

William Gardener

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

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Life has been going very well for you over the past few years. While you've never found someone right to marry, you also don't have any of the extra costs in terms of time or energy associated with a marriage. You've had that time and energy to invest in your career, and it has paid off well. You're one of the top stars at the law firm, frankly earning more than you know what to do with these days.

Barbara and Charles have not been doing nearly as well. You were very sad to hear about Virginia's death last year; you always liked her. Barbara has taken it very hard, and the terrible behavior of your brother hasn't helped matters. You were infuriated last week when Barbara called you to ask if you had heard anything from Charles, who had apparently gone missing again. Sure, it was the first time in several years, but it just reinforced for you exactly how irresponsible your brother still is.

You've helped Barbara out a little bit in the past, mostly by way of gifts and practical things for your niece, Stephanie. You've been very cautious about giving too much though. Not only is there still a rift between you and your brother over your affair with Barbara several years ago, something that you do deeply regret, but you don't want to reward Charles' bad behavior. Charles needs to learn to live up to his responsibilities to Barbara and Stephanie; you can't always be the one there to save him like you were when the two of you were children.

You expect that Charles and Barbara may well ask for some financial help this evening. They've been struggling to get by with the costs of Virginia's funeral and Charles' latest escapades have pushed them over the edge. Whether and how much you are willing to help is something about which you aren't at all certain. If you do help, you need to make very sure that Charles understands how badly he's failed and that he can't just rely on you in the future if he screws up again.