The Sixth Tuesday
We Talk About Emotions

I walked past the mountain laurels and the Japanese maple, up the bluestone steps of Morrie's house. The white rain gutter hung like a lid over the doorway. I rang the bell and was greeted not by Connie but by Morrie's wife, Charlotte, a beautiful gray-haired woman who spoke in a lilting voice. She was not often at home when I came by—she continued working at MIT, as Morrie wished—and I was surprised this morning to see her.

"Morrie's having a bit of a hard time today," she said. She stared over my shoulder for a moment, then moved toward the kitchen.

I'm sorry, I said.

"No, no, he'll be happy to see you," she said quickly. "I'm sure . . ."

She stopped in the middle of the sentence, turning her head slightly, listening for something. Then she continued. "I'm sure . . . he'll feel better when he knows you're here."

I lifted up the bags from the market—my normal food supply, I said jokingly—and she seemed to smile and fret at the same time.

"There's already so much food. He hasn't eaten any from last time."

This took me by surprise.

He hasn't eaten any, I asked?

She opened the refrigerator and I saw familiar containers of chicken salad, vermicelli, vegetables, stuffed squash, all things I had brought for Morrie. She opened the freezer and there was even more.

"Morrie can't eat most of this food. It's too hard for him to swallow. He has to eat soft things and liquid drinks now."

But he never said anything, I said.

Charlotte smiled. "He doesn't want to hurt your feelings."

It wouldn't have hurt my feelings. I just wanted to help in some way. I mean, I just wanted to bring him something . . .

"You *are* bringing him something. He looks forward to your visits. He talks about having to do this project with you, how he has to concentrate and put the time aside. I think it's giving him a good sense of purpose . . ."

Again, she gave that faraway look, the tuning-in-something-from-somewhere-else. I knew Morrie's nights were becoming difficult, that he didn't sleep through them, and that meant Charlotte often did not sleep through them either. Sometimes Morrie would lie awake

coughing for hours—it would take that long to get the phlegm from his throat. There were health care workers now staying through the night and all those visitors during the day, former students, fellow professors, meditation teachers, tramping in and out of the house. On some days, Morrie had a half a dozen visitors, and they were often there when Charlotte returned from work. She handled it with patience, even though all these outsiders were soaking up her precious minutes with Morrie.

". . . a sense of purpose," she continued. "Yes. That's good, you know."

"I hope so," I said.

I helped put the new food inside the refrigerator. The kitchen counter had all kinds of notes, messages, information, medical instructions. The table held more pill bottles than ever—Selestone for his asthma, Ativan to help him sleep, naproxen for infections—along with a powdered milk mix and laxatives. From down the hall, we heard the sound of a door open.

"Maybe he's available now . . . let me go check."

Charlotte glanced again at my food and I felt suddenly ashamed. All these reminders of things Morrie would never enjoy.

The small horrors of his illness were growing, and when I finally sat down with Morrie, he was coughing

more than usual, a dry, dusty cough that shook his chest and made his head jerk forward. After one violent surge, he stopped, closed his eyes, and took a breath. I sat quietly because I thought he was recovering from his exertion.

"Is the tape on?" he said suddenly, his eyes still closed.

Yes, yes, I quickly said, pressing down the play and record buttons.

"What I'm doing now," he continued, his eyes still closed, "is detaching myself from the experience."

Detaching yourself?

"Yes. Detaching myself. And this is important—not just for someone like me, who is dying, but for someone like you, who is perfectly healthy. Learn to detach."

He opened his eyes. He exhaled. "You know what the Buddhists say? Don't cling to things, because everything is impermanent."

But wait, I said. Aren't you always talking about experiencing life? All the good emotions, all the bad ones?

"Yes."

Well, how can you do that if you're detached?

"Ah. You're thinking, Mitch. But detachment doesn't mean you don't let the experience *penetrate* you. On the contrary, you let it penetrate you *fully*. That's how you are able to leave it."

I'm lost.

"Take any emotion—love for a woman, or grief for a

loved one, or what I'm going through, fear and pain from a deadly illness. If you hold back on the emotions—if you don't allow yourself to go all the way through them—you can never get to being detached, you're too busy being afraid. You're afraid of the pain, you're afraid of the grief. You're afraid of the vulnerability that loving entails.

"But by throwing yourself into these emotions, by allowing yourself to dive in, all the way, over your head even, you experience them fully and completely. You know what pain is. You know what love is. You know what grief is. And only then can you say, 'All right. I have experienced that emotion. I recognize that emotion. Now I need to detach from that emotion for a moment.' "

Morrie stopped and looked me over, perhaps to make sure I was getting this right.

"I know you think this is just about dying," he said, "but it's like I keep telling you. When you learn how to die, you learn how to live."

Morrie talked about his most fearful moments, when he felt his chest locked in heaving surges or when he wasn't sure where his next breath would come from. These were horrifying times, he said, and his first emotions were horror, fear, anxiety. But once he recognized the feel of those emotions, their texture, their moisture, the shiver down the back, the quick flash of heat that

crosses your brain—then he was able to say, "Okay. This is fear. Step away from it. Step away."

