

Setting

Act I, Scene 1

~

It is Barbara's twenty-first birthday and she is having a small garden party in the beautifully tended garden at her mother Virginia's house. Two young men, brothers, Charles and William, have been invited to the party. Barbara has been dating the stable and reliable William for six months to the day now. She had previously dated Charles in a whirlwind romance that ended as abruptly as it began.

The relationship between William and Barbara is... stable. One might say dull. He is calm, assured, considerate, and almost entirely predictable. There is warmth, but more than that, there is security.

The relationship between Charles and Barbara had been anything but sedate. It was dramatic and passionate, an affair of vibrant emotions and hormones. The fights were as heated as the romance, and they eventually led to the break-up.

What is not known to Barbara is that both young men intend to propose to her tonight. William is planning a quiet proposal at the end of the evening. Charles, on the other hand, has decided that the passion he still feels for Barbara is not something he wishes to contain and plans a large and showy proposal on the spot. This will spur on William to act in making his own proposal, not as he would have wished, but in self-defense.

This evening, Barbara will have to decide which of the two brothers she wishes to wed. William offers her someone she can trust, and a predictable and stable life. Charles still ignites her passion, but everything about him is a risk.

With her daughter caught at a crucial turning point in her young life, Virginia hopes to provide support and guidance. Virginia's own marriage while beginning in passion, turned into a loveless thing after a few years. In their day, divorce was not so common and there was Barbara to think about, so they remained together until his passing five years ago. Whether Virginia will try to turn her daughter towards one of the two men or to allow her daughter to make her own decision without influence is up to her.

Barbara Vela

Act I, Scene 1

~

Something is up. You can tell. William is almost stuttering and Charles has that too-slick grin on his face. You'd recognize that grin anywhere, and it means he knows something or is planning something. You really hope that whatever it is won't ruin your party.

Your mother is also just a little too quiet. You saw her looking at your father Frederick's photographs the other day. Maybe it is just that it is your 21st birthday and she wishes he was here. You do too. It was only a few weeks after your 16th birthday that he passed away of a heart attack. He had been young, but he was always a dedicated worker. He worked so hard you barely got a chance to know him growing up. Still, you miss him.

You and William have been together for six months now and you care for him. He's comfortable to be around and you can always count on him. He cares for you, that much is plain to anyone who just looks at his open face. He's a good man and you're glad to have him in your life. His stability has been a tremendous boon for you, giving you something that you feel has been lacking since your father died. You know that he feels more strongly for you than you do for him and at times that bothers you, but he is happy with it, so you don't question it too much.

William is everything that Charles isn't. You had dated Charles before you dated William, and if there are two men more different it is those two brothers. Charles is a ball of raw emotions and energy. He swept you completely off your feet a few years ago. It was electric, riveting, and dangerous. With him, you felt like you almost had no power. His smile and his hands, they controlled you.

The fights were every bit as passionate as the lovemaking. He just wouldn't accept it when he was wrong, or when something didn't go his way. You had been together for several months when one of the fights led to him disappearing, leaving town, without warning or notice. He was gone for the better part of a month. When he came back, you had mustered up the nerve to tell him it was over, and to stick with it. Whatever the passion, you just couldn't live with the uncertainty from day to day. You broke it off with him, a decision you've wrestled with ever since.

After you broke it off with Charles, you came to be friends with his brother William. The two of you could laugh about Charles and all his antics. William understood how infuriating his brother was capable of being. After the death of their own father when William was 15 and Charles was 13, William had been forced to look out for his brother. William learned all about the importance of the responsibility and stability that Charles lacked.

Six months ago, that spark of friendship became something more with William. He was so obviously in love with you, and you needed that kind of stability at the time. It was such a relief to be in control of yourself with someone. It isn't passionate, but it is... safe. He was there for you when you needed him, and that counts for a lot. Recently, though, you wonder if you're growing beyond it. What's a relationship when there isn't passion, even at the start?

Now you just need to hope that the party goes well. Whatever it is that William is nervous about, or Charles is planning, they had best not ruin your party. A girl only turns 21 once, after all. This is your night, and you mean to enjoy it.

Setting

Act I, Scene 1

~

It is Barbara's twenty-first birthday and she is having a small garden party in the beautifully tended garden at her mother Virginia's house. Two young men, brothers, Charles and William, have been invited to the party. Barbara has been dating the stable and reliable William for six months to the day now. She had previously dated Charles in a whirlwind romance that ended as abruptly as it began.

The relationship between William and Barbara is... stable. One might say dull. He is calm, assured, considerate, and almost entirely predictable. There is warmth, but more than that, there is security.

The relationship between Charles and Barbara had been anything but sedate. It was dramatic and passionate, an affair of vibrant emotions and hormones. The fights were as heated as the romance, and they eventually led to the break-up.

What is not known to Barbara is that both young men intend to propose to her tonight. William is planning a quiet proposal at the end of the evening. Charles, on the other hand, has decided that the passion he still feels for Barbara is not something he wishes to contain and plans a large and showy proposal on the spot. This will spur on William to act in making his own proposal, not as he would have wished, but in self-defense.

This evening, Barbara will have to decide which of the two brothers she wishes to wed. William offers her someone she can trust, and a predictable and stable life. Charles still ignites her passion, but everything about him is a risk.

With her daughter caught at a crucial turning point in her young life, Virginia hopes to provide support and guidance. Virginia's own marriage while beginning in passion, turned into a loveless thing after a few years. In their day, divorce was not so common and there was Barbara to think about, so they remained together until his passing five years ago. Whether Virginia will try to turn her daughter towards one of the two men or to allow her daughter to make her own decision without influence is up to her.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 1

~

You know it's wrong, but you still can't stop thinking about Barbara. Barbara and your brother William have been dating for six months. They're good for each other, and you know it, but they don't have what you had with Barbara. They have happiness and stability, but you had passion and true love. The touch of her lips on yours was better than any thrill you had ever experienced. She's the most beautiful woman you have ever met and every moment with her is wonderful, even when you're fighting. And now she's dating your brother.

Your older brother has always been the stable, responsible one. You climbed trees, he played catch. You got in fights and went to parties. He played on the baseball team and got straight As. You studied theater in school, he's going to law school. For all your fights, you have always been close. He took care of you, and he's taken the blame for your dumb ideas more than once. When your father died eight years ago, you were 13, and William was 15. William tried to be father and brother to you. While you chafed under his rules, you love him like a father and a brother both. You wish William only the best. The loss of your father was one of the first things that you and Barbara bonded over. She lost hers when she was 16, only a few years older.

You and Barbara dated first. It was amazing and passionate, but the fights were explosive. After one fight, you left for three weeks without calling or telling her where you went. All you did was hop a train and go, it's not like there was another woman, or anything, but that was the last straw for Barbara. You pleaded with her to take you back, but then William came into the picture. They were happy together, and you didn't want to hurt your brother, so you let it go.

But when he confided last night that he was going to propose to Barbara, you knew you couldn't take it. You couldn't let him marry the girl of your dreams without a fight. That's when you decided that you had to propose to her first. Today, in the middle of her birthday party, you're going to tell her that you love her and can't live without her. That if she still loves you too (as you know she does), she'll leave William and marry you. You went out and spent what little savings you had on the most beautiful ring you could find.

Today, at her 21st birthday party, you're going to propose. You're going to give her the big, flashy, romantic proposal that your brother never would. You're going to take this opportunity to tell her how much you love and need her in front of everyone. Your brother would do things quietly, behind closed doors, all prim and proper. That isn't true love. True love shouts in the face of propriety. True love declares itself openly, and ignores all barriers.

There are two big hurdles. One is your brother. You know this will crush him, but you can't let that determine how you live your life. The other is Barbara's mother, Virginia. Will she even let her daughter marry you after the big scene last time you broke up? You'll need to convince both of them that you have changed, that this time you know what you want, and it's to spend the rest of your life with Barbara. She's perfect, she's beautiful, and if you don't act soon, she'll be gone.

If she turns you down, you don't know what you'll do. How can you handle seeing the woman you love married to the brother who is so important to you?

Setting

Act I, Scene 1

~

It is Barbara's twenty-first birthday and she is having a small garden party in the beautifully tended garden at her mother Virginia's house. Two young men, brothers, Charles and William, have been invited to the party. Barbara has been dating the stable and reliable William for six months to the day now. She had previously dated Charles in a whirlwind romance that ended as abruptly as it began.

The relationship between William and Barbara is... stable. One might say dull. He is calm, assured, considerate, and almost entirely predictable. There is warmth, but more than that, there is security.

The relationship between Charles and Barbara had been anything but sedate. It was dramatic and passionate, an affair of vibrant emotions and hormones. The fights were as heated as the romance, and they eventually led to the break-up.

What is not known to Barbara is that both young men intend to propose to her tonight. William is planning a quiet proposal at the end of the evening. Charles, on the other hand, has decided that the passion he still feels for Barbara is not something he wishes to contain and plans a large and showy proposal on the spot. This will spur on William to act in making his own proposal, not as he would have wished, but in self-defense.

This evening, Barbara will have to decide which of the two brothers she wishes to wed. William offers her someone she can trust, and a predictable and stable life. Charles still ignites her passion, but everything about him is a risk.

With her daughter caught at a crucial turning point in her young life, Virginia hopes to provide support and guidance. Virginia's own marriage while beginning in passion, turned into a loveless thing after a few years. In their day, divorce was not so common and there was Barbara to think about, so they remained together until his passing five years ago. Whether Virginia will try to turn her daughter towards one of the two men or to allow her daughter to make her own decision without influence is up to her.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 1

~

Your palms are sweaty, your chest is tight, and you're trying not to stutter over every word. You don't know how you're going to get through the evening with nerves like this. Of course, it isn't every day that you are prepared to propose to the woman of your dreams.

She will say yes, won't she? Of course she will. You've been together for six months now and it has been pretty close to perfect. She's beautiful, witty, and charming. You've been attentive, caring, supportive, and completely head over heels for her. You'll be a good husband and eventually a father. The two of you can get married in another six months on your one-year anniversary. It will be perfect.

You're worried about your brother, Charles. He's got that too-calm look on his face that always suggests he's planning something. He better not spoil your surprise by blurting it out before you have a chance to propose. That would be all too like him. You almost wish you hadn't told him last night, but you couldn't help it. He's your brother and, whatever your differences, you needed his support. He had a right to know, especially since he had previously dated Barbara.

That had been a disaster, of course. Charles has never had anything like a stable relationship. Charles just feels things, he doesn't think about them. One day everything will be great, the next, who knows? You love your brother, but he's just not grounded in the real world the way you are. It was inevitable that Barbara would leave him after he abandoned her one time, just disappearing after a fight.

It was several months after that you and Barbara got together. At first, you had just been a supportive friend, someone able to understand the ups and downs of your brother. Eventually, it became more. You were the confidante, the stable one, the person she could always rely on to be there. You were the man who understood her, cared for her, and would always be there for her. And you have been, and you will be, for the rest of your life.

You spoke with Virginia, Barbara's mother, last week. Since Frederick, Barbara's father, died five years ago, you couldn't ask him for permission to wed Barbara. So, you went to Virginia. You explained how very much you loved Barbara, how you would care for her, and take care of her. She gave you permission, with a smile. You hope that Barbara's father would have approved as well.

Your own father died 8 years ago. You had been 15 and Charles was 13. It was a hard time for you, for Charles, and for your own mother. You grew up a lot that year, becoming the man of the house. You learned a lot about responsibility, the importance of stability, and dedication to your family. Charles took it much harder than you did and started acting out. You had to watch out for him constantly. You've never stopped watching out for him really. You just hope that he'll stay in control of himself tonight, of all nights.

Now you just have to make it through the party. You will propose at the end. You've got the ring burning a hole in your pocket. You just have to stay calm for a few more hours, and propose just as the sun is going down. She loves the sunset, and it will be perfect. Nothing can go wrong, as long as you just keep breathing and stay calm. By this time tomorrow you'll be engaged and well on your way to the life of your dreams.

Setting

Act I, Scene 1

~

It is Barbara's twenty-first birthday and she is having a small garden party in the beautifully tended garden at her mother Virginia's house. Two young men, brothers, Charles and William, have been invited to the party. Barbara has been dating the stable and reliable William for six months to the day now. She had previously dated Charles in a whirlwind romance that ended as abruptly as it began.

The relationship between William and Barbara is... stable. One might say dull. He is calm, assured, considerate, and almost entirely predictable. There is warmth, but more than that, there is security.

The relationship between Charles and Barbara had been anything but sedate. It was dramatic and passionate, an affair of vibrant emotions and hormones. The fights were as heated as the romance, and they eventually led to the break-up.

What is not known to Barbara is that both young men intend to propose to her tonight. William is planning a quiet proposal at the end of the evening. Charles, on the other hand, has decided that the passion he still feels for Barbara is not something he wishes to contain and plans a large and showy proposal on the spot. This will spur on William to act in making his own proposal, not as he would have wished, but in self-defense.

This evening, Barbara will have to decide which of the two brothers she wishes to wed. William offers her someone she can trust, and a predictable and stable life. Charles still ignites her passion, but everything about him is a risk.

With her daughter caught at a crucial turning point in her young life, Virginia hopes to provide support and guidance. Virginia's own marriage while beginning in passion, turned into a loveless thing after a few years. In their day, divorce was not so common and there was Barbara to think about, so they remained together until his passing five years ago. Whether Virginia will try to turn her daughter towards one of the two men or to allow her daughter to make her own decision without influence is up to her.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 1

~

Your little daughter Barbara is all grown up. She's 21 and she seems so happy. For all the troubles in your marriage, you wish her father, Frederick could have lived to see this day. He died while she was still in high school and never truly got to see the beautiful young woman that she has grown into. He died just a few weeks after her 16th birthday, and every birthday since has been hard, watching her growing up and knowing he would never see her. This is one of the hardest. You and Frederick married a month before your 21st birthday.

You remember being 21, newly married and so desperately in love. At that age, everything was perfect between you and Frederick. You were so happy, so passionate. Everything he did was magic. Even when you fought, you knew you could look forward to it being over and resting in his arms.

Of course, it didn't last. After Barbara was born, you and Frederick drifted apart. The passion and the magic faded away. There was no cheating, no blaze of passionate fury. You just drifted apart. As you changed diapers and cared for a baby, he worked longer and longer hours. Soon you had nothing in common except Barbara. At first you resented him being gone so much, then you came to appreciate it. You had plenty of time with just Barbara and your friends. The hardest times came when Frederick was home. Sometimes you fought, but that was less painful than the hours of silence. As much as you would never admit it to anyone, when he died of a heart attack five years ago, it was almost a relief. Finally you were free to live without that silence hanging over you.

Barbara has been dating William for six months now. William Gardener is solid and responsible. He will be a good husband and a responsible father. He came to you last week and asked your permission to propose to your daughter. Since she didn't have a living father to ask, he wanted to ask you. You thought it was sweet, and gave your permission, of course. It's Barbara's decision. Still, you worry. Barbara doesn't look at William with longing, with passion. They don't seem to have the intensity that you and Frederick had. At the same time, maybe that's better. Maybe this is maintainable.

There's only one man you have ever seen Barbara look at the way you remember looking at Frederick. That is William's brother, Charles. Charles is everything William is not: wild, passionate, exciting. They dated before Barbara started dating William, but their relationship ended in a bitter fight, after which Charles left for three weeks. Barbara cried the whole time he was gone. When he got back, she chewed him out and left him. But you know she still pines for him. You've seen the way she still looks at him.

With William, Barbara will have a safe, dependable life, but she will never know the sort of love and passion she could have with Charles. Charles could leave tomorrow, but she would have passion. At the same time, if she does wind up with Charles, will that passion last? Your deep love with Frederick didn't make it past Barbara's infancy. Does love like that always burn itself out? Or is that deep love her chance for true happiness?

Barbara has always been a good girl, obedient to you and her father. You don't want to sway her too much on something this important. At the same time, you want to be sure that she's really ready to settle down with William before she answers his proposal.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

Barbara's garden party birthday is going to be difficult this year. Tensions are running high, and her marriage to Charles has been going through a rocky time.

Barbara and Charles Gardener have been married for nearly two years now. There have been many ups and downs: periods of fiery passion, followed by periods of heated arguments, distance and tearful making up. Right now they are in one of the hard times. They still love each other deeply, but they have been fighting, mostly about trivial things: where to go to dinner, whether to have friends over on a given night, how often to see Barbara's mother Virginia, or Charles's brother William. Sometimes the fights have been more serious: money and Charles's spendthrift habits, whether or not they are ready for a child.

When they are fighting, Charles frequently disappears: usually for the evening, occasionally for the night, once for almost a week. Barbara fears that he is cheating on her, but he denies it, and she has found no evidence. With Charles gone, Barbara has been spending more time with her brother-in-law, William. William has been offering her comfort and reassurances, while worrying about the degradation of the marriage. At the same time, some of the old spark has kindled between William and Barbara. Seeing the problems in her relationship with Charles, Barbara has begun to wonder if she would have been better off with the reliable William.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching Charles and Barbara's deteriorating relationship with great concern. While her marriage had its problems, she believes in the sanctity of marriage, and wants her daughter to try to resolve her own marital issues. At the same time, she is very worried that Charles might be off with another woman. If things must come to a head, she wants it to happen before children are involved.

Barbara Gardener

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

There can't be another fight tonight. There just can't be. You married Charles for the passion the two of you share, 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 fight, your tolerance for Charles diminishes. So does his willingness to actually engage with you on the issues. He'd rather run away than deal with the things that need to be dealt with, be it how tight money is, his increasingly heavy drinking, or whether or not to have a child.

Charles works at the local high school teaching English, but his commitment to his job is wavering. He spends as many evenings off at the local theater as not. He's even talked about quitting his job to throw all of his time into theater. It is just another escape hatch for Charles, another way to run away from his responsibilities.

You barely make up after the fights any more. He'd have to be at home to make up. Instead, he's out drinking and playing cards, losing money that you desperately need to get by. Last summer he disappeared for almost a week. You couldn't prove it, but you're more than half convinced that he was with someone else.

William, somehow, for some unknown reason, has been there for you through all of it. Despite what you put him through, leaving him for his brother, he supports you. When Charles has gone off on another tear drinking, or comes home after having lost another paycheck gambling, you'll call up William and he'll listen. William always knew how unreliable Charles could be, a fact that you had tried to convince yourself might change after the marriage.

Lately, even the passion with Charles has been muted. Charles has been more distant than usual, more willing to just give up and less willing to engage. You couldn't prove it, but the only thing that makes sense is that there is another woman. She's probably one of the pretty ones from the theater.

You can't stand the thought of Charles cheating on you, but at the same time, you know that more is going on between you and William than is right. The thought has crossed your mind more than a few times that you married the wrong brother, or at least that if Charles is off with another woman, you should have what you want as well. It isn't right, but sometimes it is so hard when William is always right there supporting you and Charles is gone again, who knows where.

There better not be another fight tonight. If there is and Charles vanishes again, you don't know what you'll do.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

Barbara's garden party birthday is going to be difficult this year. Tensions are running high, and her marriage to Charles has been going through a rocky time.

Barbara and Charles Gardener have been married for nearly two years now. There have been many ups and downs: periods of fiery passion, followed by periods of heated arguments, distance and tearful making up. Right now they are in one of the hard times. They still love each other deeply, but they have been fighting, mostly about trivial things: where to go to dinner, whether to have friends over on a given night, how often to see Barbara's mother Virginia, or Charles's brother William. Sometimes the fights have been more serious: money and Charles's spendthrift habits, whether or not they are ready for a child.

