

Setting

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

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. Since Barbara got pregnant, both Charles and Barbara recommitted to their marriage. While there have been many fights since, and many of the same problems are still present, the birth of their daughter Stephanie strengthened their marriage. Even during the worst times, both of them have reason to stay and work things out.

William has never married, but has become a very successful lawyer. He is a doting uncle, giving Stephanie many gifts, and sometimes taking the entire family to the zoo or other events. He doesn't have a lot of free time with his practice, but much of what he does, he spends on his niece.

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 Charles 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. Charles doesn't make a lot of money at the college. 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 studying to become a teacher once Stephanie is in school, and caring for Virginia would make that very difficult. At the same time, tuition might make the costs of a nursing home even more prohibitive.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 4 (AH) — Five and a half years later

~

You have a daughter now. You can't just run off. But right now, you desperately want to. You and Barbara have been fighting over her mother Virginia. You don't know what the right answer is, you just know things can't go on the way they are. Barbara has been making herself crazy trying to care for both Stephanie and Virginia.

You know money is tight, you don't make much at the college, but there has to be some way to find the money to put Virginia in a nursing home. You understand that Barbara feels bad about it, she thinks that it's her responsibility to care for Virginia personally, but she just can't do it. It's draining her, it's straining your marriage and it's hurting Stephanie.

Plus it's making you crazy. Every time Virginia asks you the same question three times in a row again, you want to scream at her, you want to get away. It's not her fault. You know that, but it's so hard to deal with.

Still, you know Barbara wants to go back to school, and money is tight. Can you really afford to put Virginia in a home? Can you afford not to?