I thought about how often this was needed in everyday life. How we feel lonely, sometimes to the point of tears, but we don't let those tears come because we are not supposed to cry. Or how we feel a surge of love for a partner but we don't say anything because we're frozen with the fear of what those words might do to the relationship.

Morrie's approach was exactly the opposite. Turn on the faucet. Wash yourself with the emotion. It won't hurt you. It will only help. If you let the fear inside, if you pull it on like a familiar shirt, then you can say to yourself, "All right, it's just fear, I don't have to let it control me. I see it for what it is."

Same for loneliness: you let go, let the tears flow, feel it completely—but eventually be able to say, "All right, that was my moment with loneliness. I'm not afraid of feeling lonely, but now I'm going to put that loneliness aside and know that there are other emotions in the world, and I'm going to experience them as well."

"Detach," Morrie said again.

He closed his eyes, then coughed.

Then he coughed again.

Then he coughed again, more loudly.

Suddenly, he was half-choking, the congestion in his

lungs seemingly teasing him, jumping halfway up, then dropping back down, stealing his breath. He was gagging, then hacking violently, and he shook his hands in front of him—with his eyes closed, shaking his hands, he appeared almost possessed—and I felt my forehead break into a sweat. I instinctively pulled him forward and slapped the back of his shoulders, and he pushed a tissue to his mouth and spit out a wad of phlegm.

The coughing stopped, and Morrie dropped back into the foam pillows and sucked in air.

"You okay? You all right?" I said, trying to hide my fear.

"I'm . . . okay," Morrie whispered, raising a shaky finger. "Just . . . wait a minute."

We sat there quietly until his breathing returned to normal. I felt the perspiration on my scalp. He asked me to close the window, the breeze was making him cold. I didn't mention that it was eighty degrees outside.

Finally, in a whisper, he said, "I know how I want to die."

I waited in silence.

"I want to die serenely. Peacefully. Not like what just happened.

"And this is where detachment comes in. If I die in the middle of a coughing spell like I just had, I need to be able to detach from the horror, I need to say, 'This is my moment.'

"I don't want to leave the world in a state of fright. I want to know what's happening, accept it, get to a peaceful place, and let go. Do you understand?"

I nodded.

Don't let go yet, I added quickly.

Morrie forced a smile. "No. Not yet. We still have work to do."

Do you believe in reincarnation? I ask.

"Perhaps."

What would you come back as?

"If I had my choice, a gazelle."

A gazelle?

"Yes. So graceful. So fast."

A gazelle?

Morrie smiles at me. "You think that's strange?"

I study his shrunken frame, the loose clothes, the socks-wrapped feet that rest stiffly on foam rubber cushions, unable to move, like a prisoner in leg irons. I picture a gazelle racing across the desert.

No, I say. I don't think that's strange at all.

The Professor, Part Two

The Morrie I knew, the Morrie so many others knew, would not have been the man he was without the years he spent working at a mental hospital just outside Washington, D.C., a place with the deceptively peaceful name of Chestnut Lodge. It was one of Morrie's first jobs after plowing through a master's degree and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Having rejected medicine, law, and business, Morrie had decided the research world would be a place where he could contribute without exploiting others.

Morrie was given a grant to observe mental patients and record their treatments. While the idea seems common today, it was groundbreaking in the early fifties. Morrie saw patients who would scream all day. Patients who would cry all night. Patients soiling their underwear. Patients refusing to eat, having to be held down, medicated, fed intravenously.

One of the patients, a middle-aged woman, came out of her room every day and lay facedown on the tile floor, stayed there for hours, as doctors and nurses stepped around her. Morrie watched in horror. He took notes,

The Ninth Tuesday
We Talk About How Love Goes On

The leaves had begun to change color, turning the ride through West Newton into a portrait of gold and rust. Back in Detroit, the labor war had stagnated, with each side accusing the other of failing to communicate. The stories on the TV news were just as depressing. In rural Kentucky, three men threw pieces of a tombstone off a bridge, smashing the windshield of a passing car, killing a teenage girl who was traveling with her family on a religious pilgrimage. In California, the O. J. Simpson trial was heading toward a conclusion, and the whole country seemed to be obsessed. Even in airports, there were hanging TV sets tuned to CNN so that you could get an O.J. update as you made your way to a gate.

I had tried calling my brother in Spain several times. I left messages saying that I really wanted to talk to him, that I had been doing a lot of thinking about us. A few weeks later, I got back a short message saying everything was okay, but he was sorry, he really didn't feel like talking about being sick.

For my old professor, it was not the talk of being sick but the being sick itself that was sinking him. Since my

last visit, a nurse had inserted a catheter into his penis, which drew the urine out through a tube and into a bag that sat at the foot of his chair. His legs needed constant tending (he could still feel pain, even though he could not move them, another one of ALS's cruel little ironies), and unless his feet dangled just the right number of inches off the foam pads, it felt as if someone were poking him with a fork. In the middle of conversations, Morrie would have to ask visitors to lift his foot and move it just an inch, or to adjust his head so that it fit more easily into the palm of the colored pillows. Can you imagine being unable to move your own head?