When they are fighting, Charles frequently disappears: usually for the evening, occasionally for the night, once for almost a week. Barbara fears that he is cheating on her, but he denies it, and she has found no evidence. With Charles gone, Barbara has been spending more time with her brother-in-law, William. William has been offering her comfort and reassurances, while worrying about the degradation of the marriage. At the same time, some of the old spark has kindled between William and Barbara. Seeing the problems in her relationship with Charles, Barbara has begun to wonder if she would have been better off with the reliable William.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching Charles and Barbara's deteriorating relationship with great concern. While her marriage had its problems, she believes in the sanctity of marriage, and wants her daughter to try to resolve her own marital issues. At the same time, she is very worried that Charles might be off with another woman. If things must come to a head, she wants it to happen before children are involved.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

Tonight is the two year anniversary of the party at which you asked Barbara to marry you. It should be a happy night, you should be celebrating her birthday and your relationship, but you just can't stop thinking about Karen. You met Karen a few months ago, when you were both in a production of *The Tempest* for your local community Shakespeare group. She played Miranda and you played Ferdinand. As your romance played out on stage, something blossomed between the two of you as well. You never quite crossed the line with Karen, but you dreamed of her many a night after that show.

You know it's wrong, and, since the play, you have tried so hard to avoid Karen. She was recently hired as a secretary at the high school where you teach English, so it hasn't been easy. You're terrified that Barbara will find out. You love Barbara desperately, and couldn't stand to have her leave you, but with Karen, everything is so easy.

You and Barbara have been fighting a lot recently. Mostly over stupid stuff. Money is tight. You've been talking about trying to break into a career in theater. Barbara wants you to keep the job you already have. You desperately want a child, but Barbara isn't sure she's ready. You know that if you had a child to care for it would make everything better. That's what you really need, a child to bring your relationship closer.

It's so hard to be around when you and Barbara are fighting. You can't stand to see her mad at you, but you can't give up on how you feel. When things get too bad, you storm out. Usually you just go to a bar for a few hours and drink and play cards. A few times, you've just gotten in the car and driven all night. Once, last summer, you just took off and drove until you couldn't drive any further, and slept in the car. You did that for three days before you were ready to turn around. But, so far, there's one thing you haven't done. You haven't turned to Karen.

Even if things get better, even if you have a child, could that really let you forget about Karen? That beautiful long, blond hair. Those perfect lips. Those dark blue eyes. She's so beautiful, and you see her at school every day. How long can you really hold out, especially when you and Barbara are fighting like this?

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

Barbara's garden party birthday is going to be difficult this year. Tensions are running high, and her marriage to Charles has been going through a rocky time.

Barbara and Charles Gardener have been married for nearly two years now. There have been many ups and downs: periods of fiery passion, followed by periods of heated arguments, distance and tearful making up. Right now they are in one of the hard times. They still love each other deeply, but they have been fighting, mostly about trivial things: where to go to dinner, whether to have friends over on a given night, how often to see Barbara's mother Virginia, or Charles's brother William. Sometimes the fights have been more serious: money and Charles's spendthrift habits, whether or not they are ready for a child.

When they are fighting, Charles frequently disappears: usually for the evening, occasionally for the night, once for almost a week. Barbara fears that he is cheating on her, but he denies it, and she has found no evidence. With Charles gone, Barbara has been spending more time with her brother-in-law, William. William has been offering her comfort and reassurances, while worrying about the degradation of the marriage. At the same time, some of the old spark has kindled between William and Barbara. Seeing the problems in her relationship with Charles, Barbara has begun to wonder if she would have been better off with the reliable William.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching Charles and Barbara's deteriorating relationship with great concern. While her marriage had its problems, she believes in the sanctity of marriage, and wants her daughter to try to resolve her own marital issues. At the same time, she is very worried that Charles might be off with another woman. If things must come to a head, she wants it to happen before children are involved.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

Sometimes you think you could almost kill your brother Charles. The past two years have been terrible for Barbara and Charles, and your brother is to blame for all of it. While it still hurts you that she chose your brother over you, it hurts you even more that he's utterly destroying every chance Barbara has for happiness.

While you have finished up at law school, the two of them have been struggling in every sense: emotionally, financially, romantically... You hear about all of it from Barbara when she calls you in tears after Charles has vanished again. It used to be only a few times a month, then once a week. Now it is a couple of times a week. You can't stand how much he is hurting her and you wish there was something, anything, for you to do about it.

While you're starting to make some real money in your career, Charles can barely hold down a job as an English teacher at a high school. He wants to quit even that to gamble on a job in theater. He drinks. He gambles. He vanished for a week last summer. And the worst of it is that you're convinced there is another woman.

You saw the two of them together last week, just talking. But you've seen that look in your brother's eyes before. He used to look at Barbara that way. The woman apparently both works at the high school and is involved in the theater with Charles. That he would do this to Barbara is the worst blow imaginable.

You plan to confront Charles about it tonight, quietly if you can. He needs to shape up and treat Barbara the way she needs to be treated. She needs someone who actually loves her enough to be there for her and put her needs before his own. And if he won't deal with it, you'll take what you've seen right to Barbara. She has a right to know.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

Barbara's garden party birthday is going to be difficult this year. Tensions are running high, and her marriage to Charles has been going through a rocky time.

Barbara and Charles Gardener have been married for nearly two years now. There have been many ups and downs: periods of fiery passion, followed by periods of heated arguments, distance and tearful making up. Right now they are in one of the hard times. They still love each other deeply, but they have been fighting, mostly about trivial things: where to go to dinner, whether to have friends over on a given night, how often to see Barbara's mother Virginia, or Charles's brother William. Sometimes the fights have been more serious: money and Charles's spendthrift habits, whether or not they are ready for a child.

When they are fighting, Charles frequently disappears: usually for the evening, occasionally for the night, once for almost a week. Barbara fears that he is cheating on her, but he denies it, and she has found no evidence. With Charles gone, Barbara has been spending more time with her brother-in-law, William. William has been offering her comfort and reassurances, while worrying about the degradation of the marriage. At the same time, some of the old spark has kindled between William and Barbara. Seeing the problems in her relationship with Charles, Barbara has begun to wonder if she would have been better off with the reliable William.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching Charles and Barbara's deteriorating relationship with great concern. While her marriage had its problems, she believes in the sanctity of marriage, and wants her daughter to try to resolve her own marital issues. At the same time, she is very worried that Charles might be off with another woman. If things must come to a head, she wants it to happen before children are involved.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 2 (A) — Two years later

~

You have been very concerned lately about Barbara and Charles. They've been fighting too often, and you're afraid of where it's headed. This summer, Barbara ended up at your house in tears after Charles disappeared. He didn't come back for almost a week. She's afraid there's another woman, although she doesn't know who.

What's really important here is their marriage. You know that Barbara and Charles still love each other. There must be a solution here. Marriage is sacred, and the marriage vows are not to be broken lightly. It is still possible for them to reconcile. They have their problems, but they still have the basis of a good marriage.

Maybe what they really need is a child. Barbara has been worried about having children because money is tight and things are unstable, but Charles really wants kids. Maybe if they had a child, that would be enough to hold him there and keep things stable. You've seen it work for some of your friends.

On the other hand, you remember what happened to your marriage after Barbara was born. Things were going well before, but while you were so focused on your daughter, your relationship with Frederick fell apart. If Charles has been seeing someone else, this could drive him further into her arms. You don't believe in divorce, but if this marriage is not going to survive, it would be better if it ends before children are involved.

If there are issues, they need to be resolved. If Charles is seeing someone else, it doesn't have to be the end. Forgiveness is important in a marriage, and both Charles and Barbara need to remember that. However, if there is someone else, Barbara needs to know, and it needs to end, so their relationship can heal.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

~

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.

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

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, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). Charles is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will Barbara and Charles' marriage survive all the betrayals?

Barbara Gardener

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

~

How did it come to this? Your husband has been cheating on you. You had been cheating on him, with his brother. You are now two and a half months pregnant, and you can't be sure who is the father. Where do you even go from here? You wish you knew.

You have a horrible feeling about tonight. You know that you need to confront Charles about his affair and find out if he is still committed to this marriage. If he is, you need to figure out what and how to tell him. He needs to know about the child you are carrying, but you need to know first whether or not there is a marriage worth trying to save.

William is wracked by guilt over the affair and you're worried he'll just blurt it out to Charles. It was William that ended the affair because he just couldn't stand the thought of hurting his brother any more. But right now, your needs and the needs of your child-to-be come first. You and your child are going to need to know where you stand and anything else is secondary.

If Charles isn't going to, or can't focus on your marriage, you need out now. You aren't sure what you are going to do if it comes to that, but you won't raise your child in a situation like this. You just can't, no matter what comes of it.

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

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, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). Charles is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will Barbara and Charles' marriage survive all the betrayals?

Charles Gardner

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

~

After almost a year of carrying on a passionate, beautiful, guilt-ridden affair with Karen, you have finally come to realize what you should have known all along: Barbara is truly the most important thing to you and you can't live without her. You dumped Karen, and have come back to beg Barbara's forgiveness. It's been easier since you got a job at the college and don't see Karen every day.

Poor Barbara. Your wonderful, caring, loving, faithful wife. All these months, you've treated her like garbage, and she's been always at your side, waiting for you. Sure, there have been fights, and plenty of them. And you deserved everything she threw at you. The names she called you could never be as bad as what you actually were. She was perfect, the ideal wife, and you may have thrown it all away.

You know that she's about ready to give up on you. You've seen the look in her eyes, especially recently. She must know what has been going on. Your only chance is to confess everything from the very start and beg her forgiveness. Karen never really meant anything to you. She was just an escape. You got carried away by how she was beautiful and available.

Barbara needs to understand that she is, always has been and always will be your one true love. Karen was a mistake. It will never happen again. You just need Barbara's faithful, caring love and reassurance. How could you do this to such a wonderful woman as Barbara?

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

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, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). Charles is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will Barbara and Charles' marriage survive all the betrayals?

William Gardener

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

~

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 having an affair, 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.

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

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, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). Charles is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will Barbara and Charles' marriage survive all the betrayals?

Virginia Vela

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

~

Your daughter's marriage is falling apart, and sometimes you think you're more upset about it than she is. She and Charles have been fighting constantly. You've heard rumors that there's another woman. The past month, things seem to have gotten even worse. You don't know what happened, but Barbara has just snapped.

You're worried that Charles and Barbara are going to divorce, but you're even more worried that they're not going to do it until too late. Barbara and Charles both want children, and if it wasn't for all this fighting, now would be the time. Charles just got a good job at the local college, teaching theater: exactly the sort of work he's always wanted. They're settling down, this could help smooth things out.

Right now, the thing that you're most worried about is that they'll try to patch things up, have a child, and then wind up divorcing anyway. If they're going to get divorced, they should do so now, before there are any children in the picture. It may be too late for the marriage (though you hope it's not), but it's not too late to deal with this before there are children to be hurt by it.

Setting

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

~

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?

Barbara Gardener

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

~

How did it come to this? You had been cheating on your husband - with his brother. You are now two and a half months pregnant, and you can't be sure who is the father. Where do you even go from here? You wish you knew.

You have a horrible feeling about tonight. You know that you need to confront Charles about his instability - the drinking, the disappearances, the fights - and find out if he is still committed to this marriage. If he is, you need to figure out what and how to tell him. He needs to know about the child you are carrying, but you need to know first whether or not there is a marriage worth trying to save.

William is wracked by guilt over the affair and you're worried he'll just blurt it out to Charles. It was William that ended the affair because he just couldn't stand the thought of hurting his brother anymore. But right now, your needs and the needs of your child-to-be come first. You and your child are going to need to know where you stand and anything else is secondary.

If Charles isn't going to, or can't focus on your marriage, you need out now. You could try to convince William that the child is his. Either way, you won't raise your child in a situation like this. You just can't, no matter what comes of it.

Setting

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

~

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?

Charles Gardner

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

~

You don't know what's happened to Barbara lately. You've been trying so hard, but it seems like everything you do is wrong. You can't handle it. Everything you say leads to a fight, every time you try to make up with her she winds up in tears. You love her so much, but you can't handle this anymore.

You know you shouldn't leave as often as you do, but you can't handle the screaming matches. It's not like you're doing anything wrong when you leave. Maybe you drink a little too much, maybe you put a little too much money on the cards down at the bar, but you've never cheated on her and you always come home eventually. Even if it takes a few weeks sometimes.

You know you're not the easiest person to live with, but this isn't fair. You love Barbara and want to be with her, but you just can't seem to make her happy and every time you fight things get worse. Lately you only see that passion in her eyes when she's yelling at you. It almost makes you glad of the fights. When you aren't fighting, she hardly looks at you at all.

You really don't want to leave Barbara. She's the love of your life, and you want to be with her and raise children together, but you can't take much more of this. If something doesn't change soon, one day you're going to walk out the door and not come back.

Setting

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

~

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

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

~

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.

Setting

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

~

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?

Virginia Vela

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

~

Your daughter's marriage is falling apart, and sometimes you think you're more upset about it than she is. She and Charles have been fighting constantly. The past month, things seem to have gotten even worse. You don't know what happened, but Barbara has just snapped. You used to blame it all on Charles, but right now he seems desperate to make things work, and she won't even listen to him.

You're worried that Charles and Barbara are going to divorce, but you're even more worried that they're not going to do it until too late. Barbara and Charles both want children, and if it wasn't for all this fighting, now would be the time. Charles just got a good job at the local college, teaching theater: exactly the sort of work he's always wanted. They're settling down, this could help smooth things out.

Right now, the thing that you're most worried about is that they'll try to patch things up, have a child, and then wind up divorcing anyway. If they're going to get divorced, they should do so now, before there are any children in the picture. It may be too late for the marriage (though you hope it's not), but it's not too late to deal with this before there are children to be hurt by it.

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

Meanwhile, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen recently broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). He is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him. She's not sure whether she can take him back, after this betrayal- Can she ever really trust him again? Meanwhile, in her turmoil, she has often wondered whether she made the right choice. Would she have been happier with the stable William? He has been there for her through all this, calm and reassuring. He never tried to take advantage of her in her grief, despite how close they got, and she respects him for it. She knows he still loves her. Even if they don't have the passion of her marriage to Charles, at least she knows William would never cheat on her.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will their marriage survive the betrayal?

Barbara Gardener

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

~

How did it come to this? Your husband has been cheating on you. He's out drinking, gambling, or off with his pretty little actress almost as many nights as not. And here you are at home, now two and a half months pregnant. Where do you even go from here? You wish you knew.

You have a horrible feeling about tonight. You know that you need to confront Charles about his affair and find out if he is still committed to this marriage. He needs to know about the child you are carrying, but you need to know first whether or not there is a marriage worth trying to save. Right now your needs, and the needs of your child-to-be, come first. You and your child are going to need support. You are going to need a stable environment. You need to know where you stand. Anything else is secondary.

If Charles isn't going to, or can't focus on your marriage, you need out now. You love him, but not enough to subject your child to life like this, not knowing if or when their father might or might not be there. You aren't sure what you are going to do if it comes to that, but you won't raise your child in a situation like this. You just can't, no matter what comes of it.

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

Meanwhile, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen recently broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). He is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him. She's not sure whether she can take him back, after this betrayal- Can she ever really trust him again? Meanwhile, in her turmoil, she has often wondered whether she made the right choice. Would she have been happier with the stable William? He has been there for her through all this, calm and reassuring. He never tried to take advantage of her in her grief, despite how close they got, and she respects him for it. She knows he still loves her. Even if they don't have the passion of her marriage to Charles, at least she knows William would never cheat on her.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will their marriage survive the betrayal?

Charles Gardner

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

~

After almost a year of carrying on a passionate, beautiful, guilt-ridden affair with Karen, you have finally come to realize what you should have known all along: Barbara is truly the most important thing to you and you can't live without her. You dumped Karen, and have come back to beg Barbara's forgiveness. It's been easier since you got a job at the college and don't see Karen every day.

Poor Barbara. Your wonderful, caring, loving wife. All these months, you've treated her like garbage, and she's been always at your side, waiting for you. Sure, there have been fights, and plenty of them. And you deserved everything she threw at you. The names she called you could never be as bad as what you actually were. She was perfect, the ideal wife, and you may have thrown it all away.

You know that she's about ready to give up on you. You've seen the look in her eyes, especially recently. She must know what has been going on. Your only chance is to confess everything from the very start and beg her forgiveness. Karen never really meant anything to you. She was just an escape. You got carried away by how she was beautiful and available. All you really need is Barbara. If Barbara will just turn back to you, everything will be fine. How could you have ever doubted her? There was never such a woman as Barbara. You don't understand how you let Karen turn your head.

Barbara needs to understand that she is, always has been and always will be your one true love. Karen was a mistake. It will never happen again. You just need Barbara's caring love and reassurance. How could you do this to such a wonderful woman as Barbara?

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

Meanwhile, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen recently broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). He is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him. She's not sure whether she can take him back, after this betrayal- Can she ever really trust him again? Meanwhile, in her turmoil, she has often wondered whether she made the right choice. Would she have been happier with the stable William? He has been there for her through all this, calm and reassuring. He never tried to take advantage of her in her grief, despite how close they got, and she respects him for it. She knows he still loves her. Even if they don't have the passion of her marriage to Charles, at least she knows William would never cheat on her.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will their marriage survive the betrayal?

William Gardener

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

~

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 off with his actress girlfriend Karen. 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.

You plan on calling out Charles for his infidelity 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. What Charles has done is nearly unforgivable, and that is saying a lot when it comes to family.

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.

Setting

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

~

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 has recently found out that after the blow up over Karen, Charles actually did start cheating on her. She had been planning on going through with her birthday party tonight, but at this point, she's not sure she can handle the situation. It's time to confront Charles about what he has done to her, especially at this important time. She has big news and needs to know whether or not Charles will truly be there for her.

Meanwhile, Charles got a new job teaching theater at the local college. After he left the high school, he and Karen recently broke up over Charles' guilt about cheating (and the slow dimming of their own passion). He is ready to beg Barbara's forgiveness and try to start over, if she'll have him. She's not sure whether she can take him back, after this betrayal- Can she ever really trust him again? Meanwhile, in her turmoil, she has often wondered whether she made the right choice. Would she have been happier with the stable William? He has been there for her through all this, calm and reassuring. He never tried to take advantage of her in her grief, despite how close they got, and she respects him for it. She knows he still loves her. Even if they don't have the passion of her marriage to Charles, at least she knows William would never cheat on her.

Virginia is watching this all from the sidelines with tears in her eyes. She doesn't know for sure about all the cheating that has been happening, but she is hoping desperately that Barbara and Charles can resolve their issues. Will their marriage survive the betrayal?

Virginia Vela

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

~

Your daughter's marriage is falling apart, and sometimes you think you're more upset about it than her husband. She and Charles have been fighting constantly. You've heard rumors that there's another woman. The past month, things seem to have gotten even worse. You don't know what happened, but Barbara has just snapped.

You're worried that Charles and Barbara are going to divorce, but you're even more worried that they're not going to do it until too late. Barbara and Charles both want children, and if it wasn't for all this fighting, now would be the time. Charles just got a good job at the local college, teaching theater: exactly the sort of work he's always wanted. They're settling down, this could help smooth things out.

Right now, the thing that you're most worried about is that they'll try to patch things up, have a child, and then wind up divorcing anyway. If they're going to get divorced, they should do so now, before there are any children in the picture. It may be too late for the marriage (though you hope it's not), but it's not too late to deal with this before there are children to be hurt by it.

