

MITCH 2

Hunger allows no choice
We must love one another or die.”

(Lights change.)

MITCH. *(Offstage.)* Good morning! Morrie? Connie? ... I came in the back way because my food bag is leaking. I'm gonna put it in the fridge ... *(Enters, in disbelief.)* I saw the refrigerator. It's filled with my food bags.

MORRIE. *(Caught.)* Oops.

MITCH. You haven't been eating any of it.

MORRIE. *(Caught.)* I haven't been able to chew for months.

MITCH. Why didn't you tell me?

MORRIE. I didn't want to disappoint you. You get such a kick out of bringing it.

MITCH. I only brought it because I thought *you* got a kick out of eating it!

MORRIE. *(Smiles.)* Gee, this is a real O. Henry story, huh? Mitch, I have an announcement to make. I have lost my battle. Someone is now wiping my ass.

MITCH. I'm sorry, Coach.

MORRIE. Yeah, I know you wanted to be here for that.

MITCH. How are you handling it?

MORRIE. I'm not. Connie is. *(Laugh-coughs.)*

MITCH. You sure you wanna stay up? You wanna go back to bed?

MORRIE. Nah ... I have a new aphorism. "When you're in bed, you're dead."

MITCH. A rhyming one, no less.

MORRIE. Helps to remember.

MORRIE. ... So. How is Janine?

MITCH. She's good.

MORRIE. And when am I going to meet her?

MITCH. *(Hedging.)* I don't know. It's hard to coordinate. You know singers, their schedules ...

MORRIE. Always on call in case somebody needs some singing. I have a busy schedule myself, y'know. *Nightline* called the other day.

MITCH. Why?

MORRIE. They want to come by for "one last" installment. Every visit I get from Koppel, I know I'm a little closer to death. He should start wearing a shroud.

MITCH. I don't like them hovering around you like that.

MORRIE. Now, now ... Ted said he'd visit even if I *couldn't* do the interview. He's a good soul! Not everyone on TV is a bad guy.

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(Morrie coughs. He chokes. It's bad.)

MITCH. Morrie? Mor — !

MORRIE. URRGGH!

MITCH. Coach, tell me what to do!

MORRIE. *(Through choking and gagging.)* — Hit me!

MITCH. Hit you?

MORRIE. *(Through choking.)* Turn me on ... my side ... and hit me on my back!

MITCH. *(Hitting.)* Like that? Is that too hard?

MORRIE. *(Choking.)* — arder!

MITCH. *(Hitting harder.)* Harder?

MORRIE. *(Nods, red-faced, choking.)* Hmmph!

MITCH. *(Slaps hard.)* Like that? Like that?

MORRIE. Hrrrpm!

MITCH. *(Whacking him.)* There! I'm hitting you hard! Is that too hard?

MORRIE. *(Garbled.)* — ss — !

MITCH. What?

MORRIE. *(Garbled.)* — es!

MITCH. Is it too hard?!

MORRIE. *(Gasps, comes up for air.)* YES!!! *(Morrie stops coughing. He stares out front. We could mistake this for his death. Then he inhales and eases back again. Finally Morrie looks at Mitch.)* I always knew you wanted to hit me.

MITCH. Yeah. Well. That was for that “B” you gave me sophomore year.

MORRIE. Hold my hand? Squeeze.

MITCH. *(Squeezes.)* I am.

MORRIE. *(Trying to be calm.)* Harder.

MITCH. *(To us.)* I look at him sometimes, and I think about the story of Job. Job is a good man, but God makes him suffer, gives him boils, kills his cows, takes away everything he has, his house, his money, his family, his health. All to test his faith. I ask Morrie what he thinks about that. He says:

MORRIE. *(Looks at Mitch.)* I think God overdid it.

MORRIE. You know what I wish?

MITCH. What?

MORRIE. I wish I had a piano.

MITCH. So you could play?

MORRIE. So *you* could. Remember that little room where you used to play in college? I loved to stand outside the door ... and lis-

ten. Such a gift.

MITCH. (*Tenses, shakes head.*) Yeah, well ... I don't play piano anymore.

MORRIE. That's a shame. I remember you said your uncle taught you. Your uncle ... Mike?

MITCH. Yeah, he, uh ... Uh ... He died ... a long time ago. Cancer.

MORRIE. ... I am sorry for that.

MITCH. (*Shrugging it off.*) Mike had two sons. When he was really bad, they'd come down to my apartment, and I'd play for them. Cartoon songs. Theme from the *Flintstones*, you know? Sometimes we'd sit in this La-Z-Boy chair, all three of us. And the two of them fit in there with me, that's how small they were.

MORRIE. How did you handle it? Your uncle's death?

MITCH. I didn't. Night he died my aunt called, she said Mike was bad, he had to go the Emergency Room, could I watch the kids? It was three in the morning. Mike was waiting by the elevator in the hall, he was so pale ... yellow.

MORRIE. What did you say?

MITCH. "See ya soon, don't worry ... " Nothin'. Elevator door closed, and I never saw him again.

MORRIE. You wish you had said something meaningful to him. You wish he had said something meaningful back. You never had your moment.

MITCH. Isn't that what everyone wants when someone they love dies?

MORRIE. Yeah ... but if you wait until the last minute for the famous last words ... well, you better have great timing. The wise and wonderful things you want to say at the end are the kinds of things you should say all your life.

MITCH. That's easy for you. You say the right things every day.

MORRIE. (*Wearily.*) You think so? You remember the first day you taped me, and I said I wished I had been more aware of death every day of my life?

MITCH. Yeah, you were talking about your mother —

MORRIE. There's more. When my mother got sick, she didn't go to the hospital at first, she was at home ... and during the day she'd sit at the window, on the second floor, watching the street. And I'd be outside with my friends, playing stickball ... and she was in pain, she was in such pain ... and when she was bad, she'd call for me, from the window, to get her medicine, and I ... I would pre-

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