

Setting

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

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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

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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.

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Charles Gardener

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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.

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William Gardener

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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.

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Stephanie Gardener

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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.