Setting

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

~

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?

Barbara Gardener

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

~

How did it come to this? You feel like you barely know Charles anymore. He's hardly ever home. He's always out drinking or, worse, gambling away money you need to pay the rent. He's always been irresponsible, but this crosses all boundaries. At first you thought he was having an affair, maybe with Karen, but you have searched and searched, and never found any evidence. In some ways, you almost wish he was having an affair. That would be easier to deal with than knowing that he just doesn't care enough to come home.

You have a horrible feeling about tonight. You know that you need to confront Charles about his instability - the drinking, the disappearances, the fights - and find out if he is still committed to this marriage. He deserves to know about the child you are carrying, but you need to know first whether or not there is a marriage worth trying to save.

If Charles isn't going to, or can't focus on your marriage, you need out now. You aren't sure what you are going to do if it comes to that, but you won't raise your child in a situation like this. You just can't, no matter what comes of it.

Setting

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

~

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?

Charles Gardener

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

~

You don't know what's happened to Barbara lately. You've been trying so hard, but it seems like everything you do is wrong. You can't handle it. Everything you say leads to a fight; every time you try to make up with her she winds up in tears. You love her so much, but you can't handle this anymore.

You know you shouldn't leave as often as you do, but you can't handle the screaming matches. It's not like you're doing anything wrong when you leave. Maybe you drink a little too much, maybe you put a little too much money on the cards down at the bar, but you've never cheated on her and you always come home eventually. Even if it takes a few weeks sometimes.

You know you're not the easiest person to live with, but this isn't fair. You love Barbara and want to be with her, but you just can't seem to make her happy and every time you fight things get worse. Lately you only see that passion in her eyes when she's yelling at you. It almost makes you glad of the fights. When you aren't fighting, she hardly looks at you at all.

You really don't want to leave Barbara. She's the love of your life, and you want to be with her and raise children together, but you can't take much more of this. If something doesn't change soon, one day you're going to walk out the door and not come back.

Setting

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

~

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

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

~

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.

Setting

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

~

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?

Virginia Vela

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

~

Your daughter's marriage is falling apart, and sometimes you think you're more upset about it than she is. She and Charles have been fighting constantly. You've heard rumors that there's another woman. The past month, things seem to have gotten even worse. You don't know what happened, but Barbara has just snapped.

You're worried that Charles and Barbara are going to divorce, but you're even more worried that they're not going to do it until too late. Barbara and Charles both want children, and if it wasn't for all this fighting, now would be the time. Charles just got a good job at the local college, teaching theater: exactly the sort of work he's always wanted. They're settling down, this could help smooth things out.

Right now, the thing that you're most worried about is that they'll try to patch things up, have a child, and then wind up divorcing anyway. If they're going to get divorced, they should do so now, before there are any children in the picture. It may be too late for the marriage (though you hope it's not), but it's not too late to deal with this before there are children to be hurt by it.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara was bored stiff. She craved attention and passion. She missed the passion that she had with Charles, and wondered whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together.

When Charles showed up again, she couldn't resist him. The affair only went on for a few months before she decided that she couldn't continue betraying her husband that way. Since then, however, Barbara has been even more lost and lonely in her marriage. Even worse, Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever. To complicate matters further, she's not completely sure it's even William's child.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

Barbara Gardener

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

~

How did it come to this? You had been cheating on your husband - with his brother. You are now two and a half months pregnant, and you can't be sure who is the father. Where do you even go from here? You wish you knew.

You have a horrible feeling about tonight. You know that you need to tell William about your pregnancy, but somehow that will make everything all too real. You will find yourself trapped for the rest of your life this way. A big house, nice things, a child, but a passionless and rarely-home husband. You can't go on living this lie. You broke things off with Charles, but you almost regret it. You need to come clean, and tell William that he has two choices: take you back anyway and make this marriage meaningful again, or let you go. You don't want to be divorced with a child, but you can't go on like this.

It isn't that William doesn't provide for you. No, he's out working hard at the law firm because he wants to give you all the material comforts you could ever need. Somehow that makes it all that much worse. After the past few years, any hope of real passion in this marriage has dried up.

You know that you're keeping the child. Despite everything, you couldn't imagine not having it. This little child will need and care for you in a way that no one else has. The question is whether or not the stability and financial support that William provides is enough. Can you stick it out purely for these things, or do you need to get out now, however hard it will be for you and your child alone? You know one thing: you can't go on living a lie, pretending things are ok, and sleeping with your husband's brother on the side. William needs to understand what this empty marriage has made you do.

If he doesn't care enough to understand that some things are more important than stability, you're better off without him. If this doesn't break through his shell, nothing will.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara was bored stiff. She craved attention and passion. She missed the passion that she had with Charles, and wondered whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together.

When Charles showed up again, she couldn't resist him. The affair only went on for a few months before she decided that she couldn't continue betraying her husband that way. Since then, however, Barbara has been even more lost and lonely in her marriage. Even worse, Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever. To complicate matters further, she's not completely sure it's even William's child.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

Charles Gardener

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

~

Since Barbara accepted William's proposal, you have tried very hard to move on. You briefly dated Karen, a secretary at the high school where you worked. She was in a play with you and it was exciting for a little while, but she could never measure up to Barbara. When you got a job teaching theatre at the college, you and Karen parted ways.

But as time went on, it became harder and harder to keep away from Barbara. You couldn't stand watching Barbara wither away like this. William loves her, you know that, but he never shows it. He doesn't give her any of the love, passion and attention that you give her. After you got your new job, you showed up on her doorstep, and she took you in.

The affair only lasted a few months before Barbara decided she couldn't betray William like that. You understand, and feel guilty about it yourself, but she can't keep going like this. Barbara needs to get out of that marriage before she's trapped by a child. She's wasting away.

It's not just for you. Sure, you would take her back if she came to you. Of course you would; you still love her. She's still the only woman in the world to you. Really, though, you would want her to leave William even if you knew she would never come back to you. She's dying in that relationship.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara was bored stiff. She craved attention and passion. She missed the passion that she had with Charles, and wondered whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together.

When Charles showed up again, she couldn't resist him. The affair only went on for a few months before she decided that she couldn't continue betraying her husband that way. Since then, however, Barbara has been even more lost and lonely in her marriage. Even worse, Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever. To complicate matters further, she's not completely sure it's even William's child.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

William Gardener

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

~

The past year has been a rough one for your marriage. You're making a name for yourself in the law firm, but you see very little of Barbara. Every time you do see her, she seems colder and more distant. You've responded by working that much harder, and by buying things for her. It is what you can do to show her that this has all been for her, however hard these few years have been.

More and more, you're convinced that the two of you should have a child. The next few years are going to be particularly busy for you, and Barbara clearly needs someone there for her in the nice new home you bought a few months ago. A child would give her someone that can be there for her all the time while you move up the next few steps in your workplace.

Tonight at least you've managed to get the evening off. It was a close thing and you owe more than a few favors at work for it. Still, it is Barbara's birthday, and having the family together for it will be good for her.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara was bored stiff. She craved attention and passion. She missed the passion that she had with Charles, and wondered whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together.

When Charles showed up again, she couldn't resist him. The affair only went on for a few months before she decided that she couldn't continue betraying her husband that way. Since then, however, Barbara has been even more lost and lonely in her marriage. Even worse, Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever. To complicate matters further, she's not completely sure it's even William's child.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

Virginia Vela

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

~

Your daughter's marriage is falling apart, and William doesn't understand why. You know he loves her, but she needs to know it. You know what it's like to hang on for years in a loveless marriage, and Barbara doesn't even have a child to keep her company. Women need a little more passion, a little more intensity. Women are emotional creatures. William thinks that bringing home a good salary should be enough, but he doesn't understand.

Meanwhile, Barbara is at her wits end. If things don't change, you expect that she will leave him. You have talked with her about ways to bring him out, ways to make things better, but nothing she does seems to help. It's possible that a child is the right answer here. With a child, maybe William's stability would be more important than his distance. A child could provide the love that Barbara is missing, and might even bring William out a little more.

On the other hand you're worried that she'll try to patch things up, have a child, and then wind up leaving him anyway. If she's going to leave him, she should do so now, before there are any children in the picture. She needs to make a decision soon, one way or the other.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara is bored stiff. She craves attention and passion. She misses the passion that she had with Charles, and wonders whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together. Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever.

Charles has phased in and out of Barbara's life. He will try to be there for her and comfort her, then find himself getting too close and leave. She made her choice and he doesn't want to betray his brother again. They have gotten a little too close once or twice, but each time, Barbara has stood her ground, and Charles has felt guilty and left them alone, sometimes for months. It's hard for him to be around them. He can't stand to see Barbara so lost and lonely.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

Barbara Gardener

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

~

How did it come to this? A dull and empty marriage, and now you with a child on the way.

You have a horrible feeling about tonight. You know that you need to tell William about your pregnancy, but somehow that will make everything all too real. You will find yourself trapped for the rest of your life this way. A big house, nice things, a child, but a passionless and rarely-home husband.

It isn't that William doesn't provide for you, or that he is off being irresponsible like his brother Charles would have done. No, he's out working hard at the law firm because he wants to give you all the material comforts you could ever need. Somehow that makes it all that much worse. After the past few years, any hope of real passion in this marriage has dried up.

You know that you're keeping the child. Despite everything, you couldn't imagine not having it. This little child will need and care for you in a way that no one else has. The question is whether or not the stability and financial support that William provides is enough. Can you stick it out purely for these things, or do you need to get out now, however hard it will be for you and your child alone?

There aren't any easy answers, but you and your child are going to have to live with whatever you choose, for the rest of your lives.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara is bored stiff. She craves attention and passion. She misses the passion that she had with Charles, and wonders whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together. Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever.

Charles has phased in and out of Barbara's life. He will try to be there for her and comfort her, then find himself getting too close and leave. She made her choice and he doesn't want to betray his brother again. They have gotten a little too close once or twice, but each time, Barbara has stood her ground, and Charles has felt guilty and left them alone, sometimes for months. It's hard for him to be around them. He can't stand to see Barbara so lost and lonely.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

Charles Gardener

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

~

Since Barbara accepted William's proposal, you have tried very hard to move on. You briefly dated Karen, a secretary at the high school where you worked. She was in a play with you and it was exciting for a little while, but she could never measure up to Barbara. When you got a job teaching theatre at the college, you and Karen parted ways.

Recently, it has been getting harder and harder to keep away. You can't stand watching Barbara wither away like this. William loves her, you know that, but he never shows it. He doesn't give her any of the love, passion and attention that you could give her. Barbara needs to get out of that marriage before she's trapped by a child. She's wasting away.

It's not just for you. Sure, you would take her back if she came to you. Of course you would; you still love her. She's still the only woman in the world to you. Really, though, you would want her to leave William even if you knew she would never come back to you. She's dying in that relationship.

You haven't pushed because you didn't want to hurt your brother, but you can't watch this any longer. Whatever happens, you need to convince her to get out of that relationship before she loses herself altogether.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara is bored stiff. She craves attention and passion. She misses the passion that she had with Charles, and wonders whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together. Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever.

Charles has phased in and out of Barbara's life. He will try to be there for her and comfort her, then find himself getting too close and leave. She made her choice and he doesn't want to betray his brother again. They have gotten a little too close once or twice, but each time, Barbara has stood her ground, and Charles has felt guilty and left them alone, sometimes for months. It's hard for him to be around them. He can't stand to see Barbara so lost and lonely.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

William Gardener

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

~

The past year has been a rough one for your marriage. You're making a name for yourself in the law firm, but you see very little of Barbara. Every time you do see her, she seems colder and more distant. You've responded by working that much harder, and by buying things for her. It is what you can do to show her that this has all been for her, however hard these few years have been.

More and more, you're convinced that the two of you should have a child. The next few years are going to be particularly busy for you, and Barbara clearly needs someone there for her in the nice new home you bought a few months ago. A child would give her someone that can be there for her all the time while you move up the next few steps in your workplace.

Tonight at least you've managed to get the evening off. It was a close thing and you owe more than a few favors at work for it. Still, it is Barbara's birthday, and having the family together for it will be good for her.

Setting

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

~

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

Over the past two years, William has thrown himself more and more into his work. The relationship between him and Barbara - never a terribly passionate one - has grown more and more distant and strained. William loves her in his own way, but the only way he knows to show it is by working hard for her, bringing home a good paycheck, and making sure that she has a stable life.

Meanwhile, Barbara is bored stiff. She craves attention and passion. She misses the passion that she had with Charles, and wonders whether she made the wrong decision in marrying William. Charles has gone off to start a new job teaching theater at the University, and his life finally seems to be coming together. Barbara has recently found out that she is pregnant, and she is terrified that having a child with William will trap her in this boring life forever.

Charles has phased in and out of Barbara's life. He will try to be there for her and comfort her, then find himself getting too close and leave. She made her choice and he doesn't want to betray his brother again. They have gotten a little too close once or twice, but each time, Barbara has stood her ground, and Charles has felt guilty and left them alone, sometimes for months. It's hard for him to be around them. He can't stand to see Barbara so lost and lonely.

Virginia is very worried about the state of her daughter's marriage. She is hoping desperately that Barbara and William can resolve their issues, but she also worries about Barbara feeling trapped. She hopes that a child might help the marriage, but is afraid that they will have a child first, and divorce after. Will Barbara and William's marriage survive?

Virginia Vela

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

~

Your daughter's marriage is falling apart, and William doesn't understand why. You know he loves her, but she needs to know it. You know what it's like to hang on for years in a loveless marriage, and Barbara doesn't even have a child to keep her company. Women need a little more passion, a little more intensity. Women are emotional creatures. William thinks that bringing home a good salary should be enough, but he doesn't understand.

Meanwhile, Barbara is at her wits end. If things don't change, you expect that she will leave him. You have talked with her about ways to bring him out, ways to make things better, but nothing she does seems to help. It's possible that a child is the right answer here. With a child, maybe William's stability would be more important than his distance. A child could provide the love that Barbara is missing, and might even bring William out a little more.

On the other hand you're worried that she'll try to patch things up, have a child, and then wind up leaving him anyway. If she's going to leave him, she should do so now, before there are any children in the picture. She needs to make a decision soon, one way or the other.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After Charles and Barbara divorced, Barbara remarried William. While the relations between the brothers have been strained, Charles is very involved in Stephanie's life, and has tried hard to be a good father. Even through the divorce, fatherhood has brought some stability to his life, and he lives for his weekends with his daughter. He has dated a few other women, but none seriously.

Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage lacks the passion that Barbara's relationship with Charles had, it also lacks the tumult. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Barbara Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

Stephanie is a joy in your life, but also a headache. The antics of a five year old are both delightful and never-ending. With her entering school, you had been planning on going back to college yourself. You'd like to see if you could get the education you need to be a teacher; working with Stephanie has made it clear how much you enjoy teaching and working with young children.

However, a few months ago your mother Virginia had a stroke. After she got out of the hospital, she's come to live with you. William's salary lets you afford a rather large house and there was room to bring Virginia in due to the fact that she can't entirely manage on her own. Between struggling to help your mother in her limited capacity and taking care of a five-year old child though, you fear that your dream of being a teacher may not be reachable.

While you hope to be able to enjoy the garden party with the family, it is a good time to also talk about what is going to be done with Virginia. If she is put in a nursing home, she will almost certainly be able to get better care than you can provide. At the same time, it is both expensive and she won't be with family all of the time. You'd visit, probably daily as much as possible, but it still wouldn't be the same. And, it may enable you to go back to school after all for a teaching degree.

Even thinking about the last part makes you guilty though. Do you really want to stick your mother in a nursing home just so you can pursue your dream? Wouldn't it be better (and less expensive) to simply buckle down and care for her at home yourself? You aren't sure how many years she has left and with Stephanie soon to be in school, it would be manageable.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After Charles and Barbara divorced, Barbara remarried William. While the relations between the brothers have been strained, Charles is very involved in Stephanie's life, and has tried hard to be a good father. Even through the divorce, fatherhood has brought some stability to his life, and he lives for his weekends with his daughter. He has dated a few other women, but none seriously.

Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage lacks the passion that Barbara's relationship with Charles had, it also lacks the tumult. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

Even though you and Barbara divorced, you have tried very hard to be a good father to little Stephanie.

Despite Barbara having remarried William, you don't want Stephanie to grow up thinking of him as father instead of you. Your schedule is more flexible than William's, and since Barbara has been busy with an ailing mother, you've been taking Stephanie at least one day a week.

You always try to do something fun. You don't have a lot of money, but you want Stephanie to remember her time with you as exciting, something to look forward to. Sometimes you just go to the park or the zoo, but you have also splurged on trips to the state fair and other events. You have been saving up to take her to Disneyland this summer. You're not great with money, but for your little daughter you can save.

Barbara and William seem happy and you try very hard not to begrudge it. You certainly played your part in the breakup of your marriage. You miss Barbara terribly, but the two of you never worked very well. At least Stephanie doesn't see her parents fight every day. You try hard to get along with them, you don't want to hurt Stephanie.

Barbara's mother Virginia has been really going downhill since the stroke. Barbara and William have been debating whether or not to put her into a nursing home. Virginia still resents you for the way your marriage ended, but you want to be there for them. If there's any way you can help, you're willing to try.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After Charles and Barbara divorced, Barbara remarried William. While the relations between the brothers have been strained, Charles is very involved in Stephanie's life, and has tried hard to be a good father. Even through the divorce, fatherhood has brought some stability to his life, and he lives for his weekends with his daughter. He has dated a few other women, but none seriously.

Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage lacks the passion that Barbara's relationship with Charles had, it also lacks the tumult. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

You're worried about Barbara and the stress of trying to take care of both Stephanie and Virginia. In addition, you know how much Barbara wants to go back to college to get a teaching degree. Barbara just can't do all three of these things at the same time, no matter how much she might feel she can. You have to help her make the right decision.

You make good money at the law firm. Sure, a lot of the income is tied up with the new house and there are plenty of costs associated with a five year old. Still, money isn't the real issue here; time is. While you're sure that Barbara would like to personally take care of her mother, you're worried that she'll be sacrificing her future career if she does so. Virginia is going downhill and she'd probably be better off with professional care anyway. If you can delicately convince Barbara that it would be better to put Virginia in a nursing home, Barbara would be able to take the classes she needs to work on her teaching degree.

Stephanie will be in school this year and this is the time for Barbara to really reach out and expand her possibilities. She needs to have more and better opportunities for the future, not less.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After Charles and Barbara divorced, Barbara remarried William. While the relations between the brothers have been strained, Charles is very involved in Stephanie's life, and has tried hard to be a good father. Even through the divorce, fatherhood has brought some stability to his life, and he lives for his weekends with his daughter. He has dated a few other women, but none seriously.

Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage lacks the passion that Barbara's relationship with Charles had, it also lacks the tumult. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 4 (AG) — Five and a half years later

~

You know something important is happening tonight. It's one of those parties. You like the parties. Everything has gotten a lot harder since the stroke. You just need things to get back to normal.

You should get a cup of tea. You'll feel better with a cup of tea. It's ok, mom will take care of things.

No, wait. That's not right. You're here with your daughter Barbara. She's trying to take you out of your house because she thinks you can't take care of yourself. That's not true. You can handle things ok. You just wish you could talk a little more clearly so you could explain that to her.

