

Setting

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



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?

Barbara Vela

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You didn't ask for any of this. A loveless marriage, divorce, raising your daughter alone, being abandoned by her for a fellow junkie, and now being trapped inside your own body. Yet, despite all of this, letting go of what little life you have left terrifies you completely. You're not going to let what little you do have slip away without a fight.

It seems like almost every week there is something more you can't do for yourself as the MS continues on its relentless course. The disability and welfare money you have coming in doesn't go very far and the once-a-week visit from a state nurse increasingly just doesn't cut it. Charles comes over somewhat erratically, but it often feels like a pity-fest for him. That's Charles though; he's never been good at the practical things. Still, you take what you can get.

You know that Stephanie and Zach are trying to decide what to do with you. Well, you aren't going to just give up and be shipped off to a nursing home for their convenience. Yes, you did it to your own mother, Virginia, and that decision haunts you today. Yes, you rejected Zach, but he was a drug dealer. You gave birth to Stephanie and raised her; she isn't going to just abandon you when you need her the most.

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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.

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Zachary Bloom

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Your life with Stephanie has been a complex, but wonderful one. The two of you have both wrestled with so much in your past, but have found strength together. You now have two amazing children, stable employment, and a comfortable home. Yes, it has been a struggle, but you've made it here together.

Your own parents both died when you were younger and you've never had the chance to be close to Barbara. She pushed you and Stephanie away when your engagement was announced and has only tried to build a real relationship in the past couple of years when things started going downhill for her.

These days, your primary concern has to be your own family: Stephanie and your two children. Things are only going okay for you at present, and it isn't as though either of you have a lot of time or money. However, if Stephanie is willing to help out, you'll make some accommodations. You know what it is like to lose your parents and you're worried that if Stephanie doesn't do something to help her mother out now, even if it is limited, she may regret it later.

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Stephanie Bloom

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You're worried about your mother. You're so grateful that she finally reached out, but you still haven't forgiven her. At the same time, no matter how angry you still are, it's painful to see her suffering. Your mother's MS has been getting steadily worse, and she had to quit her job this year.

You and Zach aren't struggling too badly right now. Maybe you could give your mother some money to 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 or the patience. On the other hand, is that really what you want to do? If you want to rebuild a relationship, is buying someone else's time the right way to do it? You saw your grandmother languish in a nursing home. She was so lonely and angry, being left to strangers. That sort of care needs a personal touch. You feel you should help out more yourself, but you have work, classes, and two young children to care for. Besides, are you really ready to spend that much time around your mother?

You just don't know what to do. You feel like you should help out, but you still resent her rejection of you and Zach. You feel so lost.