

Setting

Act I, Scene 1

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It is Barbara's twenty-first birthday and she is having a small garden party in the beautifully tended garden at her mother Virginia's house. Two young men, brothers, Charles and William, have been invited to the party. Barbara has been dating the stable and reliable William for six months to the day now. She had previously dated Charles in a whirlwind romance that ended as abruptly as it began.

The relationship between William and Barbara is... stable. One might say dull. He is calm, assured, considerate, and almost entirely predictable. There is warmth, but more than that, there is security.

The relationship between Charles and Barbara had been anything but sedate. It was dramatic and passionate, an affair of vibrant emotions and hormones. The fights were as heated as the romance, and they eventually led to the break-up.

What is not known to Barbara is that both young men intend to propose to her tonight. William is planning a quiet proposal at the end of the evening. Charles, on the other hand, has decided that the passion he still feels for Barbara is not something he wishes to contain and plans a large and showy proposal on the spot. This will spur on William to act in making his own proposal, not as he would have wished, but in self-defense.

This evening, Barbara will have to decide which of the two brothers she wishes to wed. William offers her someone she can trust, and a predictable and stable life. Charles still ignites her passion, but everything about him is a risk.

With her daughter caught at a crucial turning point in her young life, Virginia hopes to provide support and guidance. Virginia's own marriage while beginning in passion, turned into a loveless thing after a few years. In their day, divorce was not so common and there was Barbara to think about, so they remained together until his passing five years ago. Whether Virginia will try to turn her daughter towards one of the two men or to allow her daughter to make her own decision without influence is up to her.

Barbara Vela

Act I, Scene 1

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Something is up. You can tell. William is almost stuttering and Charles has that too-slick grin on his face. You'd recognize that grin anywhere, and it means he knows something or is planning something. You really hope that whatever it is won't ruin your party.

Your mother is also just a little too quiet. You saw her looking at your father Frederick's photographs the other day. Maybe it is just that it is your 21st birthday and she wishes he was here. You do too. It was only a few weeks after your 16th birthday that he passed away of a heart attack. He had been young, but he was always a dedicated worker. He worked so hard you barely got a chance to know him growing up. Still, you miss him.

You and William have been together for six months now and you care for him. He's comfortable to be around and you can always count on him. He cares for you, that much is plain to anyone who just looks at his open face. He's a good man and you're glad to have him in your life. His stability has been a tremendous boon for you, giving you something that you feel has been lacking since your father died. You know that he feels more strongly for you than you do for him and at times that bothers you, but he is happy with it, so you don't question it too much.

William is everything that Charles isn't. You had dated Charles before you dated William, and if there are two men more different it is those two brothers. Charles is a ball of raw emotions and energy. He swept you completely off your feet a few years ago. It was electric, riveting, and dangerous. With him, you felt like you almost had no power. His smile and his hands, they controlled you.

The fights were every bit as passionate as the lovemaking. He just wouldn't accept it when he was wrong, or when something didn't go his way. You had been together for several months when one of the fights led to him disappearing, leaving town, without warning or notice. He was gone for the better part of a month. When he came back, you had mustered up the nerve to tell him it was over, and to stick with it. Whatever the passion, you just couldn't live with the uncertainty from day to day. You broke it off with him, a decision you've wrestled with ever since.

After you broke it off with Charles, you came to be friends with his brother William. The two of you could laugh about Charles and all his antics. William understood how infuriating his brother was capable of being. After the death of their own father when William was 15 and Charles was 13, William had been forced to look out for his brother. William learned all about the importance of the responsibility and stability that Charles lacked.

Six months ago, that spark of friendship became something more with William. He was so obviously in love with you, and you needed that kind of stability at the time. It was such a relief to be in control of yourself with someone. It isn't passionate, but it is... safe. He was there for you when you needed him, and that counts for a lot. Recently, though, you wonder if you're growing beyond it. What's a relationship when there isn't passion, even at the start?

Now you just need to hope that the party goes well. Whatever it is that William is nervous about, or Charles is planning, they had best not ruin your party. A girl only turns 21 once, after all. This is your night, and you mean to enjoy it.