

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (BGINP) — 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 Barbara. A few years back, Barbara was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. This year she had to quit her job, and has gone on disability. Charles has been coming by to help out a bit, but he's not the most reliable caretaker. Money has been very tight since Barbara stopped working and what the state provides doesn't go very far. A state nurse stops by once a week, but Barbara really needs more help than that.

Since Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her mother has been very strained. Her children have spent more time with Charles than they have with their own grandmother. At least Charles accepted Zach. Last year, however, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her mother for her rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her mother continues to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. 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. Besides, after watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, but isn't certain how much time she's willing to spend with Barbara. Besides, Stephanie'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 her mother will get by. 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?

Charles Gardener

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Even after all these years, it's hard to see Barbara suffering. You try to come by to help out some, but you've never been very good at this sort of thing. You try to cheer her up, but you can't really give her the regular help she needs with chores, or taking care of herself. You don't really even know why you still come by. You've gotten a little closer since William died, but the spark has been gone for many years. If you had any sense you would just leave town.

But that would mean leaving your job, and leaving your niece and her kids. Even before Barbara and Stephanie started making up, you spent as much time as you could with Jessica and Michael. You've always loved kids. Why did you spend so long pining after Barbara? You could have grandchildren of your own to play with. You've had plenty of girlfriends. You could have been happy with one of them, couldn't you?

And yet, here you are, in your 60s, still traipsing after Barbara. Years after her divorce, years after your brother's death. You just can't leave her to suffer alone. It's not like Stephanie does much to help.

That's not fair and you know it. Stephanie and Barbara have only just now begun to mend the bridges that Barbara burned years ago. Besides, Stephanie and Zach are very busy. They're raising two young children. They both work. You just wish you had a better solution.