She wants to put you in a nursing home. You don't want to go to a nursing home. You want to stay home where you belong. You like it here. Plus the roses would die if you left.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Since Barbara got pregnant, both Charles and Barbara recommitted to their marriage. While there have been many fights since, and many of the same problems are still present, the birth of their daughter Stephanie strengthened their marriage. Even during the worst times, both of them have reason to stay and work things out.

William has never married, but has become a very successful lawyer. He is a doting uncle, giving Stephanie many gifts, and sometimes taking the entire family to the zoo or other events. He doesn't have a lot of free time with his practice, but much of what he does, he spends on his niece.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and Charles need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. Charles doesn't make a lot of money at the college. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering studying to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Barbara Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

Stephanie is a joy in your life, but also a headache. The antics of a five year old are both delightful and never-ending. With her entering school, you had been planning on going back to college yourself. You'd like to see if you could get the education you need to be a teacher; raising Stephanie has made it clear how much you enjoy teaching and working with young children.

However, a few months ago your mother Virginia had a stroke. After she got out of the hospital, she came to live with you. That has changed everything; Charles' salary barely covered the cost of living for the three of you and now you have to take care of your mother as well. Virginia can't entirely manage on her own anymore and the four of you are piled in a two bedroom house. Between struggling to help your mother in her limited capacity and taking care of a five-year old child, you fear that your dream of being a teacher may not be reachable.

While you hope to be able to enjoy the garden party with the family, it is a good time to also talk about what is going to be done with Virginia. If she is put in a nursing home, she will almost certainly be able to get better care than you can provide. At the same time, it is expensive and she won't be with family all of the time. You'd visit, probably daily when possible, but it still wouldn't be the same. The cost means you probably won't be able to go back to college for a teaching degree without significant financial aid. Is it just better to forget about that for a few years? It pains you, but the answer is probably yes.

Charles is not dealing with the situation well at all. You're worried that all the stress is taking a toll on your marriage in a way that nothing has in years. You know he wants to see Virginia in a nursing home, but you feel terrible about what seems to be a choice between his comfort and your mother's wishes. Some kind of decision needs to be made, but you don't know what it is going to be.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Since Barbara got pregnant, both Charles and Barbara recommitted to their marriage. While there have been many fights since, and many of the same problems are still present, the birth of their daughter Stephanie strengthened their marriage. Even during the worst times, both of them have reason to stay and work things out.

William has never married, but has become a very successful lawyer. He is a doting uncle, giving Stephanie many gifts, and sometimes taking the entire family to the zoo or other events. He doesn't have a lot of free time with his practice, but much of what he does, he spends on his niece.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and Charles need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. Charles doesn't make a lot of money at the college. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering studying to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

You have a daughter now. You can't just run off. But right now, you desperately want to. You and Barbara have been fighting over her mother Virginia. You don't know what the right answer is, you just know things can't go on the way they are. Barbara has been making herself crazy trying to care for both Stephanie and Virginia.

You know money is tight, you don't make much at the college, but there has to be some way to find the money to put Virginia in a nursing home. You understand that Barbara feels bad about it, she thinks that it's her responsibility to care for Virginia personally, but she just can't do it. It's draining her, it's straining your marriage and it's hurting Stephanie.

Plus it's making you crazy. Every time Virginia asks you the same question three times in a row again, you want to scream at her, you want to get away. It's not her fault. You know that, but it's so hard to deal with.

Still, you know Barbara wants to go back to school, and money is tight. Can you really afford to put Virginia in a home? Can you afford not to?

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Since Barbara got pregnant, both Charles and Barbara recommitted to their marriage. While there have been many fights since, and many of the same problems are still present, the birth of their daughter Stephanie strengthened their marriage. Even during the worst times, both of them have reason to stay and work things out.

William has never married, but has become a very successful lawyer. He is a doting uncle, giving Stephanie many gifts, and sometimes taking the entire family to the zoo or other events. He doesn't have a lot of free time with his practice, but much of what he does, he spends on his niece.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and Charles need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. Charles doesn't make a lot of money at the college. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering studying to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

The last several years have been good for you. With Barbara and Charles finally settled down, and no significant demands on your own time, you've poured yourself into your work. To say that your career is going well is an understatement.

You appreciate these family garden parties every year. They're a nice chance to relax a bit and pamper your young niece, Stephanie. You gave her a dozen gifts earlier on this evening, most of which she utterly adored. You know that Barbara and Charles are going through a rough time financially right now, so you're happy to give Stephanie the toys her parents couldn't afford.

You were very sorry to hear about Virginia's recent stroke. The thought of being trapped in a failing body and mind horrifies you more than a little bit and dealing with Virginia this evening has been a challenge. You don't know how Barbara and Charles manage to live with it every day, especially with the four of them packed in a small two bedroom house. They have some hard decisions to make about what to do as Virginia continues to slide downhill. You don't at all envy them having to sort it out.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Since Barbara got pregnant, both Charles and Barbara recommitted to their marriage. While there have been many fights since, and many of the same problems are still present, the birth of their daughter Stephanie strengthened their marriage. Even during the worst times, both of them have reason to stay and work things out.

William has never married, but has become a very successful lawyer. He is a doting uncle, giving Stephanie many gifts, and sometimes taking the entire family to the zoo or other events. He doesn't have a lot of free time with his practice, but much of what he does, he spends on his niece.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and Charles need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. Charles doesn't make a lot of money at the college. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering studying to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

You know something important is happening tonight. It's one of those parties. You like the parties. Everything has gotten a lot harder since the stroke. You just need things to get back to normal.

You should get a cup of tea. You'll feel better with a cup of tea. It's ok, mom will take care of things.

No, wait. That's not right. You're here with your daughter Barbara. She's trying to take you out of your house because she thinks you can't take care of yourself. That's not true. You can handle things ok. You just wish you could talk a little more clearly so you could explain that to her.

She wants to put you in a nursing home. You don't want to go to a nursing home. You want to stay home where you belong. You like it here. Plus the roses would die if you left.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After William and Barbara divorced, Barbara has struggled as a single mother. William has contributed financially to Stephanie's upbringing, but rarely visits. Since he made partner in the law firm, he hasn't had enough time to help out. Besides, he still finds it hard to see Barbara like this, but he knows that he can't go back.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and Stephanie's lives. They have been involved on and off, but he is such a destabilizing influence that Barbara never wanted him to be too present in Stephanie's life. She always felt that letting Charles become a father-figure to Stephanie would be worse than no father. With his flair for the dramatic, he could break her heart almost by accident. She's young and grows attached too easily. How could she handle it if he suddenly disappeared? Still, they reconnect occasionally, and Stephanie is quite fond of him.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara needs to decide whether to care for her in her home or send her to a nursing home. Without additional help, she probably can't afford the cost of a nursing home. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia might make that impossible. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Barbara Vela

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

You had so many dreams at one point. You wish you knew what happened to them. You never imagined that you'd wind up a divorced, single mother, working a dead end job, while also trying to support an ailing mother. Life can be bitterly cruel.

William provides some financial support for Stephanie. If it wasn't for that, you really don't know what you would do. Still, it isn't enough now that Virginia can't help with Stephanie during the time you need to work. You're going to have to ask William to either fork over some more money for day care or spend some of his precious time with his own daughter. His career is so important to him, though, that you can't imagine he'll choose the latter. Probably for the best anyway.

You're neck-deep in forms to help cover some of the costs associated with Virginia's medical care now. She was living with you and Stephanie before the stroke, but since then, everything has just spiraled out of control. As much as you hate to do so, you don't have any choice but to put her in a nursing home. She isn't doing well enough to get by on her own while you're working and you have to spend almost as much time helping her as helping Stephanie while you're home. You have no clue how you'll afford it, but you don't have a choice.

Charles... you wish you knew what to do about Charles. It is clear to you now that he cares for you more than William ever did. Hell, he even cares more for his niece, Stephanie, than does William. He'd love to help out, but you don't trust him and you wouldn't trust yourself around him. The last thing your life needs is more complications, and Charles is one big complication.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After William and Barbara divorced, Barbara has struggled as a single mother. William has contributed financially to Stephanie's upbringing, but rarely visits. Since he made partner in the law firm, he hasn't had enough time to help out. Besides, he still finds it hard to see Barbara like this, but he knows that he can't go back.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and Stephanie's lives. They have been involved on and off, but he is such a destabilizing influence that Barbara never wanted him to be too present in Stephanie's life. She always felt that letting Charles become a father-figure to Stephanie would be worse than no father. With his flair for the dramatic, he could break her heart almost by accident. She's young and grows attached too easily. How could she handle it if he suddenly disappeared? Still, they reconnect occasionally, and Stephanie is quite fond of him.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara needs to decide whether to care for her in her home or send her to a nursing home. Without additional help, she probably can't afford the cost of a nursing home. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia might make that impossible. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

It's been hard watching Barbara as a single mother. You've tried to reach out to her, but she pushes you away. You can't really blame her, it's not like you're a great role model for a kid. You like your little niece, but you don't get to see her often enough. You try to bring her treats and things, but she is fickle as small children are, and often seems hardly to recognize you one time to the next.

Since the divorce, your brother threw himself headlong into his work. He provides reasonably well for Barbara and Stephanie, but rarely sees his daughter. He thinks he can pay his way out of being a father, and Barbara mostly lets him. Meanwhile, you can see how overwhelmed Barbara is with being alone.

Until recently, Virginia was able to help out, but since the stroke, Barbara has been spending almost as much time caring for Virginia as for Stephanie. You wish you could help out, but you don't have the money to help with a nursing home, and Barbara pushes you away when you try to assist her. Maybe this is your opportunity to offer something.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After William and Barbara divorced, Barbara has struggled as a single mother. William has contributed financially to Stephanie's upbringing, but rarely visits. Since he made partner in the law firm, he hasn't had enough time to help out. Besides, he still finds it hard to see Barbara like this, but he knows that he can't go back.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and Stephanie's lives. They have been involved on and off, but he is such a destabilizing influence that Barbara never wanted him to be too present in Stephanie's life. She always felt that letting Charles become a father-figure to Stephanie would be worse than no father. With his flair for the dramatic, he could break her heart almost by accident. She's young and grows attached too easily. How could she handle it if he suddenly disappeared? Still, they reconnect occasionally, and Stephanie is quite fond of him.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara needs to decide whether to care for her in her home or send her to a nursing home. Without additional help, she probably can't afford the cost of a nursing home. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia might make that impossible. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

Since the divorce several years ago, your career has done very well. While it was painful at the time, you threw yourself into work in the aftermath and you've really built something for yourself. Barbara could have been a part of it if she wanted, but she made her decision years ago. Now she has to live with some of the consequences.

You provide more than adequately for your daughter Stephanie, something that Barbara hasn't been able to manage on her own. Still, it galls you that after everything you offered to Barbara, all she wants these days is money. That, and the demands of your career, have kept you more distant from Stephanie than you might have preferred. It is not your daughter's fault that things turned out this way, but money for the things she otherwise wouldn't have will have to do.

Charles has continued to drift in and out of all of your lives. He's got a teaching job, but he's never really made anything of himself. One more person who wasted their chances and potential. It is a shame, but people have to live with the choices they make. You love your brother, but you learned long ago that charity only helps so much and that personal responsibility has to take care of the rest.

You were very sorry to hear about Virginia having a stroke. She was a very nice woman and you always liked her. You don't know exactly how Barbara will be able to take care of both Virginia and Stephanie. You expect that she'll be asking for more money from you to take care of it all. That seems to be your role: a font of money to solve the problems of the people that betrayed you. You'll probably help out for Stephanie's sake, but you need to make it clear that this has to stop somewhere.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. After William and Barbara divorced, Barbara has struggled as a single mother. William has contributed financially to Stephanie's upbringing, but rarely visits. Since he made partner in the law firm, he hasn't had enough time to help out. Besides, he still finds it hard to see Barbara like this, but he knows that he can't go back.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and Stephanie's lives. They have been involved on and off, but he is such a destabilizing influence that Barbara never wanted him to be too present in Stephanie's life. She always felt that letting Charles become a father-figure to Stephanie would be worse than no father. With his flair for the dramatic, he could break her heart almost by accident. She's young and grows attached too easily. How could she handle it if he suddenly disappeared? Still, they reconnect occasionally, and Stephanie is quite fond of him.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara needs to decide whether to care for her in her home or send her to a nursing home. Without additional help, she probably can't afford the cost of a nursing home. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia might make that impossible. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — Five and a half years later

~

You know something important is happening tonight. It's one of those parties. You like the parties. Everything has gotten a lot harder since the stroke. You just need things to get back to normal.

You should get a cup of tea. You'll feel better with a cup of tea. It's ok, mom will take care of things.

No, wait. That's not right. You're here with your daughter Barbara. She's trying to take you out of your house because she thinks you can't take care of yourself. That's not true. You can handle things ok. You just wish you could talk a little more clearly so you could explain that to her.

She wants to put you in a nursing home. You don't want to go to a nursing home. You want to stay home where you belong. You like it here. Plus the roses would die if you left.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage has never been passionate, it is stable and seems to be working these days. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and William's lives. Since the problems before Stephanie's birth, Barbara has kept Charles at arm's length. He still tries hard to connect with his brother, but William was never terribly good at reaching out. Charles is still teaching at the local college, but no one, not even him, seems quite sure how he keeps that job.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very challenging. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Barbara Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

Stephanie is a joy in your life, but also a headache. The antics of a five year old are both delightful and never-ending. With her entering school, you had been planning on going back to college yourself. You'd like to see if you could get the education you need to be a teacher; working with Stephanie has made it clear how much you enjoy teaching and working with young children.

However, a few months ago your mother Virginia had a stroke. After she got out of the hospital, she's come to live with you. William's salary lets you afford a rather large house and there was room to bring Virginia in due to the fact that she can't entirely manage on her own. Between struggling to help your mother in her limited capacity and taking care of a five-year old child though, you fear that your dream of being a teacher may not be reachable.

While you hope to be able to enjoy the garden party with the family, it is a good time to also talk about what is going to be done with Virginia. If she is put in a nursing home, she will almost certainly be able to get better care than you can provide. At the same time, it is both expensive and she won't be with family all of the time. You'd visit, probably daily as much as possible, but it still wouldn't be the same. And, it may enable you to go back to school after all for a teaching degree.

Even thinking about the last part makes you guilty though. Do you really want to stick your mother in a nursing home just so you can pursue your dream? Wouldn't it be better (and less expensive) to simply buckle down and care for her at home yourself? You aren't sure how many years she has left and with Stephanie soon to be in school, it would be manageable.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage has never been passionate, it is stable and seems to be working these days. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and William's lives. Since the problems before Stephanie's birth, Barbara has kept Charles at arm's length. He still tries hard to connect with his brother, but William was never terribly good at reaching out. Charles is still teaching at the local college, but no one, not even him, seems quite sure how he keeps that job.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very challenging. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

It's so hard watching Barbara, William and Stephanie as the perfect, happy family. You have drifted from girlfriend to girlfriend, never staying in a relationship for too long. You're still almost amazed that you've kept your job at the local college. The changing students help - there are always new kids, with new ideas. That's fun at least.

Sometimes you think you should stop coming to these parties, but it's almost your only contact with Barbara and William these days. William is too busy with work, Barbara is too busy with Stephanie. Mostly you just try to drink enough to make these parties bearable without making a fool of yourself.

You wish you could at least be part of Stephanie's life. She's your niece. You deserve some connection to her. You brought her a new doll. Maybe you could offer to take her for a day at some point. Not that Barbara let you the last few times you offered.

You just want to feel like you're part of your own family again.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage has never been passionate, it is stable and seems to be working these days. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and William's lives. Since the problems before Stephanie's birth, Barbara has kept Charles at arm's length. He still tries hard to connect with his brother, but William was never terribly good at reaching out. Charles is still teaching at the local college, but no one, not even him, seems quite sure how he keeps that job.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very challenging. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

William Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

You're worried about Barbara and the stress of trying to take care of both Stephanie and Virginia. In addition, you know how much Barbara wants to go back to college to get a teaching degree. Barbara just can't do all three of these things at the same time, no matter how much she might feel she can. You have to help her make the right decision.

You make good money at the law firm. Sure, a lot of the income is tied up with the new house and there are plenty of costs associated with a five year old. Still, money isn't the real issue here; time is. While you're sure that Barbara would like to personally take care of her mother, you're worried that she'll be sacrificing her future career if she does so. Virginia is going downhill and she'd probably be better off with professional care anyway. If you can delicately convince Barbara that it would be better to put Virginia in a nursing home, Barbara would be able to take the classes she needs to work on her teaching degree.

Stephanie will be in school this year and this is the time for Barbara to really reach out and expand her possibilities. She needs to have more and better opportunities for the future, not less.

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

This year, as for the past four years, the garden party has been shifted from Barbara's birthday to that of her five-year old daughter Stephanie. Barbara and William are doing well. William has a good job at a law firm, and, while their marriage has never been passionate, it is stable and seems to be working these days. William works long hours, but since Stephanie was born, Barbara has been relatively content to focus on her young daughter.

Charles has remained connected, at least as connected as Charles ever was. He has drifted in and out of Barbara and William's lives. Since the problems before Stephanie's birth, Barbara has kept Charles at arm's length. He still tries hard to connect with his brother, but William was never terribly good at reaching out. Charles is still teaching at the local college, but no one, not even him, seems quite sure how he keeps that job.

Recently, however, a new issue has come up. Barbara's mother, Virginia, has had a stroke, and can no longer manage on her own. Barbara and William need to decide whether to care for her themselves, or send her to a nursing home. They recently bought a new house, and the cost of a nursing home would be hard on them. However, Barbara is very busy chasing after Stephanie, and the extra work of caring for an ailing parent would be difficult. She has been considering going back to college to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very challenging. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Virginia Vela

Act I, Scene 4 (BH) — Five and a half years later

~

You know something important is happening tonight. It's one of those parties. You like the parties. Everything has gotten a lot harder since the stroke. You just need things to get back to normal.

You should get a cup of tea. You'll feel better with a cup of tea. It's ok, mom will take care of things.

No, wait. That's not right. You're here with your daughter Barbara. She's trying to take you out of your house because she thinks you can't take care of yourself. That's not true. You can handle things ok. You just wish you could talk a little more clearly so you could explain that to her.

She wants to put you in a nursing home. You don't want to go to a nursing home. You want to stay home where you belong. You like it here. Plus the roses would die if you left.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia went into the nursing home, the financial issues that Barbara and Charles faced have gone from bad to worse. The medical bills leading up to Virginia's death were hard enough, and her funeral put another substantial drain on their finances. While Barbara started going to college, she dropped out after a year, unable to pay the tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well and their 9-year old daughter, Stephanie, brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. After Barbara and William's affair several years ago, it's hard for Charles to think about turning to William for help, but right now he doesn't know what else to do.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether or not to volunteer help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. At the same time, he still feels guilty about his affair with Barbara and doesn't want to see Barbara suffer. But if he helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

The past few years have been the hardest you've ever faced in your life. From giving up on your dreams of a college degree to your mother's death a few months ago, it is hard to imagine how much worse things could get. To make matters worse, Charles has failed you, both financially and emotionally. While you've struggled to care for Stephanie and deal with your grief, he's been more combative and distant than ever before.

Last week, he disappeared for a few nights. Desperately, you even tried to get ahold of him at his job at the college, but he had blown off from there too, calling in sick. When he eventually came back home, he was still wasted and your bank account was almost empty. You don't even know how many hours you spent yelling and crying at him about what he had done to your family.

