

Setting

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

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Stephanie and Zach Bloom are doing fairly well. They have two children; Jessica, age 10, and Michael, age 7. They've had their financial struggles, but they have managed to get by. Since Michael started school, Stephanie has been taking night classes to get a bookkeeping certificate. Zach's boss wants to retire soon, and has been talking to Zach about arranging for him to take over the garage where he works.

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.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her mother struggle to care for Virginia, she doesn't want to take on that sort of responsibility. At the same time, the family doesn't have a lot of extra money to go around. They could possibly pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara one or two days a week, but money would be really tight. Stephanie could try to get over to pitch in a few days a week, but she's already very busy, between work, taking care of her kids, and her own school work. At the same time, if she doesn't help in some way, she's not sure how long her father can keep going.

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 and a comfortable, if somewhat small, home. Stephanie is even taking night classes. 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 come to know and accept both Barbara and Charles as a new set of parents. Despite a rocky start due to concerns about your past, they eventually accepted you and brought you into the family. Watching Barbara slowly deteriorate has been incredibly painful.

It is going to be a hard balance with all of the responsibilities that you and Stephanie share, between your own jobs and your two children, but you want to see if there is some way that the two of you can pitch in personally. You know that Stephanie still feels some pain about watching her family trying to personally take care of her grandmother, and if possible, you'd like to avoid having her deal with the same with her own mother. At the same time, Barbara did take you in, and you want to show her that you care and appreciate her, and won't abandon her now just as her life is at its toughest.