

Setting

Act I, Scene 1



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.

Charles Gardener

Act I, Scene 1

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You know it's wrong, but you still can't stop thinking about Barbara. Barbara and your brother William have been dating for six months. They're good for each other, and you know it, but they don't have what you had with Barbara. They have happiness and stability, but you had passion and true love. The touch of her lips on yours was better than any thrill you had ever experienced. She's the most beautiful woman you have ever met and every moment with her is wonderful, even when you're fighting. And now she's dating your brother.

Your older brother has always been the stable, responsible one. You climbed trees, he played catch. You got in fights and went to parties. He played on the baseball team and got straight As. You studied theater in school, he's going to law school. For all your fights, you have always been close. He took care of you, and he's taken the blame for your dumb ideas more than once. When your father died eight years ago, you were 13, and William was 15. William tried to be father and brother to you. While you chafed under his rules, you love him like a father and a brother both. You wish William only the best. The loss of your father was one of the first things that you and Barbara bonded over. She lost hers when she was 16, only a few years older.

You and Barbara dated first. It was amazing and passionate, but the fights were explosive. After one fight, you left for three weeks without calling or telling her where you went. All you did was hop a train and go, it's not like there was another woman, or anything, but that was the last straw for Barbara. You pleaded with her to take you back, but then William came into the picture. They were happy together, and you didn't want to hurt your brother, so you let it go.

But when he confided last night that he was going to propose to Barbara, you knew you couldn't take it. You couldn't let him marry the girl of your dreams without a fight. That's when you decided that you had to propose to her first. Today, in the middle of her birthday party, you're going to tell her that you love her and can't live without her. That if she still loves you too (as you know she does), she'll leave William and marry you. You went out and spent what little savings you had on the most beautiful ring you could find.

Today, at her 21st birthday party, you're going to propose. You're going to give her the big, flashy, romantic proposal that your brother never would. You're going to take this opportunity to tell her how much you love and need her in front of everyone. Your brother would do things quietly, behind closed doors, all prim and proper. That isn't true love. True love shouts in the face of propriety. True love declares itself openly, and ignores all barriers.

There are two big hurdles. One is your brother. You know this will crush him, but you can't let that determine how you live your life. The other is Barbara's mother, Virginia. Will she even let her daughter marry you after the big scene last time you broke up? You'll need to convince both of them that you have changed, that this time you know what you want, and it's to spend the rest of your life with Barbara. She's perfect, she's beautiful, and if you don't act soon, she'll be gone.

If she turns you down, you don't know what you'll do. How can you handle seeing the woman you love married to the brother who is so important to you?