Your last hope is with William. If you can't get some financial help from him, there is a very real chance of losing the house you rent, not to mention having more of your various debts go into collections. You know that Charles doesn't want to rely on his brother and that the memory of your affair with William is still a patched, but unhealed wound. There isn't any choice though, and if it ends up hurting Charles enough to motivate him more in the future, all the better.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia went into the nursing home, the financial issues that Barbara and Charles faced have gone from bad to worse. The medical bills leading up to Virginia's death were hard enough, and her funeral put another substantial drain on their finances. While Barbara started going to college, she dropped out after a year, unable to pay the tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well and their 9-year old daughter, Stephanie, brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. After Barbara and William's affair several years ago, it's hard for Charles to think about turning to William for help, but right now he doesn't know what else to do.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether or not to volunteer help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. At the same time, he still feels guilty about his affair with Barbara and doesn't want to see Barbara suffer. But if he helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

You've really done it this time. Everything was hard to begin with. You're still in debt from Virginia's funeral, and you didn't have enough to pay rent and Stephanie's expenses. You were struggling, and when you're struggling, you and Barbara fight.

You've gotten better at dealing with it, but this time it was too much. So you did what you usually do when that happens: you went out to drink and play cards with your friends. This time, however, you had too much to drink, stayed out too long, and lost too much money on the cards. You aren't sure you have enough to pay rent this month, let alone Stephanie's expenses and the costs for Virginia's funeral.

You've worked so hard since Stephanie was born. Now you don't know what to do. You could probably turn to William for help, but you've never completely forgiven him after the affair. You and Barbara mended your relationship, but it left a permanent rift with your brother. He'd probably help, but can you stomach asking?

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia went into the nursing home, the financial issues that Barbara and Charles faced have gone from bad to worse. The medical bills leading up to Virginia's death were hard enough, and her funeral put another substantial drain on their finances. While Barbara started going to college, she dropped out after a year, unable to pay the tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well and their 9-year old daughter, Stephanie, brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. After Barbara and William's affair several years ago, it's hard for Charles to think about turning to William for help, but right now he doesn't know what else to do.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether or not to volunteer help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. At the same time, he still feels guilty about his affair with Barbara and doesn't want to see Barbara suffer. But if he helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

Life has been going very well for you over the past few years. While you've never found someone right to marry, you also don't have any of the extra costs in terms of time or energy associated with a marriage. You've had that time and energy to invest in your career, and it has paid off well. You're one of the top stars at the law firm, frankly earning more than you know what to do with these days.

Barbara and Charles have not been doing nearly as well. You were very sad to hear about Virginia's death last year; you always liked her. Barbara has taken it very hard, and the terrible behavior of your brother hasn't helped matters. You were infuriated last week when Barbara called you to ask if you had heard anything from Charles, who had apparently gone missing again. Sure, it was the first time in several years, but it just reinforced for you exactly how irresponsible your brother still is.

You've helped Barbara out a little bit in the past, mostly by way of gifts and practical things for your niece, Stephanie. You've been very cautious about giving too much though. Not only is there still a rift between you and your brother over your affair with Barbara several years ago, something that you do deeply regret, but you don't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. Charles needs to learn to live up to his responsibilities to Barbara and Stephanie; you can't always be the one there to save him like you were when the two of you were children.

You expect that Charles and Barbara may well ask for some financial help this evening. They've been struggling to get by with the costs of Virginia's funeral and Charles' latest escapades have pushed them over the edge. Whether and how much you are willing to help is something about which you aren't at all certain. If you do help, you need to make very sure that Charles understands how badly he's failed and that he can't just rely on you in the future if he screws up again.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia went into the nursing home, the financial issues that Barbara and Charles faced have gone from bad to worse. The medical bills leading up to Virginia's death were hard enough, and her funeral put another substantial drain on their finances. While Barbara started going to college, she dropped out after a year, unable to pay the tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well and their 9-year old daughter, Stephanie, brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. After Barbara and William's affair several years ago, it's hard for Charles to think about turning to William for help, but right now he doesn't know what else to do.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether or not to volunteer help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. At the same time, he still feels guilty about his affair with Barbara and doesn't want to see Barbara suffer. But if he helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ACFHI) — Four years later

~

Money's tight. You know that. Money's always tight. That's just the way things are. Your parents try to protect you from it, but you're old enough to know what's going on. In the past few weeks, though, things have gotten worse. Dad did something dumb again. You know that much. There have been less treats in the past few weeks, and mom and dad have been fighting even more than usual.

Mostly when they're fighting like this, you just try to calm things down. There's nothing you can really do to make it better, but maybe you can at least get them to stop fighting. At least the tea party is still fun! You know uncle William helped pay for the party this year. You hope he brought something fun. Uncle William always brings the best presents.

Maybe the best present would be for your parents to stop fighting over money for a little while.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia moved in with Barbara and Charles, the financial issues that they faced have gone from bad to worse. They were having a hard time paying rent, but then the medical bills leading up to Virginia's death put them further into debt, and her funeral strained their already tenuous situation to the breaking point. Barbara is still considering applying to college, but she doesn't have the money for tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well, and their 9-year old daughter Stephanie brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do, or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. William still hasn't forgiven Charles for all the heartache he caused Barbara, and Charles doesn't want to humiliate himself in front of his brother again.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether to volunteer to help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. If Charles gets forgiven and helped every time he screws up, how will he ever learn? It will be just like the affair Charles had all over again. Besides, if William helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

The past few years have been the hardest you've ever faced in your life. From giving up on your dreams of a college degree to your mother's death a few months ago, it is hard to imagine how much worse things could get. To make matters worse, Charles has failed you, both financially and emotionally. While you've struggled to care for Stephanie and deal with your grief, he's been more combative and distant than ever before.

Last week, he disappeared for a few nights. Desperately, you even tried to get ahold of him at his job at the college, but he had blown off from there too, calling in sick. When he eventually came back home, he was still wasted and your bank account was almost empty. You don't even know how many hours you spent yelling and crying at him about what he had done to your family.

Your last hope is with William. If you can't get some financial help from him, there is a very real chance of losing the house you rent, not to mention having more of your various debts go into collections. You know that Charles doesn't want to rely on his brother. There isn't any choice though, and if it ends up hurting Charles enough to motivate him more in the future, all the better.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia moved in with Barbara and Charles, the financial issues that they faced have gone from bad to worse. They were having a hard time paying rent, but then the medical bills leading up to Virginia's death put them further into debt, and her funeral strained their already tenuous situation to the breaking point. Barbara is still considering applying to college, but she doesn't have the money for tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well, and their 9-year old daughter Stephanie brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do, or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. William still hasn't forgiven Charles for all the heartache he caused Barbara, and Charles doesn't want to humiliate himself in front of his brother again.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether to volunteer to help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. If Charles gets forgiven and helped every time he screws up, how will he ever learn? It will be just like the affair Charles had all over again. Besides, if William helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

You've really done it this time. Everything was hard to begin with. After Virginia died, you didn't really have enough money to deal with the funeral and Stephanie's expenses. You were struggling, and when you're struggling, you and Barbara fight.

You've gotten better at dealing with it, but this time it was too much. So you did what you usually do when that happens: you went out to drink and play cards with your friends. This time, however, you had too much to drink, stayed out too long, and lost too much money on the cards. You barely have enough to pay rent this month, let alone Stephanie's expenses.

You've worked so hard since Stephanie was born. Now you don't know what to do. You could probably turn to William for help, but he's never completely forgiven you for hurting Barbara because of the affair you had several years ago. You can't stand to humiliate yourself in front of him, yet again. He might well help, but can you stomach asking?

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia moved in with Barbara and Charles, the financial issues that they faced have gone from bad to worse. They were having a hard time paying rent, but then the medical bills leading up to Virginia's death put them further into debt, and her funeral strained their already tenuous situation to the breaking point. Barbara is still considering applying to college, but she doesn't have the money for tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well, and their 9-year old daughter Stephanie brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do, or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. William still hasn't forgiven Charles for all the heartache he caused Barbara, and Charles doesn't want to humiliate himself in front of his brother again.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether to volunteer to help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. If Charles gets forgiven and helped every time he screws up, how will he ever learn? It will be just like the affair Charles had all over again. Besides, if William helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

Life has been going very well for you over the past few years. While you've never found someone right to marry, you also don't have any of the extra costs in terms of time or energy associated with a marriage. You've had that time and energy to invest in your career, and it has paid off well. You're one of the top stars at the law firm, frankly earning more than you know what to do with these days.

Barbara and Charles have not been doing nearly as well. You were very sad to hear about Virginia's death last year; you always liked her. Barbara has taken it very hard, and the terrible behavior of your brother hasn't helped matters. You were infuriated last week when Barbara called you to ask if you had heard anything from Charles, who had apparently gone missing again. Sure, it was the first time in several years, but it just reinforced for you exactly how irresponsible your brother still is.

You've helped Barbara out a little bit in the past, mostly by way of gifts and practical things for your niece, Stephanie. You've been very cautious about giving too much though; you don't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. After what he put Barbara through during his affair several years ago, this latest betrayal is inexcusable. Charles needs to learn to live up to his responsibilities to Barbara and Stephanie; you can't always be the one there to save him like you were when the two of you were children.

You expect that Charles and Barbara may well ask for some financial help this evening. They've been struggling to get by with the costs of Virginia's funeral and Charles' latest escapades have pushed them over the edge. Whether and how much you are willing to help is something about which you aren't at all certain. If you do help, you need to make very sure that Charles understands how badly he's failed and that he can't just rely on you in the future if he screws up again.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

Since Virginia moved in with Barbara and Charles, the financial issues that they faced have gone from bad to worse. They were having a hard time paying rent, but then the medical bills leading up to Virginia's death put them further into debt, and her funeral strained their already tenuous situation to the breaking point. Barbara is still considering applying to college, but she doesn't have the money for tuition. They have been having a hard time just paying for rent and groceries. Charles' job at the college doesn't pay very well, and their 9-year old daughter Stephanie brings her own expenses.

Last week, things got even worse. Frustrated by the issues at home, Charles took off for a few days. He spent most of that time playing cards and drinking, and he lost more money than they can afford. If they don't get some extra help from somewhere, they will be risking eviction. Barbara has been alternating between yelling at Charles and crying. Neither of them know what to do, or where to go from here. Barbara has considered trying to find work, but she has no marketable skills and a young daughter to care for. Meanwhile, Charles has been working up his courage to ask William for a loan. William still hasn't forgiven Charles for all the heartache he caused Barbara, and Charles doesn't want to humiliate himself in front of his brother again.

Meanwhile, William isn't sure whether to volunteer to help. He's doing well on his own, but he tries to be responsible and save. He's helped Barbara out with small things a few times before, mostly gifts for Stephanie. He doesn't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. If Charles gets forgiven and helped every time he screws up, how will he ever learn? It will be just like the affair Charles had all over again. Besides, if William helps now, what about the next time? How can he draw a line to keep this from happening again?

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (ADEHJ) — Four years later

~

Money's tight. You know that. Money's always tight. That's just the way things are. Your parents try to protect you from it, but you're old enough to know what's going on. In the past few weeks though, things have gotten worse. Dad did something dumb again. You know that much. There have been a lot less treats in the past few weeks, and mom and dad have been fighting even more than usual.

Mostly when they're fighting like this, you just try to calm things down. There's nothing you can really do to make it better, but maybe you can at least get them to stop fighting. At least the tea party is still fun! You know uncle William helped pay for the party this year. You hope he brought something fun. Uncle William always brings the best presents.

Maybe the best present would be for your parents to stop fighting over money for a little while.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

While William helped to pay for Virginia's care, since Virginia's death, he has not reached out to Barbara. He has always been responsible about paying child support and given Stephanie nice gifts, even if he never spent very much time with her. A few months ago, his firm folded. He has still been helping out when he can, but right now he is struggling to make mortgage payments while looking for a new job.

Barbara's part-time secretarial work does not pay the bills, and with William out of work, she isn't getting much from him. Taking care of a 9-year old has a lot of small expenses, and just keeping up with the rent is hard enough. She's not sure how she can make ends meet.

Charles, on the other hand, had a break recently. He got a few stage parts, and from there has gotten several advertising roles, and even a minor role in a television show being shot locally. For the first time, he actually has a little extra money, although most of it has gone to gambling and a string of short-term girlfriends. He's always been willing to help out with small things, but Barbara doesn't like turning to him. He's still infatuated with her, but she doesn't want him around Stephanie too much. Will Barbara turn to him, and, if so, will he be able and willing to help with something this big?

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

Since William's firm folded, things have been hard for him. He had a good education and has years of experience though, so you don't know why it is taking him so long to get another job. In the meantime, his child support payments have dropped and left your daughter, Stephanie, in a real bind. You don't have any real sympathy for him though given the size of the house he has for just himself, or the fancy car he drives. He doesn't know how to live frugally and so you and Stephanie are suffering for it.

While William's luck has vanished, Charles seems to have picked up tons of it: several recent roles in advertisements and now a minor role in a television show being shot locally. Charles is thriving in a way you never thought possible. While it is likely he'll crash and burn at some point, given his proclivities, he's doing well right now. You're hesitant about letting him share too much of his recent good fortune with you or with his niece, Stephanie. You don't want to risk any kind of dependency on him, or especially having your daughter get too close to him before he flames out.

Maybe you can use Charles' recent success and largesse to shame William into picking up some of the financial slack though. You know it has to gall William to no end that he's now out of a job. If a show of appreciation for a little short-term help from Charles could kick William into cutting back his own spending so he can support you and your daughter, that would be just fine by you.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

While William helped to pay for Virginia's care, since Virginia's death, he has not reached out to Barbara. He has always been responsible about paying child support and given Stephanie nice gifts, even if he never spent very much time with her. A few months ago, his firm folded. He has still been helping out when he can, but right now he is struggling to make mortgage payments while looking for a new job.

Barbara's part-time secretarial work does not pay the bills, and with William out of work, she isn't getting much from him. Taking care of a 9-year old has a lot of small expenses, and just keeping up with the rent is hard enough. She's not sure how she can make ends meet.

Charles, on the other hand, had a break recently. He got a few stage parts, and from there has gotten several advertising roles, and even a minor role in a television show being shot locally. For the first time, he actually has a little extra money, although most of it has gone to gambling and a string of short-term girlfriends. He's always been willing to help out with small things, but Barbara doesn't like turning to him. He's still infatuated with her, but she doesn't want him around Stephanie too much. Will Barbara turn to him, and, if so, will he be able and willing to help with something this big?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

For the first time, it really seems like things are going your way. You've gotten a few parts in stage shows and commercials, and now you actually have a minor recurring character in a television show called Backlash! You never really expected your acting career to take off, but now it looks like it might.

Over the past year, you have dated a few different women you met through your shows. None of them lasted, but it's been a lot of fun to be out and dating again. Currently, you're dating Margaret, a girl who works in costuming for Backlash. She's pretty and fun and exciting. No one will ever replace Barbara, but, for the first time, things are going well.

Unfortunately, you can't say the same for Barbara. William lost his job when his firm went under, and while he's been looking for work, it's been hard on him. Since his child support payments decreased, Barbara has been having trouble paying her rent. You'd love to help her out, but you're not going to do it with nothing in return. She doesn't need to date you, but she at least needs to let you be part of her Stephanie's lives. You also need to consider what Margaret might think. If this is going anywhere, how will she feel about you paying your ex-girlfriend's rent?

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

While William helped to pay for Virginia's care, since Virginia's death, he has not reached out to Barbara. He has always been responsible about paying child support and given Stephanie nice gifts, even if he never spent very much time with her. A few months ago, his firm folded. He has still been helping out when he can, but right now he is struggling to make mortgage payments while looking for a new job.

Barbara's part-time secretarial work does not pay the bills, and with William out of work, she isn't getting much from him. Taking care of a 9-year old has a lot of small expenses, and just keeping up with the rent is hard enough. She's not sure how she can make ends meet.

Charles, on the other hand, had a break recently. He got a few stage parts, and from there has gotten several advertising roles, and even a minor role in a television show being shot locally. For the first time, he actually has a little extra money, although most of it has gone to gambling and a string of short-term girlfriends. He's always been willing to help out with small things, but Barbara doesn't like turning to him. He's still infatuated with her, but she doesn't want him around Stephanie too much. Will Barbara turn to him, and, if so, will he be able and willing to help with something this big?

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

There has never been a time where you felt as down and out as you do right now. Your career was the one great success in your life... and the firm you spent your entire adult life with has folded. It folded because of some bad decisions by senior partners and a lot of internal politicking gone awry. It wasn't your fault, but everyone at the firm that dedicated themselves to the place paid the price for it.

You lost Barbara years ago... but you always prided yourself on still being able to provide something for Stephanie. Tonight is your daughter's 9th birthday and for the first time you had to think twice about getting her all the gifts she wanted. You've cashed in a good portion of your investments already to keep you floating while you try to find a place at another firm. With the old firm folding though, you're likely to have to start some ways back from your old position wherever you wind up. You also have no idea how long it is going to be before you do find a new position.

Barbara and Stephanie are struggling to get by since the amount of child support you were paying dropped. That is not something you ever wanted to happen, but it has. Barbara has put on only the thinnest veneer of sympathy for what you're going through; at the end of the day she wants your money. If it wasn't for Stephanie, you'd have a lot less tolerance for Barbara. As it is, you're doing what you can.

Surprisingly, your brother Charles has had a string of good luck lately just as bad luck came your way. He's got a minor role in a television show being shot locally. While he's still not making the kind of money you used to bring in, he also doesn't have the more expensive life that you are currently locked into. The mortgage payments alone on your house are more than he is used to spending. And you know he's just waiting to show off that he's succeeding while you're failing. You expect he may well offer to help Barbara and Stephanie out now just to rub it in your face.

Setting

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

While William helped to pay for Virginia's care, since Virginia's death, he has not reached out to Barbara. He has always been responsible about paying child support and given Stephanie nice gifts, even if he never spent very much time with her. A few months ago, his firm folded. He has still been helping out when he can, but right now he is struggling to make mortgage payments while looking for a new job.

Barbara's part-time secretarial work does not pay the bills, and with William out of work, she isn't getting much from him. Taking care of a 9-year old has a lot of small expenses, and just keeping up with the rent is hard enough. She's not sure how she can make ends meet.

Charles, on the other hand, had a break recently. He got a few stage parts, and from there has gotten several advertising roles, and even a minor role in a television show being shot locally. For the first time, he actually has a little extra money, although most of it has gone to gambling and a string of short-term girlfriends. He's always been willing to help out with small things, but Barbara doesn't like turning to him. He's still infatuated with her, but she doesn't want him around Stephanie too much. Will Barbara turn to him, and, if so, will he be able and willing to help with something this big?

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 1 (BGI) — Four years later

~

Money's tight. You know that. Money's always tight. That's just the way things are. Mom tries to protect you from it, but you're old enough to know what's going on. In the past few months, though, things have gotten worse. Dad lost his job, and the money has slowed down to a trickle. Mom never really made enough to pay for things, you know that.

Mom is getting more and more worried. You wish there was something you could do. At least the tea party is still fun! You know uncle Charlie helped pay for the party this year. You hope he brought something fun. Uncle Charlie is always entertaining, and lately he has been giving you even better presents than Dad.

Maybe he can help out.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after all the help he has given the couple, can they really turn to him again? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave her with no money of her own and take away that learning opportunity.

