

MORRIE. You're a good student. Look it up.

MITCH. Coach ... Look ... I ...

MORRIE. You gotta go.

MITCH. I gotta go.

MORRIE. "You gotta go, you gotta go."

MITCH. I don't know how to say goodbye.

MORRIE. This is how we say goodbye. (*Morrie hugs Mitch. Mitch pulls away.*) Uh-uhh. Extra credit. (*Mitch smiles and kisses Morrie's forehead.*) You'll stay in touch, right?

MITCH. Of course.

MORRIE. Promise me.

MITCH. I promise.

MORRIE. Say it in a sentence.

MITCH. Wha — ?

MORRIE. Say: "Morrie, I promise to stay in touch."

MITCH. "Morrie, I promise to stay in touch."

MORRIE. *Satisfied, turns, walks, then ...*) Say it again, so you won't forget.

MITCH. "*Morrie, I PROMISE to stay in touch!*" (*Morrie exits. Mitch turns to us.*) I didn't. I proceeded to break that promise every day, every week, and every month for sixteen years. What happened? *Life* happened. After college, I moved to New York. Into an apartment building where my Uncle Mike and his family lived. And I started my career as a jazz pianist. (*Mitch sits at piano, plays jazz in a charming, lyrical way.*) I wasn't an instant star, but I was young, plenty of time, knock on doors, play some piano bars, come home and tell Mike about my adventures. "Don't give up!" he said, "You'll make it!" We'd play duets together. It was a fun time ... (*Stops playing.*) Then Mike got sick. Pancreatic cancer. Very painful. No cure. Mike was young. He had a family. He was bitter. He couldn't handle it. And I couldn't handle it either. I tried not to look when he doubled over or threw-up from the chemo. He was my hero; I didn't want to see him sick and weak! So I'd leave the room and sit at the piano ... by myself. (*Mitch plays a tune akin to "Fascinating Rhythm," now slightly too fast.* *) And when he was in pain, which was all the time, he'd cry out. I didn't know what to do, so I just sat there and played. I just kept playing. (*Mitch plays even faster now.*) And as the cancer spread into his stomach and his bones and his skin turned yellow and his hair fell out, he'd cry out louder, and I'd play louder, and his family

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couldn't help, and the doctors couldn't help, and I couldn't help! (*Mitch plays crazy fast now, discordant, making mistakes. Then he suddenly stops and slams down the piano. Mitch stands.*) I stopped playing music. (*Piano strikes upstage.*) Mike was dead. He was forty-two. I was twenty-one. Half his age. I thought ... "I've got twenty-one years left!" It was time to get "serious." (*Mitch puts on a dress coat and tie.*) I sold my keyboard. I went back to school. Columbia this time. Master's Degree. Journalism. Got a job as a sports reporter. I worked hard. I hustled. And things caught on. And then they more than caught on. I was going to the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Olympics. I got a column, and a bigger paycheck, and a radio gig, and a TV gig, and a new house. and an even bigger paycheck — ! And one day I woke up and said: "*This was meant to be!*" I was hatched out of the egg, just like this. Whenever I got music magazines, mail from Brandeis, I threw it away. The past was the past; forget it. And so I forgot my teacher. I might never have spoken, or seen, or heard from Morrie Schwartz ever again had I not been surfing TV late one night when something caught my ear. (*We hear a snippet of Nightline theme.*) MITCH/TED KOPPEL. "Good evening, I'm Ted Koppel, and this ... is *Nightline*. Just who *is* Morrie Schwartz, and why, by the end of the night, are so many of *you* going to care ... about *him*?" (*A light upstage on Morrie.*)

MORRIE. (*To us.*) It started with little things. Long walks would leave me out of breath. Exhausted. Then I began to stumble — for no reason. One night, on the dance floor, I fell. And I never fall when I'm dancing. So ... I had tests. *Lots* of tests. And finally my wife Charlotte and I went to see this neurologist. The doctor says: MITCH/DOCTOR. Mister Schwartz, please sit down.

MORRIE. Good news they let you stand. Bad news ...

MITCH/DOCTOR. "Mr. Schwartz, you have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, ALS, a degenerative disease of the nervous system — also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

MORRIE. "Lou Gehrig's disease. But that's fatal."

MITCH/DOCTOR. "Yes, it is."

MORRIE. "I mean — it *used* to be fatal. There's a cure now, right?"

MITCH/DOCTOR. "No. There isn't."

MORRIE. "Well ... how many years do I have?"

MITCH/DOCTOR. "It's not a matter of years."

MORRIE. Charlotte and I went outside. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, the sky was blue, children were laughing, singing. *I wanted it all to stop!* I screamed, "Make the sun die, make