythorn's perspective instead of Alice's was a smart move. It makes everything less clear and leaves Waythorn to have to ask questions and come to conclusions about what he has thought about his new wife and what the truth about her is. However, if there is such a thing as Edith Wharton fan fiction, I'd like to see Alice's story in further detail. I also enjoyed how tense and awkward yet polite the interactions between Alice's ex husbands and Waythorn are.

Overall, *The Other Two* is sharp, modern, and everything any Edith Wharton short story should be. I would definitely recommend!

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