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

Stephanie takes after her father far too much for your liking at times, and this is certainly one of those times. The recklessness, the pleasure-seeking, the impulsiveness, and the blindness to the consequences... you don't know what to do with her. It has taken decades for Charles to mostly grow up, but you despair of what might happen to your daughter if she doesn't learn right from wrong sooner rather than later. The kind of thrills that kids today are chasing after are a far cry from the relative innocence of your youth.

The question now is what to do about Stephanie. Next week she has a court date. A court date! You never wanted to wind up one of those parents who takes their teenager to a court date! She was driving while seriously intoxicated. She was damn lucky that neither she or anyone else wound up hurt nor dead. The worst of it is that she just doesn't seem to care, or to grasp the severity of the situation.

William is now a very well-respected and well-connected lawyer in the local community. He could probably pull a few strings and see that nothing too terrible happens to Stephanie. However, you aren't sure whether or not that is the right thing to do. If Stephanie really just doesn't get it yet, maybe losing her driver's license and having to do a lot of community service would be a good thing. Maybe it would scare her straight in a way that coddling sure hasn't.

At the same time, that would mean that Stephanie couldn't keep her current job. You'd been pushing for awhile for her to get a part-time job after school, and she got one just recently. A car is needed for her to get to the restaurant and, with your own work schedule, you couldn't drive her there. If she can't drive there, she can't work.

Tonight, which was supposed to be a celebration, looks like it is going to be a lot more of a headache than anyone imagined. You just wish you knew what the right thing to do for your daughter was.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after all the help he has given the couple, can they really turn to him again? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave her with no money of her own and take away that learning opportunity.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

It's your fault. Stephanie got this from you and you know it. You were 17 the first time you got caught driving drunk, too. Of course the penalties weren't as bad then. Kids make mistakes. She shouldn't have to suffer too badly for making a stupid teenage mistake.

Of course, maybe if someone had really hit you hard, taught you a lesson when you were a teenager, you would have learned something. Your brother always protected you since your father died. People make a lot of allowances for struggling teens. Does that help them or hurt them?

Your brother always helped you out when you got in a jam, and you know he cares about his niece. He might help her out of trouble as well if you asked. But do you want him to?

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after all the help he has given the couple, can they really turn to him again? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave her with no money of her own and take away that learning opportunity.

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

Watching your niece, Stephanie, is like watching your brother Charles back in the day. She's every bit as reckless and wild as he was, only today that means it is a lot more dangerous. You always did your best to watch out for your younger brother and you hope that you can do something at least to help out with Stephanie.

Charles has matured somewhat in the past few years. Having to raise Stephanie and watch her make so many of his own early mistakes has to have had an impact. The question now is whether or not he is ready to really step up and do what is right by his own daughter. Both Barbara and Charles have some hard decisions to make about how to get Stephanie back on the right path.

You know you could call in a few favors and see that Stephanie gets only a slap on the wrist for this. You've had to do this sort of thing for your brother in the past, as much as you disliked doing so. That said, there does have to be a line somewhere. If Charles and Barbara do ask you for help, exactly how much are you willing to do for them?

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after all the help he has given the couple, can they really turn to him again? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave her with no money of her own and take away that learning opportunity.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHK) — Eight years later

~

Seriously. How is this a big deal? You had a couple of beers, that's all. If your family had money, this would be over already. Your friend Rebecca got caught last month, but it just got handled. This isn't really a big deal.

But you can't lose your license! Your job is the only freedom you have. As long as you are making your own money you get to decide what to do with it. If you didn't have money of your own, you couldn't go out with your friends, and you'd be stuck wearing clothing your mom likes. Plus there are some days you think your job is the only reason your mom lets you out of the house.

Your uncle William is a big lawyer. He's helped your family out with money issues in the past. Surely he'll help you out of this as well.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after he refused to help when they were in financial trouble, can they get his help now? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped the family. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave the family on even more tenuous financial footing.

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

Stephanie takes after her father far too much for your liking at times, and this is certainly one of those times. The recklessness, the pleasure-seeking, the impulsiveness, and the blindness to the consequences... you don't know what to do with her. It has taken decades for Charles to mostly grow up, but you despair of what might happen to your daughter if she doesn't learn right from wrong sooner rather than later. The kind of thrills that kids today are chasing after are a far cry from the relative innocence of your youth.

The question now is what to do about Stephanie. Next week she has a court date. A court date! You never wanted to wind up one of those parents who takes their teenager to a court date! She was driving while seriously intoxicated. She was damn lucky that neither she nor anyone else wound up hurt or dead. The worst of it is that she just doesn't seem to care, or to grasp the severity of the situation.

William is now a very well-respected and well-connected lawyer in the local community. He could probably pull a few strings and see that nothing too terrible happens to Stephanie. However, you aren't sure whether or not that is the right thing to do. If Stephanie really just doesn't get it yet, maybe losing her driver's license and having to do a lot of community service would be a good thing. Maybe it would scare her straight in a way that coddling sure hasn't.

At the same time, that would mean that Stephanie couldn't keep her current job. You'd been pushing for awhile for her to get a part-time job after school, and she got one just recently. A car is needed for her to get to the restaurant and, with your own work schedule, you couldn't drive her there. If she can't drive there, she can't work. Times are tight financially, and without what she brings in your family would be struggling that much more.

Tonight, which was supposed to be a celebration, looks like it is going to be a lot more of a headache than anyone imagined. You just wish you knew what the right thing was to do for your daughter.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after he refused to help when they were in financial trouble, can they get his help now? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped the family. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave the family on even more tenuous financial footing.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

It's your fault. Since you've been struggling so hard for money, you've been working long hours doing extra tutoring at the college to make ends meet. You haven't been around to take care of Stephanie and help her through the hard times.

And blood matters too. Stephanie got this from you and you know it. You were 17 the first time you got caught driving drunk, too. Of course the penalties weren't as bad then. Kids make mistakes. She shouldn't have to suffer too badly for making a stupid teenage mistake.

Of course, maybe if someone had really hit you hard, taught you a lesson when you were a teenager, you would have learned something. Your brother always protected you since your father died. People make a lot of allowances for struggling teens. Does that help them or hurt them? You didn't really start taking account of your own behaviors until you had to figure out how to pay rent and feed your child in hard times. That made you grow up.

Your brother may still have issues with you, but you know he cares about his niece. He might help her out of trouble if you asked. But do you want him to?

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after he refused to help when they were in financial trouble, can they get his help now? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped the family. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave the family on even more tenuous financial footing.

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

Watching your niece, Stephanie, is like watching your brother Charles back in the day. She's every bit as reckless and wild as he was, only today that means it is a lot more dangerous. You always did your best to watch out for your younger brother and you hope that you can do something at least to help out with Stephanie.

Charles has matured somewhat in the past few years. Having to raise Stephanie and watch her make so many of his own early mistakes has to have had an impact. The question now is whether or not he is ready to really step up and do what is right by his own daughter. Both Barbara and Charles have some hard decisions to make about how to get Stephanie back on the right path.

You know you could call in a few favors and see that Stephanie gets only a slap on the wrist for this. You've had to do this sort of thing for your brother in the past, as much as you disliked doing so. You haven't helped them out financially the past few times they were in tight straits. Because of that, the income from Stephanie's job, which can only be reached by car, means a fair bit to their family. That said, there does have to be a line somewhere. If Charles and Barbara do ask you for help, exactly how much are you willing to do for them?

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara and Charles are concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, after he refused to help when they were in financial trouble, can they get his help now? Even if they can, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this?

If she does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with her new teaching job, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped the family. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave the family on even more tenuous financial footing.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — Eight years later

~

Seriously. How is this a big deal? You had a couple of beers, that's all. If your family had money, this would be over already. Your friend Rebecca got caught last month, but it just got handled. This isn't really a big deal.

But you can't lose your license! Your job is the only freedom you have. As long as you have a job you still have some spending money. If you didn't have money of your own, you couldn't go out with your friends, and you'd be stuck wearing clothing from Goodwill all the time. Plus there are some days you think your job is the only reason your mom lets you out of the house. Your family really needs the money.

Your uncle William is a big lawyer. He could fix this problem; you just need to convince him that he should help you out.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help on this when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy working, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also lose Stephanie the opportunity and the family a portion of its income.

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

You don't know who to blame more for this disaster: Stephanie or William. Stephanie certainly needs to accept some of the responsibility for what she's done, but William... what did he expect giving the two of you barely enough child support and spending almost no time with his daughter even after he got a position at a new firm?

You're tired. You're just plain tired. For all of Stephanie's life, you've worked low-wage jobs just trying to make ends meet. It means you haven't always had the time for Stephanie that she needed. And a little bit of money every month isn't a substitute for a father either. You've done your best, but it is clear that sometimes that isn't enough.

Stephanie needs to really learn how to show some gratitude to you for everything you've done for her. Going out drinking and partying whenever she gets the chance doesn't cut it. Yes, her life has been harder than it could have been, but that's no excuse. She's almost an adult now and she needs to learn to shape up.

You know that William will probably offer to get her off light for this. He did the same for his brother, Charles, enough over the years. You aren't sure that getting Stephanie off the hook on this one is that great an idea though. She needs to grow up and the only reason you're considering it is because the two of you really do need the money she has coming in from her job, a job she can only get to with a car. If she loses her driver's license over this, she loses her job and the money it brings in.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help on this when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy working, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also lose Stephanie the opportunity and the family a portion of its income.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

Poor Stephanie. You know exactly what she's going through. You certainly got in trouble enough as a teenager. Adolescence is hard, especially without a father figure in your life. While William has always provided for Barbara and Stephanie, he hasn't really spent a lot of time with his daughter. You've tried to be around when you could, but even after accepting your help, Barbara hasn't given you as much time with Stephanie as you would have liked.

After William's neglect led to this, the least he can do is help his daughter out of her legal trouble. He's a well-connected lawyer, and he's certainly helped you out of jams before. It's his abandonment that led her to this, anyway.

Maybe you can offer to help out more in the future. You have helped out with money in the past, but maybe you really need to spend more time with Stephanie. If William won't be a father to his own daughter maybe you can give her the help she needs. You've been there; you know a lot of what she's going through. You should take her aside today and really talk with her about what's going on in her life.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help on this when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy working, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also lose Stephanie the opportunity and the family a portion of its income.

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

While everything between you and Barbara is broken at this point, you have always tried to look out for your daughter, Stephanie, whenever you could. This latest mess is a really big one though and you really need to make sure both Stephanie and Barbara understand that.

You've already made a few calls and you have it set up so that Stephanie can get off the hook for this DUI at her court date next week. All that you need is to make sure that Barbara and Stephanie will go along with it. At the same time, you need to really make it clear that you can't do this indefinitely and that you won't always be able to pull the strings that are needed if this becomes a pattern. That's all the more so since you got your position at a new firm a few years back.

Frankly, you're also worried for Stephanie. You know that you haven't always been there for her as much as you'd like, in no small part because of how difficult things are between you and Barbara. That said, she clearly needs a father right now, someone who will help set her straight and make sure she steers clear of this kind of danger in the future.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help on this when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy working, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also lose Stephanie the opportunity and the family a portion of its income.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (BGK) — Eight years later

~

Seriously. How is this a big deal? You had a couple of beers, that's all. If your family had money, this would be over already. Your friend Rebecca got caught last month, but it just got handled. This isn't really a big deal.

But you can't lose your license! Your job is the only freedom you have. As long as you still have a job you still have some spending money. If you didn't have money of your own, you couldn't go out with your friends, and you'd be stuck wearing clothing from Goodwill. Plus there are some days you think your job is the only reason your mom lets you out of the house.

Your dad is a big lawyer. He hasn't been around much, except for birthdays and holidays, but he helps out with money and stuff. He could fix this problem, you just need to convince him that he should help you out.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with at work, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave Barbara and Stephanie on even more tenuous financial footing.

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

You don't know who to blame more for this disaster: Stephanie or William. Stephanie certainly needs to accept some of the responsibility for what she's done, but William... what did he expect giving the two of you barely enough child support and spending almost no time with his daughter even after he got a position at a new firm?

You're tired. You're just plain tired. For all of Stephanie's life, you've worked low-wage jobs just trying to make ends meet. It means you haven't always had the time for Stephanie that she needed. And a little bit of money every month isn't a substitute for a father either. You've done your best, but it is clear that sometimes that isn't enough.

Stephanie needs to really learn how to show some gratitude to you for everything you've done for her. Going out drinking and partying whenever she gets the chance doesn't cut it. Yes, her life has been harder than it could have been, but that's no excuse. She's almost an adult now and she needs to learn to shape up.

You know that William will probably offer to get her off light for this. He did the same for his brother, Charles, enough over the years. You aren't sure that getting Stephanie off the hook on this one is that great an idea though. She needs to grow up and the only reason you're considering it is because the two of you really do need the money she has coming in from her job, a job she can only get to with a car. If she loses her driver's license over this, she loses her job and the money it brings in.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with at work, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave Barbara and Stephanie on even more tenuous financial footing.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

Poor Stephanie. You know exactly what she's going through. You certainly got in trouble enough as a teenager. Adolescence is hard, especially without a father figure in your life. While William has always provided for Barbara and Stephanie, he hasn't really spent a lot of time with his daughter. Even though William has been so absent, Barbara has never let you help out with Stephanie the way you would have liked.

After William's neglect led to this, the least he can do is help his daughter out of her legal trouble. He's a well-connected lawyer, and he's certainly helped you out of jams before. It's his abandonment that led her to this anyway.

Maybe you can offer to help out more in the future. Maybe you really need to spend more time with Stephanie, regardless of what Barbara thinks. If William won't be a father to his own daughter maybe you can help out. You've been there; you know a lot of what she's going through. You should take her aside today and really talk with her about what's going on in her life.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with at work, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave Barbara and Stephanie on even more tenuous financial footing.

William Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

While everything between you and Barbara is broken at this point, you have always tried to look out for your daughter, Stephanie, whenever you could. This latest mess is a really big one though and you really need to make sure both Stephanie and Barbara understand that.

You've already made a few calls and you have it set up so that Stephanie can get off the hook for this DUI at her court date next week. All that you need is to make sure that Barbara and Stephanie will go along with it. At the same time, you need to really make it clear that you can't do this indefinitely and that you won't always be able to pull the strings that are needed if this becomes a pattern. That's all the more so since you got your position at a new firm a few years back.

Frankly, you're also worried for Stephanie. You know that you haven't always been there for her as much as you'd like, in no small part because of how difficult things are between you and Barbara. That said, she clearly needs a father right now, someone who will help set her straight and make sure she steers clear of this kind of danger in the future.

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

This year, the garden party is celebrating Stephanie's 17th birthday, but all is not well in the Gardener family. Stephanie has been caught driving drunk and her court date is next week. While this is the first time she has been caught, everyone knows it's not the first time she has been off drinking. Barbara is concerned about her behavior.

William has strong connections, and with a little pushing, he could get the case put in front of a lenient judge, and either get her off entirely, or get her off with a slap on the wrist. He has certainly done it for Charles in the past. At the same time, does Barbara really want to turn to him for help when he can barely be a father to his daughter normally? Even if he will help, is it a good idea to get Stephanie off the hook for this? On the other hand, maybe if William would show he cared for her a little more, she wouldn't be acting out like this.

If Stephanie does get convicted, she will lose her license until she's 18. She has an after school job working at a restaurant that she needs the car to get to. Barbara has been very busy with at work, and could not drive her. If Stephanie gets convicted, she would probably have to quit her job. Barbara encouraged her to get a job in the first place to learn some responsibility, and the money has really helped out. If she has to quit over this it might be a good lesson, but it would also leave Barbara and Stephanie on even more tenuous financial footing.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 2 (BGL) — Eight years later

~

Seriously. How is this a big deal? You had a couple of beers, that's all. If your family had money, this would be over already. Your friend Rebecca got caught last month, but it just got handled. This isn't really a big deal.

But you can't lose your license! Your job is the only freedom you have. As long as you still have a job you still have some spending money. If you didn't have money of your own, you couldn't go out with your friends, and you'd be stuck wearing clothing from Goodwill. Plus there are some days you think your job is the only reason your mom lets you out of the house.

Your dad is a big lawyer. He hasn't been around much, except for birthdays and holidays, but he helps out with money and stuff. He could fix this problem, you just need to convince him that he should help you out.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After the drunk driving incident, William's help allowed Stephanie to get off easy. But the intervening few years have been hard. Stephanie wound up on drugs and was forced to go through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she finally realized that no one would be there to pull her out of the next fire and started taking care of herself. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town.

She met Zack again at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

You're worried about your daughter, Stephanie. Of course, you're almost always worried about your daughter, but this time it's different. She's been seeing this Zack for almost six months now and you're concerned that the two of them are getting serious. While Stephanie has had a number of relationships before now, many of which disturbed you, Zack's history is horrible. You don't want your daughter getting seriously involved with someone who sold cocaine to kids in high school!

Since her uncle William passed away a few years ago, Stephanie has finally been getting her life in order. You're terrified that Zack will lead her down a very dark path again. She got off light several years back when William got her an easy pass for her first DUI. That let her feel like she could get away with anything for the couple of years that followed. In hindsight, it was a horrible decision and one that you don't want to make again.

You need to straighten your daughter out, however rough it will be in the short-term. You love her and you need her to realize that she can't have bad influences like Zack around. He's no good for her and if she doesn't make the changes in her life that need to be made, she's going to wind up in a very bad place in the years to come.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After the drunk driving incident, William's help allowed Stephanie to get off easy. But the intervening few years have been hard. Stephanie wound up on drugs and was forced to go through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she finally realized that no one would be there to pull her out of the next fire and started taking care of herself. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town.

She met Zack again at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

You're really worried about Stephanie's new boyfriend, Zack. He reminds you too much of yourself as a young man, and not in good ways. He was in and out of juvie up until he turned 18. He seems to have straightened out, but it's hard to tell whether he really has or whether he's just gotten better at hiding it. Even if he has cleaned up, he might go back to his old ways the first time things get difficult. You've heard rumors that he used to deal drugs. Will he start again when money gets tight?

Of course, Stephanie has finally started pulling herself together in the past few years, and she has been dating Zack through some of that time. Maybe he really is getting his act together. If so, he might even be a good influence on her. They could either help each other out or start a cycle and drag each other back down. That is, assuming he isn't still using, and you're not sure about that.

You know that Zack is important to Stephanie, and you would never be one to look down on the demands of the heart. If they truly love each other, that's enough of an answer for you, but you need to make sure Stephanie is sure about this, and that she knows what she's getting into.

You don't want your future grandchildren being raised by a drug dealer, or worse, being abandoned by a useless addict.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After the drunk driving incident, William's help allowed Stephanie to get off easy. But the intervening few years have been hard. Stephanie wound up on drugs and was forced to go through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she finally realized that no one would be there to pull her out of the next fire and started taking care of herself. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town.

She met Zack again at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

You were alternately ecstatic and terrified driving over to the family gathering with Stephanie. You love her madly and when she accepted your proposal of marriage, it was better than any high. You know she loves you too and that the two of you are going to make a life together, but you're very worried about how the announcement is going to go with her parents, Barbara and Charles.

Yes, you had a troubled adolescence. So did Stephanie. But both of you got your shit together. You got clean and you're staying clean. Hell, you don't even drink. In the past few years you have held down a steady job at a garage and managed to get by on your own. With Stephanie, you're convinced that all the worst of your troubles are far behind you and it is smooth sailing ahead.

Now you just need to be able to convince Stephanie's parents of this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After the drunk driving incident, William's help allowed Stephanie to get off easy. But the intervening few years have been hard. Stephanie wound up on drugs and was forced to go through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she finally realized that no one would be there to pull her out of the next fire and started taking care of herself. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town.

