

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

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.

Charles Gardener

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

~

You're really worried about Stephanie's new boyfriend, Zack. He reminds you too much of yourself as a young man, and not in good ways. He was in and out of juvie up until he turned 18. He seems to have straightened out, but it's hard to tell whether he really has or whether he's just gotten better at hiding it. Even if he has cleaned up, he might just go back to his old ways the first time things get difficult. You've heard rumors that he used to deal drugs. Will he start again when money gets tight?

Stephanie is going to graduate college this winter and you're so proud of her. You worry, though, that her newfound stability might be more fragile than she thinks, and Zack could pull things off kilter. Of course, she has been dating Zack while in college, and still done well. Maybe he really is getting his act together. If so, he might even be a good influence on her. They could either help each other out or start a cycle and drag each other back down. That is, assuming he isn't still using, and you're not sure about that.

You know that Zack is important to Stephanie, and you would never be one to look down on the demands of the heart. If they truly love each other, that's enough of an answer for you, but you need to make sure Stephanie is sure about this, and that she knows what she's getting into.

You don't want your future grandchildren being raised by a drug dealer, or worse, being abandoned by a useless addict.