

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.

Stephanie Bloom

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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 work, classes and two young children to care for. You can't spare much time. You need to do well in your classes so you can get out of these dead-end jobs and have enough money for your children.

You and Zach aren't struggling too badly right now. Maybe you could give your father some money to help hire someone to come in and help out a few days a week. It isn't much, but it might make the difference. It would make things tighter for your family, but someone needs to take care of your mother and you really don't have the time. You saw your mother nearly go crazy trying to take care of you and your grandmother at the same time, and you have two children. On the other hand, you're not sure you can really spare the money either. Maybe you would be better off just coming over to assist a few hours a week.

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