

Setting

Act II, Scene 2 (AHL) — 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 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

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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.