

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHM) — Six years later

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This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After the drunk driving incident, William's help allowed Stephanie to get off easy. But the intervening few years have been hard. Stephanie wound up on drugs and was forced to go through court-mandated rehab. However, since William died of a sudden heart attack a few years back, Stephanie has pulled herself together. After his death, she finally realized that no one would be there to pull her out of the next fire and started taking care of herself. She got a job at the supermarket and moved out into a small apartment in town.

She met Zack again at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She really hoped that Stephanie would pull herself together and go to college, and now she's afraid that won't happen. She's even more worried that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Barbara Gardener

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You're worried about your daughter, Stephanie. Of course, you're almost always worried about your daughter, but this time it's different. She's been seeing this Zack for almost six months now and you're concerned that the two of them are getting serious. While Stephanie has had a number of relationships before now, many of which disturbed you, Zack's history is horrible. You don't want your daughter getting seriously involved with someone who sold cocaine to kids in high school!

Since her uncle William passed away a few years ago, Stephanie has finally been getting her life in order. You're terrified that Zack will lead her down a very dark path again. She got off light several years back when William got her an easy pass for her first DUI. That let her feel like she could get away with anything for the couple of years that followed. In hindsight, it was a horrible decision and one that you don't want to make again.

You need to straighten your daughter out, however rough it will be in the short-term. You love her and you need her to realize that she can't have bad influences like Zack around. He's no good for her and if she doesn't make the changes in her life that need to be made, she's going to wind up in a very bad place in the years to come.