

# *Setting*

## **Act I, Scene 4 (BG) — 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. 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**

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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.