

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

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Barbara and William Gardener have been married for almost two years now. William graduated from law school this spring and has just started a good entry level job at a large firm. They bought a house, and are starting to plan a family. On the surface, they are the perfect young couple, but underneath, something is missing. Despite William's gentle and caring ways, Barbara is lonely. She has been spending more of her time with friends, and less time with William. He's been so busy with work, but that isn't all. He never moved her in the way Charles did.

As she has been looking for something more, Charles has been right there. Charles has not found anyone else, and he's still head over heels for Barbara. He tries very hard to support his brother, but when Barbara comes to him, he can't help but think that it should have been him instead. The passion between them is still palpable to everyone except William. Even after the shocking proposal two years ago, William can't really believe his little brother would ever hurt him like that.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching all of this with great concern. She sees the same patterns in Barbara and William's marriage that happened in her marriage to Frederick, and she knows how lonely that can be. At the same time, she is very worried about the interaction between Barbara and Charles. The marriage vows are sacred; a little loneliness does not change that. She has been looking for ways to coax William and Barbara back together. William loves her so much. If only she could convince him to show it a little more. He's so quiet, so responsible. Barbara needs to truly know how important she is to William. Virginia has been trying to encourage William to be a little more like his brother, without losing his stability.

Barbara Gardener

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There can't be another quiet night tonight. There just can't be. You are still young and alive, not an old lady. You married William for his stability, but that alone doesn't make a marriage. You understand that now.

The past two years have been hard, and it keeps getting harder. With every sedate evening and perfectly arranged day, your tolerance for William diminishes. And he seems completely blind to it all, no matter how many times you have pushed to liven things up. He's too tired or just isn't interested.

First he was busy with law school, and now he's working all day every day. The house is nice, but it is empty and so is your life. Everything looks perfect, but you need something more than a nice facade on your life. You are worried that if something doesn't change soon, the only way you'll ever have more is with someone other than William. There has been some talk of a child, but you just don't know if you are ready for that, especially with the emptiness in your life with William.

You look at the life Charles is living and you can't help but wonder how it could have been with the two of you. He's so vibrant and alive in every way that William isn't. You've been to see the last few plays he has been in at the local theater. Afterwards, you've joined him and some of the members of the cast for drinks. It feels so good to be alive for awhile, and you wish that feeling could last. You're not sure you've ever really fallen out of love with Charles, and from the way he looks at you, you're sure he feels the same way.

The passion between you and Charles is still there, just beneath the surface. It has been building like a volcano over the past few months. The thought of hurting William appalls you, but you just aren't sure you can keep going on this way. You need to break through to William that you need more in your life. Something that you hope you can get from your husband, so that you don't have to keep fighting against turning to his brother for it.

This better not be another quiet night. If it is, you don't think you can keep going on without getting some of what you need somewhere else.

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Charles Gardener

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It's been two years since Barbara turned you down and decided to marry your brother, and you still can't get her out of your head. It hasn't been easy, staying close to them all this time, especially watching Barbara suffer. Women need attention, passion, love. All William can offer is a perfectly planned life. He does love her, but you wouldn't know it from the way he acts. She's bored out of her mind with him.

It would have been different if she had married you. You know it wouldn't have been a fairy tale, there would have been some problems, of course, but she wouldn't be wasting away like this. Maybe there's still time to change things. Maybe it's not too late.

You couldn't really stand to do that to your brother. He's done so much for you over the years. At the same time, Barbara has been turning to you more and more often. Just for little things: help with something while he's at work, going for a walk with her, picking up something at the store. But you still see the way she looks at you. The passion in her eyes has never changed. Every time you see her when William isn't there, you dream about carrying her away. Maybe not forever, maybe you can't have that at this point, but just a few hours with her. Your brother would never need to know.

You know she's been thinking about it too. The way she'll let her fingers brush yours. The way she looks at you when she thinks no one's looking. You miss her touch, and you can't stand to see her so lonely. Who knows, you might really be helping your brother. Surely she'll leave him if it goes on like this. Maybe seeing you on the side would keep her from leaving him.

Oh, that's just silly and you know it. You just can't stand seeing her all the time and having to be so careful. You miss her so much.

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William Gardener

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You are worried about your marriage. You're doing everything you can to provide for Barbara, but she doesn't seem to understand that. You hope that perhaps a nice dinner party with family will help her through.

The early years of a marriage are supposed to be the hardest. You read that somewhere and it is clear that it is true. Part of it is that you've been so busy trying to get your career off the ground. Law school was exhausting and now that you've got a position at a law firm, you find that you just don't have enough energy when you get home. You're doing all of it for the two of you, though. How else will you be able to support your family and give Barbara the excellent life she deserves?

You know that she wants more time with you and you wish that you had it to give to her. In a few years, you might have more time, but not right now. One of the things that you think might help Barbara through this would be a child. The two of you have talked about it only a little bit, but you think it would be the perfect time. It would help Barbara to have someone there that needed her, and your salary is certainly enough to really get started on a family.

Your brother Charles has been struggling over the past two years and you're worried about him. He managed to get a job as an English teacher at the local high school, but he's now talking about leaving it to focus on theater. You suspect that he may actually be close to being fired for some reason or another and is just trying to make it look like he is in control of his life. He isn't, and you wish there was some way you could help him. He's an adult now, though, and has to learn to stand on his own two feet.

Hopefully tonight will just be the quiet family dinner that Barbara needs.

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Virginia Vela

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You're really worried about Barbara and William. You know what it's like to live in a boring marriage without passion, but Barbara never had your patience. She was always a little more like her father. William is a good and caring husband, but Barbara drifts further and further from him as time passes.

And while she drifts away from William, Charles is right there. You can tell the two of them are still in love. Anyone with eyes can tell that. Thankfully, William is blind as a bat to any flaws in Barbara. You worry about whatever is happening between the two of them. Marriage isn't always easy, but the marriage vows are sacred. If Barbara is bored, she needs to find a hobby, or have a child. Falling in with another man, especially her husband's brother, is dangerous and wrong.

Perhaps there is still hope for William and Barbara. William loves her dearly. If only he would show it a little more, things might be okay between the two of them. He's so quiet, so slow to act. He could learn something from the passion of his brother. Perhaps you could help him. Teach him something of what a woman wants to hear. If he were a little more passionate, a little more dramatic, maybe Barbara would understand how important she is to him. Women need a little romance, a little drama. Women need to know that they matter.

There must be something that William could do to stave off Barbara's frustrations and save their marriage. Maybe by talking to your daughter and her husband, you can find that and help them both.