

Setting

Act I, Scene 2 (B) — Two years later

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Barbara and William Gardener have been married for almost two years now. William graduated from law school this spring and has just started a good entry level job at a large firm. They bought a house, and are starting to plan a family. On the surface, they are the perfect young couple, but underneath, something is missing. Despite William's gentle and caring ways, Barbara is lonely. She has been spending more of her time with friends, and less time with William. He's been so busy with work, but that isn't all. He never moved her in the way Charles did.

As she has been looking for something more, Charles has been right there. Charles has not found anyone else, and he's still head over heels for Barbara. He tries very hard to support his brother, but when Barbara comes to him, he can't help but think that it should have been him instead. The passion between them is still palpable to everyone except William. Even after the shocking proposal two years ago, William can't really believe his little brother would ever hurt him like that.

Meanwhile, Virginia has been watching all of this with great concern. She sees the same patterns in Barbara and William's marriage that happened in her marriage to Frederick, and she knows how lonely that can be. At the same time, she is very worried about the interaction between Barbara and Charles. The marriage vows are sacred; a little loneliness does not change that. She has been looking for ways to coax William and Barbara back together. William loves her so much. If only she could convince him to show it a little more. He's so quiet, so responsible. Barbara needs to truly know how important she is to William. Virginia has been trying to encourage William to be a little more like his brother, without losing his stability.

William Gardener

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You are worried about your marriage. You're doing everything you can to provide for Barbara, but she doesn't seem to understand that. You hope that perhaps a nice dinner party with family will help her through.

The early years of a marriage are supposed to be the hardest. You read that somewhere and it is clear that it is true. Part of it is that you've been so busy trying to get your career off the ground. Law school was exhausting and now that you've got a position at a law firm, you find that you just don't have enough energy when you get home. You're doing all of it for the two of you, though. How else will you be able to support your family and give Barbara the excellent life she deserves?

You know that she wants more time with you and you wish that you had it to give to her. In a few years, you might have more time, but not right now. One of the things that you think might help Barbara through this would be a child. The two of you have talked about it only a little bit, but you think it would be the perfect time. It would help Barbara to have someone there that needed her, and your salary is certainly enough to really get started on a family.

Your brother Charles has been struggling over the past two years and you're worried about him. He managed to get a job as an English teacher at the local high school, but he's now talking about leaving it to focus on theater. You suspect that he may actually be close to being fired for some reason or another and is just trying to make it look like he is in control of his life. He isn't, and you wish there was some way you could help him. He's an adult now, though, and has to learn to stand on his own two feet.

Hopefully tonight will just be the quiet family dinner that Barbara needs.