She met Zack again at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

~

This party is very important to you. Zack just proposed, and this is your opportunity to tell your parents. You know they're worried about him, and you understand why, but Zack is clean these days, and his determination has helped you stay clean as well. If your parents can't look beyond his past, how can they look beyond yours? It's not like your father has a sterling history himself.

Sure, you met him in high school when you were both struggling, but seeing his progress has made you aware of what is possible. If he was able to pull himself out of serious addictions and very lucrative dealing, surely you could deal with your own problems. When you met him at the supermarket, you were amazed at how different he had become.

You are going to marry Zack regardless of what they say. You love him and you are happy together. Being with Zack is the first time your life has actually felt stable or made sense. You both have jobs; you're paying rent; you're getting by. You've even started talking about having kids together.

Your parents have a very simple choice: either they accept Zack and you, or they reject you both and you go on with your life without them.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After having her driver's license revoked and doing several weeks of community service following her drunk driving incident, Stephanie started pulling her act together. When William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and then went on to begin an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

You're worried about your daughter, Stephanie. Of course, you're almost always worried about your daughter, but this time it's different. She's been seeing this Zack for almost six months now and you're concerned that the two of them are getting serious. While Stephanie has had a number of relationships before now, many of which troubled you, Zack's history is horrible. You don't want your daughter getting seriously involved with someone who sold cocaine to kids in high school!

Since her uncle William passed away a few years ago, Stephanie has gone to college and should be getting a degree this winter. You're terrified that Zack will lead her down a very dark path, throwing away her future. When you, Charles, and William decided not to pull strings to let Stephanie off light for her first DUI, she got her act together and has largely kept it together. Being a tough parent may be difficult, but it works with Stephanie.

You need to straighten your daughter out, however rough it will be in the short term. You love her and you need her to realize that she can't have bad influences like Zack around. He's no good for her and if she doesn't make the changes in her life that need to be made, she's going to wind up in a very bad place in the years to come.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After having her driver's license revoked and doing several weeks of community service following her drunk driving incident, Stephanie started pulling her act together. When William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and then went on to begin an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

You're really worried about Stephanie's new boyfriend, Zack. He reminds you too much of yourself as a young man, and not in good ways. He was in and out of juvie up until he turned 18. He seems to have straightened out, but it's hard to tell whether he really has or whether he's just gotten better at hiding it.

Even if he has cleaned up, he might just go back to his old ways the first time things get difficult. You've heard rumors that he used to deal drugs. Will he start again when money gets tight?

Stephanie is going to graduate college this winter and you're so proud of her. You worry, though, that her newfound stability might be more fragile than she thinks, and Zack could pull things off kilter. Of course, she has been dating Zack while in college, and still done well. Maybe he really is getting his act together. If so, he might even be a good influence on her. They could either help each other out or start a cycle and drag each other back down. That is, assuming he isn't still using, and you're not sure about that.

You know that Zack is important to Stephanie, and you would never be one to look down on the demands of the heart. If they truly love each other, that's enough of an answer for you, but you need to make sure Stephanie is sure about this, and that she knows what she's getting into.

You don't want your future grandchildren being raised by a drug dealer, or worse, being abandoned by a useless addict.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After having her driver's license revoked and doing several weeks of community service following her drunk driving incident, Stephanie started pulling her act together. When William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and then went on to begin an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

You were alternately ecstatic and terrified driving over to the family gathering with Stephanie. You love her madly and when she accepted your proposal of marriage, it was better than any high. You know she loves you too and that the two of you are going to make a life together, but you're very worried about how the announcement is going to go with her parents, Barbara and Charles.

Yes, you had a troubled adolescence. Stephanie had some troubles too, if nothing like you did. But you got your shit together. You got clean and you're staying clean. Hell, you don't even drink. In the past few years you have held down a steady job at a garage and managed to get by on your own. With Stephanie, you're convinced that all the worst of your troubles are far behind you and it is smooth sailing ahead.

Now you just need to be able to convince Stephanie's parents of this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After having her driver's license revoked and doing several weeks of community service following her drunk driving incident, Stephanie started pulling her act together. When William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and then went on to begin an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

This party is very important to you. Zack just proposed, and this is your opportunity to tell your parents. You know they're worried about him, and you understand why, but Zack is clean these days, and his determination has helped you stay clean as well. If your parents can't look beyond his past, how can they look beyond yours? It's not like your father has a sterling history himself.

Sure, you met him in high school when you were both struggling, but seeing his progress has made you more confident in yourself. If he was able to pull himself out of serious addictions and very lucrative dealing, surely you could get through college. When you met him at the supermarket, you were amazed at how different he had become.

You are going to marry Zack regardless of what they say. You love him and you are happy together. Being with Zack is the first time that your life has actually felt stable or made sense. He has a job, and you're almost finished with college. You've even started talking about having kids together.

Your parents have a very simple choice: either they accept Zack and you, or they reject you both and you go on with your life without them.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After William was able to get Stephanie off the hook on the drunk driving charges, she started pulling her act together and graduated high school. After William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and is now working on an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

You're worried about your daughter, Stephanie. Of course, you're almost always worried about your daughter, but this time it's different. She's been seeing this Zack for almost six months now and you're worried that the two of them are getting serious. While Stephanie has had a number of relationships before now, many of which worried you, Zack's history is horrible. You don't want your daughter getting seriously involved with someone who sold cocaine to kids in high school!

When her father, William, passed away a few years ago, Stephanie used some of her inheritance to go to college and she should be getting a degree this winter. You're terrified that Zack will lead her down a very dark path, throwing away her future. When you and William had agreed to help her out with her first DUI several years ago, Stephanie seemed to appreciate it and she did get somewhat better. She is in college after all, but she's still on a precipice.

You need to straighten your daughter out, however rough it will be in the short-term. You love her and you need her to realize that she can't have bad influences like Zack around. He's no good for her and if she doesn't make the changes in her life that need to be made, she's going to wind up in a very bad place in the years to come.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After William was able to get Stephanie off the hook on the drunk driving charges, she started pulling her act together and graduated high school. After William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and is now working on an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

Since William died, you have really tried to be there for Stephanie. You know what it's like to lose a father young, and you see a lot of your struggles playing out in her, except without the influence of a stable older brother. You're really worried about Stephanie's new boyfriend, Zack. He reminds you too much of yourself as a young man, and not in good ways. He was in and out of juvie up until he turned 18. He seems to have straightened out, but it's hard to tell whether he really has or whether he's just gotten better at hiding it. Even if he has cleaned up, he might just go back to his old ways the first time things get difficult. You've heard rumors that he used to deal drugs. Will he start again when money gets tight?

Stephanie is going to graduate from college this winter and you're so proud of her. You worry, though, that her newfound stability might be more fragile than she thinks, and Zack could pull things off kilter. Of course, she has been dating Zack while in college, and still done well. Maybe he really is getting his act together. If so, he might even be a good influence on her. They could either help each other out or start a cycle and drag each other back down. That is, assuming he isn't still using, and you're not sure about that.

You know that Zack is important to Stephanie, and you would never be one to look down on the demands of the heart. If they truly love each other, that's enough of an answer for you, but you need to make sure Stephanie is sure about this, and that she knows what she's getting into.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After William was able to get Stephanie off the hook on the drunk driving charges, she started pulling her act together and graduated high school. After William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and is now working on an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

You were alternately ecstatic and terrified driving over to the family gathering with Stephanie. You love her madly and when she accepted your proposal of marriage, it was better than any high. You know she loves you too and that the two of you are going to make a life together, but you're very worried about how the announcement is going to go with her mother, Barbara, and her uncle, Charles.

Yes, you had a troubled adolescence. Stephanie had some troubles too, if nothing like you did. But you got your shit together. You got clean and you're staying clean. Hell, you don't even drink. In the past few years you have held down a steady job at a garage and managed to get by on your own. With Stephanie, you're convinced that all the worst of your troubles are far behind you and it is smooth sailing ahead.

Now you just need to be able to convince Stephanie's mother and uncle of this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After William was able to get Stephanie off the hook on the drunk driving charges, she started pulling her act together and graduated high school. After William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and is now working on an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (BGM) — Six years later

~

This party is very important to you. Zack just proposed, and this is your opportunity to tell your mother. You know she's worried about him, and you understand why, but Zack is clean these days, and his determination has helped you stay clean as well. If your mom can't look beyond his past, how can she look beyond yours?

Sure, you met him in high school when you were both struggling, but seeing his progress has made you aware of what is possible. If he was able to pull himself out of serious addictions and very lucrative dealing, surely you could get through college. When you met him at the supermarket, you were amazed at how different he had become.

You are going to marry Zack regardless of what your mother says. You love him and you are happy together. Being with Zack is the first time your life has actually felt stable or made sense. He has a job, and you're almost finished with college. You've even started talking about having kids together.

Your mother has a very simple choice: either she accepts Zack and you, or she rejects you both and you go on with your life without her.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

Stephanie had a hard few years after the drunk driving incident. Losing her driver's license and her job just sent her into a downward spiral. She wound up getting involved in drugs and going through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she took some of the money she inherited and went into therapy. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town. Since William's death, Charles has also tried to help out with Stephanie's recovery. He sees a lot of himself in her struggles.

Stephanie ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy that Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

You're worried about your daughter, Stephanie. Of course, you're almost always worried about your daughter, but this time is different. She's been seeing this Zack for almost six months now and you're worried that the two of them are getting serious. While Stephanie has had a number of relationships before now, many of which worried you, Zack's history is horrible. You don't want your daughter getting seriously involved with someone who sold cocaine to kids in high school!

Since her father, William, passed away a few years ago, Stephanie has finally been getting her life in order. She's been in therapy, has a job and is mostly stable. You're terrified that Zack will lead her down a very dark path, throwing away her future. How to handle it is the tricky part though. When you and William decided to stay tough with Stephanie and let her take her lumps for first DUI, she rebelled further. Being a tough parent has only pushed Stephanie away in the past.

You need to get Stephanie to see that Zach could undermine everything she's managed to build for herself since her father's death. However, you have to do it in a way that won't push her away. After all, if she responds like she did before, it could be very bad for her. At the same time, if she doesn't make the changes in her life that need to be made, she's going to wind up in a very bad place in the years to come.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

Stephanie had a hard few years after the drunk driving incident. Losing her driver's license and her job just sent her into a downward spiral. She wound up getting involved in drugs and going through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she took some of the money she inherited and went into therapy. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town. Since William's death, Charles has also tried to help out with Stephanie's recovery. He sees a lot of himself in her struggles.

Stephanie ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy that Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

Since William died, you have really tried to be there for Stephanie. You know what it's like to lose a father young, and you see a lot of your struggles playing out in her, except without the influence of a stable older brother. You're really worried about Stephanie's new boyfriend, Zack. He reminds you too much of yourself as a young man, and not in good ways. He was in and out of juvie up until he turned 18. He seems to have straightened out, but it's hard to tell whether he really has or whether he's just gotten better at hiding it. Even if he has cleaned up, he might just go back to his old ways the first time things get difficult. You've heard rumors that he used to deal drugs. Will he start again when money gets tight?

Of course, Stephanie has finally started pulling herself together in the past few years, and she has been dating Zack through some of that time. Maybe he really is getting his act together. If so, he might even be a good influence on her. They could either help each other out or start a cycle and drag each other back down. That is, assuming he isn't still using, and you're not sure about that.

You know that Zack is important to Stephanie, and you would never be one to look down on the demands of the heart. If they truly love each other, that's enough of an answer for you, but you need to make sure that Stephanie is certain about this, and that she knows what she's getting into.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

Stephanie had a hard few years after the drunk driving incident. Losing her driver's license and her job just sent her into a downward spiral. She wound up getting involved in drugs and going through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she took some of the money she inherited and went into therapy. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town. Since William's death, Charles has also tried to help out with Stephanie's recovery. He sees a lot of himself in her struggles.

Stephanie ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy that Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

You were alternately ecstatic and terrified driving over to the family gathering with Stephanie. You love her madly and when she accepted your proposal of marriage, it was better than any high. You know she loves you too and that the two of you are going to make a life together, but you're very worried about how the announcement is going to go with her mother, Barbara, and her uncle, Charles.

Yes, you had a troubled adolescence. So did Stephanie. But both of you got your shit together. You got clean and you're staying clean. Hell, you don't even drink. In the past few years you have held down a steady job at a garage and managed to get by on your own. With Stephanie, you're convinced that all the worst of your troubles are far behind you and it is smooth sailing ahead.

Now you just need to be able to convince Stephanie's mother and uncle of this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara is not certain she trusts his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

Stephanie had a hard few years after the drunk driving incident. Losing her driver's license and her job just sent her into a downward spiral. She wound up getting involved in drugs and going through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she took some of the money she inherited and went into therapy. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town. Since William's death, Charles has also tried to help out with Stephanie's recovery. He sees a lot of himself in her struggles.

Stephanie ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. Barbara is happy that Stephanie has found someone, but she is worried about Zack. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Stephanie Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (BGN) — Six years later

~

This party is very important to you. Zack just proposed, and this is your opportunity to tell your mother. You know she's worried about him, and you understand why, but Zack is clean these days, and his determination has helped you stay clean as well. If your mom can't look beyond his past, how can she look beyond yours?

Sure, you met him in high school when you were both struggling, but seeing his progress has made you aware of what is possible. If he was able to pull himself out of serious addictions and very lucrative dealing, surely you could deal with your own problems. When you met him at the supermarket, you were amazed at how different he had become.

You are going to marry Zack regardless of what your mother says. You love him and you are happy together. Being with Zack is the first time your life has actually felt stable or made sense. You both have jobs; you're paying rent; you're getting by. You've even started talking about having kids together.

Your mother has a very simple choice: either she accepts Zack and you, or she rejects you both and you go on with your life without her.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting her parents to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

It seems like every week there is something more you can't do for yourself as the MS continues in its relentless course. Almost worse than what it is doing to you is what it is doing to your family. Increasingly, you lay awake at night wondering whether it wouldn't just be better for everyone if you were dead.

Charles... what this has done to Charles is almost unthinkable. The passion he's carried throughout his life seems to at last be ground down by something, and it is terrible to see. He's trying so hard to be careful and considerate around you, reining in all that he's feeling and trying to be a stable force. As terrible as it is, sometimes you find yourself going out of your way to pick fights with him just to see his passion flare again.

You know how badly he wants to run away at times, and you don't blame him for it at all. Sometimes you think it would be better if he would, even though it would really leave you alone. You don't have many more years at this point, but what those years will do to him... you don't want to think about. Yet, a prisoner in your own body, you have little else to think about.

You're so proud of your daughter, Stephanie, and what she's made of her life. Despite all of your concerns, Zach turned out to be a good husband for Stephanie and a wonderful father as well. You also love your two grandchildren. Spending time with them is one of the greatest joys in your life, but you worry about them seeing all of what you're going through and only remembering you this way.

You know that everyone has been talking about whether or not to put you in a nursing home or to dedicate more personal time with you. You remember all those years ago when you and Charles made the decision to put your mother, Virginia, into a nursing home. She was miserable, but now you understand better how willing she was to just let go at the end and not be a burden anymore. As much as it terrifies you, it may be best if you begin the process of separation from your family soon as well. You love them all, and it is precisely for that reason that you would rather they remember you in better health than personally doing everything for you while you slowly fade away.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting her parents to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

The last few years have been very hard on you. You never realized how much you relied on Barbara until she got sick. All the little things she used to do around the house, all the cooking and cleaning, keeping up with the garden. The two of you have been fighting constantly. You fight about finances, about how you do what used to be her chores, about everything. You know she's in pain, and you know it's hard on her, but you don't know how long you can cope with this. Since she had to give up her job, everything has gotten harder. She's around all the time, and there's not enough money coming in.

The worst part is, you can't even get away from it. You can't leave Barbara alone. Even when you're gone for work it's hard on her. She has trouble doing basic things for herself, especially when she's having a bad day. In the past when the two of you were fighting, you could always leave for a day or two. Now the best you can do is go to a bar for a few hours, and you still feel guilty about doing that.

If you had the money, you could hire someone to take some of the load off, but getting by is hard enough right now. The money you got from William's inheritance has mostly gone to pay medical bills, and Barbara's disability doesn't go very far.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting her parents to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've come to know and accept both Barbara and Charles as a new set of parents. Despite a rocky start due to concerns about your past, they eventually accepted you and brought you into the family. Watching Barbara slowly deteriorate has been incredibly painful.

It is going to be a hard balance with all of the responsibilities that you and Stephanie share, between your own jobs and your two children, but you want to see if there is some way that the two of you can pitch in personally. You know that Stephanie still feels some pain about seeing her own grandmother only occasionally in a nursing home and if possible you'd like to avoid having her deal with the same with her own mother. Plus, Barbara did take you in, and you want to show her that you care and appreciate her, and won't abandon her now just as her life is at its toughest.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting her parents to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Stephanie Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — Fifteen years later

~

You're worried about your parents. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year. Your father isn't coping well at all. You're almost surprised he's still there. You need to help out more, but you have a full time job and two young children to care for. You just can't spare much time.

You and Zach are doing all right financially. Maybe you could hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. On the other hand, things are only going to get worse. Maybe you should pool your savings and help your parents get into assisted living while your mother can still make the move. Your dad is doing fine healthwise, but he shouldn't have to do everything around the house in addition to caring for your mother.

On yet another side, you remember what it was like watching your grandmother dying in a nursing home. She was so angry, being cared for by strangers. No matter how often you and your mother visited, she always felt alone. That sort of care should really be provided by someone the patient knows and loves. Maybe you could buy a larger house and move them in with you. Would Zach put up with that? What would that do to Jessica and Michael, living around your ailing mother for years, watching her die?

You just don't know what to do. You know you need to help out, but you feel so lost.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children: Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. If Zach and Stephanie do decide to help out, they have the money to make a difference. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but that won't mend the wounds the way personal care would. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should be the one to care for her mother. Just providing money won't heal their relationship. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, time is limited.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

It seems like every week there is something else you can't do for yourself as the MS continues in its relentless course. Almost worse than what it is doing to you is what it is doing to your family. Increasingly, you lay awake at night wondering whether it wouldn't just be better for everyone if you were dead.

Charles... what this has done to Charles is almost unthinkable. The passion he's carried throughout his life seems to at last be ground down by something, and it is terrible to see. He's trying so hard to be careful and considerate around you, reining in all that he's feeling and trying to be a stable force. As terrible as it is, sometimes you find yourself going out of your way to pick fights with him just to see his passion flare again.

You know how badly he wants to run away at times, and you don't blame him for it at all. Sometimes you think it would be better if he would, even though it would really leave you alone. You don't have many more years at this point, but what those years will do to him... you don't want to think about. Yet, a prisoner in your own body, you have little else to think about.

You're so proud of your daughter, Stephanie, and what she's made of her life. Despite all of your concerns, Zach turned out to be a good husband for Stephanie and a wonderful father as well. You also love your two grandchildren. Seeing them is one of the greatest joys in your life. Reaching out over the past few years to try to reconcile with Stephanie has been one of the hardest, but most rewarding things you've ever done.

