

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINP) — Fifteen years later

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Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing well. They have two children: Jessica, age 10 and Michael, age 7. Stephanie has recently gone back to work as an accountant. With her help, Zach bought the garage where he works, and the business has been fairly successful. He has even hired a couple new people to help out.

Things have not been going as well for Charles and Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and caring for her has been taking more and more of Charles' time. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working, and Barbara and Charles are fighting about money yet again. Things are made even worse by the fact that Charles can't leave: Barbara can't make do without him, even for a few days.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. If Zach and Stephanie do decide to help out, they have the money to make a difference. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but that won't mend the wounds the way personal care would. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should be the one to care for her mother. Just providing money won't heal their relationship. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, time is limited.

Will Stephanie and Zach help at all? If so, will Stephanie devote time to caring for her mother, or will she simply pay for help and be done with it? Can Barbara and Stephanie mend their broken relationship this late in the game?

Zachary Bloom

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Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've never had the chance to be close to Barbara and Charles. The two of them pushed you and Stephanie away when your engagement was announced and have only tried to build a real relationship in the past couple of years when things started going downhill for themselves.

These days, your primary concern has to be your own family: Stephanie and your two children. While things are going relatively well for you at present, it isn't as though either of you have a lot of time or money. If Stephanie really wants to help out, you'll make some accommodations, but you think it would be best if they were as minimal as possible.