

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — 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 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 it 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.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. 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.

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 Gardener

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

~

It seems like every week there is something else you can't do for yourself as the MS continues in its relentless course. Almost worse than what it is doing to you is what it is doing to your family. Increasingly, you lay awake at night wondering whether it wouldn't just be better for everyone if you were dead.

Charles... what this has done to Charles is almost unthinkable. The passion he's carried throughout his life seems to at last be ground down by something, and it is terrible to see. He's trying so hard to be careful and considerate around you, reining in all that he's feeling and trying to be a stable force. As terrible as it is, sometimes you find yourself going out of your way to pick fights with him just to see his passion flare again.

You know how badly he wants to run away at times, and you don't blame him for it at all. Sometimes you think it would be better if he would, even though it would really leave you alone. You don't have many more years at this point, but what those years will do to him... you don't want to think about. Yet, a prisoner in your own body, you have little else to think about.

You're so proud of your daughter, Stephanie, and what she's made of her life. Despite all of your concerns, Zach turned out to be a good husband for Stephanie and a wonderful father as well. You also love your two grandchildren. Seeing them is one of the greatest joys in your life. Reaching out over the past few years to try to reconcile with Stephanie has been one of the hardest, but most rewarding things you've ever done.

You know that everyone has been talking about whether or not to put you in a nursing home or to dedicate more personal time with you. You remember all those years ago when you and Charles made the decision to try to take care of your mother, Virginia. It was incredibly painful for all of you, and now you understand better how willing she was to just let go at the end and not be a burden anymore. As much as it terrifies you, it may be best if you begin the process of separation from your family soon as well. Going into a nursing home and sparing them some of what you went through may be for the best. You love them all, and it is precisely for that reason that you would rather they remember you in better health than personally doing everything for you while you slowly fade away.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — 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 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 it 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.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. 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.

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?

Charles Gardener

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

~

You're really glad that Barbara finally reached out to Stephanie and Zach. It's so good to see them and your grandchildren more often. You felt terrible about what happened when they announced their engagement. It's been hard seeing your grandchildren so rarely. You're happy to play with children again and hear about how their lives are going. There has been so little joy in your life lately.

The last few years have been very hard on you. You never realized how much you relied on Barbara until she got sick. All the little things she used to do around the house, all the cooking and cleaning, keeping up with the garden. The two of you have been fighting constantly. You fight about finances, about how you do what used to be her chores, about everything. You know she's in pain, and you know it's hard on her, but you don't know how long you can cope with this. Since she had to give up her job, everything has gotten harder. She's around all the time, and there's not enough money coming in.

The worst part is, you can't even get away from it. You can't leave Barbara alone. Even when you're gone for work it's hard on her. She has trouble doing basic things for herself, especially when she's having a bad day. In the past, when the two of you were fighting, you could always leave for a day or two. Now the best you can do is go to a bar for a few hours, and you still feel guilty about doing that.

If you had the money, you could hire someone to take some of the load off, but getting by is hard enough right now. The money you got from William's will has mostly gone to pay medical bills, and Barbara's disability doesn't go very far.

You just don't know how much longer you can deal with this.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — 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 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 it 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.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. 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.

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?

Zachary Bloom

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

~

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 and Charles. The two of them pushed you and Stephanie away when your engagement was announced and have only tried to build a real relationship in the past couple of years when things started going downhill for themselves.

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 really wants 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 out now, even if it is limited, she may regret it.

Setting

Act II, Scene 4 (AHJMP) — 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 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 it 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.

Since Charles and Barbara refused to accept Zach twelve years ago, Stephanie's relationship with her parents has been very strained. Last year, Barbara reached out to her daughter. With her failing health, she wanted to mend fences. Since then, Stephanie has been talking more with her parents, and she and Barbara have begun to rebuild their relationship.

Stephanie and Zach have been discussing whether or not to help out Charles and Barbara, and if so, how to do so. Stephanie is still very angry at her parents for their rejection of Zach, but Zach worries that if she doesn't help, and her parents continue to suffer, Stephanie will regret it. 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.

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?

Stephanie Bloom

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

~

You're worried about your parents. You're so grateful that your mother finally reached out, but you still haven't entirely 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. Your father isn't coping well at all. You're almost surprised he's still there.

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. 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 feel you should help out more yourself, but you have work, classes, and two young children to care for. You can't spare much time. Besides, are you really ready to spend that much time around your mother after all these years? 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.

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