You know that everyone has been talking about whether or not to put you in a nursing home or to dedicate more personal time with you. You remember all those years ago when you and Charles made the decision to put your mother, Virginia, into a nursing home. She was miserable, but now you understand better how willing she was to just let go at the end and not be a burden anymore. As much as it terrifies you, it may be best if you begin the process of separation from your family soon as well. You love them all, and it is precisely for that reason that you would rather they remember you in better health than personally doing everything for you while you slowly fade away.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children: Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. If Zach and Stephanie do decide to help out, they have the money to make a difference. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but that won't mend the wounds the way personal care would. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should be the one to care for her mother. Just providing money won't heal their relationship. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, time is limited.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

You're really glad that Barbara finally reached out to Stephanie and Zach. It's so good to see them and your grandchildren more often. You felt terrible about what happened when they announced their engagement. It's been so hard seeing your grandchildren so rarely. You're happy to play with children again and hear about how their lives are going. There has been so little joy in your life lately.

The last few years have been very hard on you. You never realized how much you relied on Barbara until she got sick. All the little things she used to do around the house, all the cooking and cleaning, keeping up with the garden. The two of you have been fighting constantly. You fight about finances, about how you do what used to be her chores, about everything. You know she's in pain, and you know it's hard on her, but you don't know how long you can cope with this. Since she had to give up her job, everything has gotten harder. She's around all the time, and there's not enough money coming in.

The worst part is, you can't even get away from it. You can't leave Barbara alone. Even when you're gone for work it's hard on her. She has trouble doing basic things for herself, especially when she's having a bad day. In the past when the two of you were fighting, you could always leave for a day or two. Now the best you can do is go to a bar for a few hours, and you still feel guilty about doing that.

If you had the money, you could hire someone to take some of the load off, but getting by is hard enough right now. The money you got from William's inheritance has mostly gone to pay medical bills, and Barbara's disability doesn't go very far.

You just don't know how much longer you can deal with this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children: Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. If Zach and Stephanie do decide to help out, they have the money to make a difference. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but that won't mend the wounds the way personal care would. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should be the one to care for her mother. Just providing money won't heal their relationship. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, time is limited.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've never had the chance to be close to Barbara and Charles. The two of them pushed you and Stephanie away when your engagement was announced and have only tried to build a real relationship in the past couple of years when things started going downhill for themselves.

These days, your primary concern has to be your own family: Stephanie and your two children. While things are going relatively well for you at present, it isn't as though either of you have a lot of time or money. If Stephanie really wants to help out, you'll make some accommodations, but you think it would be best if they were as minimal as possible.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children: Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. If Zach and Stephanie do decide to help out, they have the money to make a difference. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but that won't mend the wounds the way personal care would. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should be the one to care for her mother. Just providing money won't heal their relationship. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, time is limited.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Stephanie Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

~

You're worried about your parents. You're so grateful that your mother finally reached out, but you still haven't entirely forgiven her. At the same time, no matter how angry you still are, it's painful to see her suffering. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year. Your father isn't coping well at all. You're almost surprised he's still there.

You and Zach are doing alright financially. You've thought about helping out. Maybe you could hire someone to come in and provide care a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. On the other hand, is that really what you want to do? If you want to rebuild a relationship, is buying someone else's time the right way to do it? You feel you should help out more yourself, but you have a full time job and two young children to care for. You can't spare much time. Besides, are you really ready to spend that much time around your mother after all these years?

On yet another side, you remember what it was like watching your grandmother dying in a nursing home. She was so angry, being cared for by strangers. No matter how often you and your mother visited, she always felt alone. That sort of care should really be provided by someone the patient knows and loves. You just don't know what to do. You want to help out, but you still resent her rejection of you and Zach. You feel so lost.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

It seems like every week there is something else you can't do for yourself as the MS continues in its relentless course. Almost worse than what it is doing to you is what it is doing to your family. Increasingly, you lay awake at night wondering whether it wouldn't just be better for everyone if you were dead.

Charles... what this has done to Charles is almost unthinkable. The passion he's carried throughout his life seems to at last be ground down by something, and it is terrible to see. He's trying so hard to be careful and considerate around you, reining in all that he's feeling and trying to be a stable force. As terrible as it is, sometimes you find yourself going out of your way to pick fights with him just to see his passion flare again.

You know how badly he wants to run away at times, and you don't blame him for it at all. Sometimes you think it would be better if he would, even though it would really leave you alone. You don't have many more years at this point, but what those years will do to him... you don't want to think about. Yet, a prisoner in your own body, you have little else to think about.

You're so proud of your daughter, Stephanie, and what she's made of her life. Despite all of your concerns, and there were a lot of them, Zach turned out to be a good husband for Stephanie and a wonderful father as well. You also love your two grandchildren. Seeing them is one of the greatest joys in your life, but you worry about them seeing all of what you're going through and only remembering you this way.

You know that everyone has been talking about whether or not to put you in a nursing home or to dedicate more personal time with you. You remember all those years ago when you and Charles made the decision to try to take care of your mother, Virginia. It was incredibly painful for all of you, and now you understand better how willing she was to just let go at the end and not be a burden anymore. As much as it terrifies you, it may be best if you begin the process of separation from your family soon as well. Going into a nursing home and sparing them some of what you went through may be for the best. You love them all, and it is precisely for that reason that you would rather they remember you in better health than personally doing everything for you while you slowly fade away.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

The last few years have been very hard on you. You never realized how much you relied on Barbara until she got sick. All the little things she used to do around the house, all the cooking and cleaning, keeping up with the garden. The two of you have been fighting constantly. You fight about finances, about how you do what used to be her chores, about everything. You know she's in pain, and you know it's hard on her, but you don't know how long you can cope with this. Since she had to give up her job, everything has gotten harder. She's around all the time, and there's not enough money coming in.

The worst part is, you can't even get away from it. You can't leave Barbara alone. Even when you're gone for work it's hard on her. She has trouble doing basic things for herself, especially when she's having a bad day. In the past when the two of you were fighting, you could always leave for a day or two. Now the best you can do is go to a bar for a few hours, and you still feel guilty about doing that.

If you had the money, you could hire someone to take some of the load off, but getting by is hard enough right now. The money you got from William's inheritance has mostly gone to pay medical bills, and Barbara's disability doesn't go very far.

You just don't know how much longer you can deal with this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children and a comfortable, if somewhat small, home. Stephanie is even taking night classes. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've come to know and accept both Barbara and Charles as a new set of parents. Despite a rocky start due to concerns about your past, they eventually accepted you and brought you into the family. Watching Barbara slowly deteriorate has been incredibly painful.

It is going to be a hard balance with all of the responsibilities that you and Stephanie share, between your own jobs and your two children, but you want to see if there is some way that the two of you can pitch in personally. You know that Stephanie still feels some pain about watching her family trying to personally take care of her grandmother, and if possible, you'd like to avoid having her deal with the same with her own mother. At the same time, Barbara did take you in, and you want to show her that you care and appreciate her, and won't abandon her now just as her life is at its toughest.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Stephanie Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMO) — Fifteen years later

~

You're worried about your parents. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year. Your father isn't coping well at all. You're almost surprised he's still there. You need to help out more, but you have work, classes and two young children to care for. You can't spare much time. You need to do well in your classes so you can get out of these dead-end jobs and have enough money for your children.

You and Zach aren't struggling too badly right now. Maybe you could give your father some money to help hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. It would make things tighter for your family, but someone needs to take care of your mother and you really don't have the time. You saw your mother nearly go crazy trying to take care of you and your grandmother at the same time, and you have two children. On the other hand, you're not sure you can really spare the money either. Maybe you would be better off just coming over to assist a few hours a week.

You just don't know what to do. You know you need to help out, but you feel so lost.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about it yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Barbara Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

It seems like every week there is something else you can't do for yourself as the MS continues in its relentless course. Almost worse than what it is doing to you is what it is doing to your family. Increasingly, you lay awake at night wondering whether it wouldn't just be better for everyone if you were dead.

Charles... what this has done to Charles is almost unthinkable. The passion he's carried throughout his life seems to at last be ground down by something, and it is terrible to see. He's trying so hard to be careful and considerate around you, reining in all that he's feeling and trying to be a stable force. As terrible as it is, sometimes you find yourself going out of your way to pick fights with him just to see his passion flare again.

You know how badly he wants to run away at times, and you don't blame him for it at all. Sometimes you think it would be better if he would, even though it would really leave you alone. You don't have many more years at this point, but what those years will do to him... you don't want to think about. Yet, a prisoner in your own body, you have little else to think about.

You're so proud of your daughter, Stephanie, and what she's made of her life. Despite all of your concerns, Zach turned out to be a good husband for Stephanie and a wonderful father as well. You also love your two grandchildren. Seeing them is one of the greatest joys in your life. Reaching out over the past few years to try to reconcile with Stephanie has been one of the hardest, but most rewarding things you've ever done.

You know that everyone has been talking about whether or not to put you in a nursing home or to dedicate more personal time with you. You remember all those years ago when you and Charles made the decision to try to take care of your mother, Virginia. It was incredibly painful for all of you, and now you understand better how willing she was to just let go at the end and not be a burden anymore. As much as it terrifies you, it may be best if you begin the process of separation from your family soon as well. Going into a nursing home and sparing them some of what you went through may be for the best. You love them all, and it is precisely for that reason that you would rather they remember you in better health than personally doing everything for you while you slowly fade away.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about it yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

You're really glad that Barbara finally reached out to Stephanie and Zach. It's so good to see them and your grandchildren more often. You felt terrible about what happened when they announced their engagement. It's been hard seeing your grandchildren so rarely. You're happy to play with children again and hear about how their lives are going. There has been so little joy in your life lately.

The last few years have been very hard on you. You never realized how much you relied on Barbara until she got sick. All the little things she used to do around the house, all the cooking and cleaning, keeping up with the garden. The two of you have been fighting constantly. You fight about finances, about how you do what used to be her chores, about everything. You know she's in pain, and you know it's hard on her, but you don't know how long you can cope with this. Since she had to give up her job, everything has gotten harder. She's around all the time, and there's not enough money coming in.

The worst part is, you can't even get away from it. You can't leave Barbara alone. Even when you're gone for work it's hard on her. She has trouble doing basic things for herself, especially when she's having a bad day. In the past, when the two of you were fighting, you could always leave for a day or two. Now the best you can do is go to a bar for a few hours, and you still feel guilty about doing that.

If you had the money, you could hire someone to take some of the load off, but getting by is hard enough right now. The money you got from William's will has mostly gone to pay her medical bills, and Barbara's disability doesn't go very far.

You just don't know how much longer you can deal with this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about it yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've never had the chance to be close to Barbara and Charles. The two of them pushed you and Stephanie away when your engagement was announced and have only tried to build a real relationship in the past couple of years when things started going downhill for themselves.

These days, your primary concern has to be your own family: Stephanie and your two children. Things are only going okay for you at present, and it isn't as though either of you have a lot of time or money. However, if Stephanie really wants to help out, you'll make some accommodations. You know what it is like to lose your parents and you're worried that if Stephanie doesn't do something to help out now, even if it is limited, she may regret it.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about it yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Stephanie Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — Fifteen years later

~

You're worried about your parents. You're so grateful that your mother finally reached out, but you still haven't entirely forgiven her. At the same time, no matter how angry you still are, it's painful to see her suffering. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year. Your father isn't coping well at all. You're almost surprised he's still there.

You and Zach aren't struggling too badly right now. Maybe you could give your father some money to help hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. It would make things tighter for your family, but someone needs to take care of your mother and you really don't have the time. On the other hand, is that really what you want to do? If you want to rebuild a relationship, is buying someone else's time the right way to do it? You feel you should help out more yourself, but you have work, classes, and two young children to care for. You can't spare much time. Besides, are you really ready to spend that much time around your mother after all these years? You saw your mother nearly go crazy trying to take care of you and your grandmother at the same time, and you have two children. On the other hand, you're not sure you can really spare the money.

You just don't know what to do. You want to help out, but you still resent her rejection of you and Zach. You feel so lost.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting Barbara to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

You didn't ask for any of this. A loveless marriage, divorce, raising your daughter alone, and now being trapped inside your own body. Yet, despite all of this, letting go of what little life you have left terrifies you completely. You're not going to let what little you do have slip away without a fight.

It seems like almost every week there is something more you can't do for yourself as the MS continues on its relentless course. The disability and welfare money you have coming in doesn't go very far and the once-a-week visit from a state nurse increasingly just doesn't cut it. Charles comes over somewhat erratically, but it often feels like a pity-fest for him. That's Charles though; he's never been good at the practical things. Still, you take what you can get.

You know that Stephanie and Zach are trying to decide what to do with you. Well, you aren't going to just give up and be shipped off to a nursing home for their convenience. Yes, you did it to your own mother, Virginia, and that decision haunts you today. You gave birth to Stephanie and raised her; she isn't going to just abandon you when you need her the most.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting Barbara to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Even after all these years, it's hard to see Barbara suffering. You try to come by to help out some, but you've never been very good at this sort of thing. You try to cheer her up, but you can't really give her the regular help she needs with chores, or taking care of herself. You don't really even know why you still come by. You've gotten a little closer since William died, but the spark has been gone for many years. If you had any sense you would just leave town.

But that would mean leaving your job, and leaving your niece and her kids. You love spending time with Jessica and Michael. You've always loved kids. Why did you spend so long pining after Barbara? You could have had grandchildren of your own to play with. You've had plenty of girlfriends. You could have been happy with one of them, couldn't you?

And yet, here you are, in your 60s, still traipsing after Barbara. Years after her divorce, years after your brother's death. You just can't leave her to suffer alone. It's not like Stephanie and Zach do much to help.

That's not fair and you know it. They're raising two young children. They both work. You just wish you had a better solution.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting Barbara to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've come to know and accept Barbara as a new mother, albeit a cranky one. Despite a rocky start due to concerns about your past, she eventually accepted you and brought you into the family. Watching Barbara slowly deteriorate has been incredibly painful.

It is going to be a hard balance with all of the responsibilities that you and Stephanie share, between your own jobs and your two children, but you want to see if there is some way that the two of you can pitch in personally. You know that Stephanie still feels some pain about seeing her own grandmother only occasionally in a nursing home and if possible you'd like to avoid having her deal with the same with her own mother. Plus, Barbara did take you in, and you want to show her that you care and appreciate her, and won't abandon her now just as her life is at its toughest.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children, Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting Barbara to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Stephanie Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (BGIMO) — Fifteen years later

~

You're worried about your mother. Her MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year. Charles has been helping out a little, but it's hard on him. Between her portion of your father's inheritance and the little she gets from the government, she's getting by, but she's not doing well. She needs more help than she's getting. You need to help out more, but you have a full time job and two young children to care for. You just can't spare much time.

You and Zach are doing all right financially. Maybe you could hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. On the other hand, things are only going to get worse. Maybe you should pool your savings and get your mother into assisted living while she can still make the move.

On yet another side, you remember what it was like watching your grandmother dying in a nursing home. She was so angry, being cared for by strangers. No matter how often you and your mother visited, she always felt alone. That sort of care should really be provided by someone the patient knows and loves. Maybe you could buy a larger house and move her in with you. Would Zach put up with that? What would that do to Jessica and Michael, living around your ailing mother for years, watching her die?

You just don't know what to do. You know you need to help out, but you feel so lost.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Since Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her mother has been very strained. Her children have spent more time with Charles than they have with their own grandmother. At least Charles accepted Zach. Last year, however, Barbara reached out to her daughter.

With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her mother for her rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her mother continues to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Besides, after watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, but isn't certain how much time she's willing to spend with Barbara. Besides, Stephanie's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how her mother will get by. Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Barbara Vela

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

You didn't ask for any of this. A loveless marriage, divorce, raising your daughter alone, being abandoned by her for a fellow junkie, and now being trapped inside your own body. Yet, despite all of this, letting go of what little life you have left terrifies you completely. You're not going to let what little you do have slip away without a fight.

It seems like almost every week there is something more you can't do for yourself as the MS continues on its relentless course. The disability and welfare money you have coming in doesn't go very far and the once-a-week visit from a state nurse increasingly just doesn't cut it. Charles comes over somewhat erratically, but it often feels like a pity-fest for him. That's Charles though; he's never been good at the practical things. Still, you take what you can get.

You know that Stephanie and Zach are trying to decide what to do with you. Well, you aren't going to just give up and be shipped off to a nursing home for their convenience. Yes, you did it to your own mother, Virginia, and that decision haunts you today. Yes, you rejected Zach, but he was a drug dealer. You gave birth to Stephanie and raised her; she isn't going to just abandon you when you need her the most.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Since Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her mother has been very strained. Her children have spent more time with Charles than they have with their own grandmother. At least Charles accepted Zach. Last year, however, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her mother for her rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her mother continues to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Besides, after watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, but isn't certain how much time she's willing to spend with Barbara. Besides, Stephanie's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how her mother will get by. Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Even after all these years, it's hard to see Barbara suffering. You try to come by to help out some, but you've never been very good at this sort of thing. You try to cheer her up, but you can't really give her the regular help she needs with chores, or taking care of herself. You don't really even know why you still come by. You've gotten a little closer since William died, but the spark has been gone for many years. If you had any sense you would just leave town.

But that would mean leaving your job, and leaving your niece and her kids. Even before Barbara and Stephanie started making up, you spent as much time as you could with Jessica and Michael. You've always loved kids. Why did you spend so long pining after Barbara? You could have grandchildren of your own to play with. You've had plenty of girlfriends. You could have been happy with one of them, couldn't you?

And yet, here you are, in your 60s, still traipsing after Barbara. Years after her divorce, years after your brother's death. You just can't leave her to suffer alone. It's not like Stephanie does much to help.

That's not fair and you know it. Stephanie and Barbara have only just now begun to mend the bridges that Barbara burned years ago. Besides, Stephanie and Zach are very busy. They're raising two young children. They both work. You just wish you had a better solution.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Since Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her mother has been very strained. Her children have spent more time with Charles than they have with their own grandmother. At least Charles accepted Zach. Last year, however, Barbara reached out to her daughter.

With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her mother for her rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her mother continues to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Besides, after watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, but isn't certain how much time she's willing to spend with Barbara. Besides, Stephanie's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how her mother will get by. Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Zachary Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've never had the chance to be close to Barbara. She pushed you and Stephanie away when your engagement was announced and has only tried to build a real relationship in the past couple of years when things started going downhill for her.

These days, your primary concern has to be your own family: Stephanie and your two children. Things are only going okay for you at present, and it isn't as though either of you have a lot of time or money. However, if Stephanie is willing to help out, you'll make some accommodations. You know what it is like to lose your parents and you're worried that if Stephanie doesn't do something to help her mother out now, even if it is limited, she may regret it later.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

Things have not been going as well for Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Since Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her mother has been very strained. Her children have spent more time with Charles than they have with their own grandmother. At least Charles accepted Zach. Last year, however, Barbara reached out to her daughter.

With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her mother for her rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her mother continues to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Besides, after watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, but isn't certain how much time she's willing to spend with Barbara. Besides, Stephanie's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how her mother will get by. Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Stephanie Bloom

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — Fifteen years later

~

You're worried about your mother. You're so grateful that she finally reached out, but you still haven't forgiven her. At the same time, no matter how angry you still are, it's painful to see her suffering. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year.

You and Zach aren't struggling too badly right now. Maybe you could give your mother some money to hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. It would make things tighter for your family, but someone needs to take care of your mother and you really don't have the time or the patience. On the other hand, is that really what you want to do? If you want to rebuild a relationship, is buying someone else's time the right way to do it? You saw your grandmother languish in a nursing home. She was so lonely and angry, being left to strangers. That sort of care needs a personal touch. You feel you should help out more yourself, but you have work, classes, and two young children to care for. Besides, are you really ready to spend that much time around your mother?

You just don't know what to do. You feel like you should help out, but you still resent her rejection of you and Zach. You feel so lost.