

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — 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 having her driver's license revoked and doing several weeks of community service following her drunk driving incident, Stephanie started pulling her act together. When William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and then went on to begin an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack 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's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Stephanie Gardener

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This party is very important to you. Zack just proposed, and this is your opportunity to tell your parents. You know they're worried about him, and you understand why, but Zack is clean these days, and his determination has helped you stay clean as well. If your parents can't look beyond his past, how can they look beyond yours? It's not like your father has a sterling history himself.

Sure, you met him in high school when you were both struggling, but seeing his progress has made you more confident in yourself. If he was able to pull himself out of serious addictions and very lucrative dealing, surely you could get through college. When you met him at the supermarket, you were amazed at how different he had become.

You are going to marry Zack regardless of what they say. You love him and you are happy together. Being with Zack is the first time that your life has actually felt stable or made sense. He has a job, and you're almost finished with college. You've even started talking about having kids together.

Your parents have a very simple choice: either they accept Zack and you, or they reject you both and you go on with your life without them.