

MORRIE 1

They are now in the house. A chair. A table. A white pitcher. A phone. Tempting:) You'll stay for lunch, right?

MITCH. Er, well, I don't have a lotta time —

MORRIE. You have to eat. You and me, we always eat. Besides, we're very healthy here. Eggplant, hummus, tabouli, it's like we live at the co-op. You want ice tea?

MITCH. Ice tea's good. This it here? *(Reaches for pitcher.)*

MORRIE. That's my urine beaker. *(Smiles.)* You wanna hold it for me? Help an old man out?

MITCH. Uhh —

MORRIE. It's OK. I have helpers. There's a woman here now, Connie, Italian, she's terrific. They're all terrific. I have someone who massages my muscles so they don't seize up, and extends my joints so they don't crunch down. Not to mention the help I'll need when this thing really kicks in ... I dread that.

MITCH. I can imagine.

MORRIE. *(Skeptical.)* Can you? You know what the worst indignity about all this is?

MITCH. What?

MORRIE. Pretty soon somebody's gonna have to wipe my ass. *(Mitch's cell phone rings.)* What's that? Did we set off the smoke alarm — ?

MITCH. *(Takes out cell phone.)* Uh, actually, lemme just take this quick. *(Into phone.)* ... Yeah? ... No, I didn't cut you off, I dropped my keys ... I dropped — Skip it. No, no-no — Keep the interview scheduled for eleven. ... No, don't give it to Sagel. I'll be there, *I promise!* *(Clicks off.)* Sorry.

MORRIE. Don't be. *My* phone rings all the time now. I'm getting a lot of calls since the show.

MITCH. *Nightline* ... Yeah, that was something! I mean, there I am flipping channels, and all of a sudden — *(Nightline theme.)* — BAHM-BAHM-BA-BAAAHM! I didn't know you were ... that you ... You did great on the show. How, uh, how'd that happen?

MORRIE. I'll tell you. This thing I have had been coming on a long time. ALS.

MITCH. "Lou Gehrig's Disease."

MORRIE. Yeah.

MITCH. Remember the line?

MORRIE. What line?

MITCH. From the movie. Gary Cooper is Lou Gehrig, and he's got "Lou Gehrig's Disease," and he goes in front of Yankee Stadium,

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and he says over the loudspeaker: “Today *day* ... I consider myself *self* ... the luckiest man *man* ... on the face of the earth.”

MORRIE. Yeah, well, I didn’t say that. Anyway, this ALS works fast. I had to stop swimming, stop driving, stop teaching. That hurt. You know me. I have to teach, or what am I here for? So I started observing my own decay, and I began to jot down ideas, aphorisms. A friend sent them to a reporter, and next thing I know, I get a phone call from Fred.

MITCH. Fred?

MORRIE. I’m always calling him “Fred.” Ted! Ted Koppel! He came to the house, asks me what I thought about his show. I said, “I’ve only seen it twice.” “Twice?” he says. “Don’t feel bad, I said I’ve only seen *Oprah* once!”

MITCH. So what *did* you think of his show the two times you saw it?

MORRIE. I thought he was a narcissist.

MITCH. Good thing you didn’t tell him *that*.

MORRIE. I did! I told him he acts like he knows the answers to all the questions BEFORE he asks them. I said, “Look, you don’t know anything about dying; I do. If you’re going to interview me, you better be prepared to LEARN something.” Also, he has very serious hair. Anyway, we did the show, and already some good has come out of it.

MITCH. Because you’re famous.

MORRIE. Because you came back.

MITCH. Yeah, hey, Morrie, I’m sorry I never ... I mean, I’ve lost touch with almost everyone from college: beer-drinking buddies, the first woman I ever woke up with in the morning ...

MORRIE. (*Deadpan.*) That was in college, huh?

MITCH. Well, yea —

MORRIE. (*Smiles, amused.*) Uh-huh. So, we’ll catch up. Sit down. What have you been up to for sixteen years? Start at graduation.

MITCH. Well, when I left Boston, I was gonna be a jazz musician.

MORRIE. I loved that! A jazz musician

MITCH. Yeah, well, I’m not a jazz musician.

MORRIE. Oh. So ... what are you?

MITCH. I’m a journalist.

MORRIE. What do you cover, education? Science?

MITCH. No.

MORRIE. International affairs?

MITCH. Does soccer count? No, I’m — I’m a sports reporter. A

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