

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHINO) — 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.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out, and if so, how to do so. After watching her grandmother languish alone in a nursing home, Stephanie feels like she should provide more personal care to her mother, maybe even buying a larger house and inviting her parents to move in. At the same time, with two children, Stephanie's work, and Zach's business, none of them have much time to help. They could pay for someone to come in and help out Barbara a few days a week, but Stephanie feels like she should do more. Will that even help enough to make a difference? Maybe Barbara really needs to be in assisted living somewhere. Can Stephanie and Zach afford that? Do they want to?

Stephanie Bloom

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

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You're worried about your parents. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year. Your father isn't coping well at all. You're almost surprised he's still there. You need to help out more, but you have a full time job and two young children to care for. You just can't spare much time.

You and Zach are doing all right financially. Maybe you could hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. On the other hand, things are only going to get worse. Maybe you should pool your savings and help your parents get into assisted living while your mother can still make the move. Your dad is doing fine healthwise, but he shouldn't have to do everything around the house in addition to caring for your mother.

On yet another side, you remember what it was like watching your grandmother dying in a nursing home. She was so angry, being cared for by strangers. No matter how often you and your mother visited, she always felt alone. That sort of care should really be provided by someone the patient knows and loves. Maybe you could buy a larger house and move them in with you. Would Zach put up with that? What would that do to Jessica and Michael, living around your ailing mother for years, watching her die?

You just don't know what to do. You know you need to help out, but you feel so lost.