

# *Setting*

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

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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**

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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.