

Setting

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

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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

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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?