

Setting

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

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While William helped to pay for Virginia's care, since Virginia's death, he has not reached out to Barbara. He has always been responsible about paying child support and given Stephanie nice gifts, even if he never spent very much time with her. A few months ago, his firm folded. He has still been helping out when he can, but right now he is struggling to make mortgage payments while looking for a new job.

Barbara's part-time secretarial work does not pay the bills, and with William out of work, she isn't getting much from him. Taking care of a 9-year old has a lot of small expenses, and just keeping up with the rent is hard enough. She's not sure how she can make ends meet.

Charles, on the other hand, had a break recently. He got a few stage parts, and from there has gotten several advertising roles, and even a minor role in a television show being shot locally. For the first time, he actually has a little extra money, although most of it has gone to gambling and a string of short-term girlfriends. He's always been willing to help out with small things, but Barbara doesn't like turning to him. He's still infatuated with her, but she doesn't want him around Stephanie too much. Will Barbara turn to him, and, if so, will he be able and willing to help with something this big?

Barbara Vela

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Since William's firm folded, things have been hard for him. He had a good education and has years of experience though, so you don't know why it is taking him so long to get another job. In the meantime, his child support payments have dropped and left your daughter, Stephanie, in a real bind. You don't have any real sympathy for him though given the size of the house he has for just himself, or the fancy car he drives. He doesn't know how to live frugally and so you and Stephanie are suffering for it.

While William's luck has vanished, Charles seems to have picked up tons of it: several recent roles in advertisements and now a minor role in a television show being shot locally. Charles is thriving in a way you never thought possible. While it is likely he'll crash and burn at some point, given his proclivities, he's doing well right now. You're hesitant about letting him share too much of his recent good fortune with you or with his niece, Stephanie. You don't want to risk any kind of dependency on him, or especially having your daughter get too close to him before he flames out.

Maybe you can use Charles' recent success and largesse to shame William into picking up some of the financial slack though. You know it has to gall William to no end that he's now out of a job. If a show of appreciation for a little short-term help from Charles could kick William into cutting back his own spending so he can support you and your daughter, that would be just fine by you.

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Charles Gardener

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For the first time, it really seems like things are going your way. You've gotten a few parts in stage shows and commercials, and now you actually have a minor recurring character in a television show called Backlash! You never really expected your acting career to take off, but now it looks like it might.

Over the past year, you have dated a few different women you met through your shows. None of them lasted, but it's been a lot of fun to be out and dating again. Currently, you're dating Margaret, a girl who works in costuming for Backlash. She's pretty and fun and exciting. No one will ever replace Barbara, but, for the first time, things are going well.

Unfortunately, you can't say the same for Barbara. William lost his job when his firm went under, and while he's been looking for work, it's been hard on him. Since his child support payments decreased, Barbara has been having trouble paying her rent. You'd love to help her out, but you're not going to do it with nothing in return. She doesn't need to date you, but she at least needs to let you be part of her Stephanie's lives. You also need to consider what Margaret might think. If this is going anywhere, how will she feel about you paying your ex-girlfriend's rent?

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William Gardener

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There has never been a time where you felt as down and out as you do right now. Your career was the one great success in your life... and the firm you spent your entire adult life with has folded. It folded because of some bad decisions by senior partners and a lot of internal politicking gone awry. It wasn't your fault, but everyone at the firm that dedicated themselves to the place paid the price for it.

You lost Barbara years ago... but you always prided yourself on still being able to provide something for Stephanie. Tonight is your daughter's 9th birthday and for the first time you had to think twice about getting her all the gifts she wanted. You've cashed in a good portion of your investments already to keep you floating while you try to find a place at another firm. With the old firm folding though, you're likely to have to start some ways back from your old position wherever you wind up. You also have no idea how long it is going to be before you do find a new position.

Barbara and Stephanie are struggling to get by since the amount of child support you were paying dropped. That is not something you ever wanted to happen, but it has. Barbara has put on only the thinnest veneer of sympathy for what you're going through; at the end of the day she wants your money. If it wasn't for Stephanie, you'd have a lot less tolerance for Barbara. As it is, you're doing what you can.

Surprisingly, your brother Charles has had a string of good luck lately just as bad luck came your way. He's got a minor role in a television show being shot locally. While he's still not making the kind of money you used to bring in, he also doesn't have the more expensive life that you are currently locked into. The mortgage payments alone on your house are more than he is used to spending. And you know he's just waiting to show off that he's succeeding while you're failing. You expect he may well offer to help Barbara and Stephanie out now just to rub it in your face.

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Stephanie Gardener

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Money's tight. You know that. Money's always tight. That's just the way things are. Mom tries to protect you from it, but you're old enough to know what's going on. In the past few months, though, things have gotten worse. Dad lost his job, and the money has slowed down to a trickle. Mom never really made enough to pay for things, you know that.

Mom is getting more and more worried. You wish there was something you could do. At least the tea party is still fun! You know uncle Charlie helped pay for the party this year. You hope he brought something fun. Uncle Charlie is always entertaining, and lately he has been giving you even better presents than Dad.

Maybe he can help out.