With each visit, Morrie seemed to be melting into his chair, his spine taking on its shape. Still, every morning he insisted on being lifted from his bed and wheeled to his study, deposited there among his books and papers and the hibiscus plant on the windowsill. In typical fashion, he found something philosophical in this.

"I sum it up in my newest aphorism," he said.

Let me hear it.

"When you're in bed, you're dead."

He smiled. Only Morrie could smile at something like that.

He had been getting calls from the "Nightline" people and from Ted Koppel himself.

"They want to come and do another show with me," he said. "But they say they want to wait."

Until what? You're on your last breath?

"Maybe. Anyhow, I'm not so far away."

Don't say that.

"I'm sorry."

That bugs me, that they want to wait until you wither.

"It bugs you because you look out for me."

He smiled. "Mitch, maybe they are using me for a little drama. That's okay. Maybe I'm using them, too. They help me get my message to millions of people. I couldn't do that without them, right? So it's a compromise."

He coughed, which turned into a long-drawn-out gargle, ending with another glob into a crushed tissue.

"Anyhow," Morrie said, "I told them they better not wait too long, because my voice won't be there. Once this thing hits my lungs, talking may become impossible. I can't speak for too long without needing a rest now. I have already canceled a lot of the people who want to see me. Mitch, there are so many. But I'm too fatigued. If I can't give them the right attention, I can't help them."

I looked at the tape recorder, feeling guilty, as if I were stealing what was left of his precious speaking time. "Should we skip it?" I asked. "Will it make you too tired?"

Morrie shut his eyes and shook his head. He seemed

to be waiting for some silent pain to pass. "No," he finally said. "You and I have to go on.

"This is our last thesis together, you know."

Our last thesis.

"We want to get it right."

I thought about our first thesis together, in college. It was Morrie's idea, of course. He told me I was good enough to write an honors project—something I had never considered.

Now here we were, doing the same thing once more. Starting with an idea. Dying man talks to living man, tells him what he should know. This time, I was in less of a hurry to finish.

"Someone asked me an interesting question yesterday," Morrie said now, looking over my shoulder at the wallhanging behind me, a quilt of hopeful messages that friends had stitched for him on his seventieth birthday. Each patch on the quilt had a different message: STAY THE COURSE, THE BEST IS YET TO BE, MORRIE—ALWAYS NO. 1 IN MENTAL HEALTH!

What was the question? I asked.

"If I worried about being forgotten after I died?"

Well? Do you?

"I don't think I will be. I've got so many people who have been involved with me in close, intimate ways. And love is how you stay alive, even after you are gone."

Sounds like a song lyric—"love is how you stay alive."

Morrie chuckled. "Maybe. But, Mitch, all this talk that we're doing? Do you ever hear my voice sometimes when you're back home? When you're all alone? Maybe on the plane? Maybe in your car?"

Yes, I admitted.

"Then you will not forget me after I'm gone. Think of my voice and I'll be there."

Think of your voice.

"And if you want to cry a little, it's okay."

Morrie. He had wanted to make me cry since I was a freshman. "One of these days, I'm gonna get to you," he would say.

Yeah, yeah, I would answer.

"I decided what I wanted on my tombstone," he said.

I don't want to hear about tombstones.

"Why? They make you nervous?"

I shrugged.

"We can forget it."

No, go ahead. What did you decide?

Morrie popped his lips. "I was thinking of this: A Teacher to the Last."

He waited while I absorbed it.

A Teacher to the Last.

"Good?" he said.

Yes, I said. Very good.

I came to love the way Morrie lit up when I entered the room. He did this for many people, I know, but it was his special talent to make each visitor feel that the smile was unique.

"Ahhhh, it's my buddy," he would say when he saw me, in that foggy, high-pitched voice. And it didn't stop with the greeting. When Morrie was with you, he was really with you. He looked you straight in the eye, and he listened as if you were the only person in the world. How much better would people get along if their first encounter each day were like this—instead of a grumble from a waitress or a bus driver or a boss?

"I believe in being fully present," Morrie said. "That means you should be *with* the person you're with. When I'm talking to you now, Mitch, I try to keep focused only on what is going on between us. I am not thinking about something we said last week. I am not thinking of what's coming up this Friday. I am not thinking about doing another Koppel show, or about what medications I'm taking.

"I am talking to you. I am thinking about you."

I remembered how he used to teach this idea in the Group Process class back at Brandeis. I had scoffed back then, thinking this was hardly a lesson plan for a university course. Learning to pay attention? How important could that be? I now know it is more important than almost everything they taught us in college.

Morrie motioned for my hand, and as I gave it to him, I felt a surge of guilt. Here was a man who, if he wanted, could spend every waking moment in self-pity, feeling his body for decay, counting his breaths. So many people with far smaller problems are so self-absorbed, their eyes glaze over if you speak for more than thirty seconds. They already have something else in mind—a friend to call, a fax to send, a lover they're daydreaming about. They only snap back to full attention when you finish talking, at which point they say "Uh-huh" or "Yeah, really" and fake their way back to the moment.

"Part of the problem, Mitch, is that everyone is in such a hurry," Morrie said. "People haven't found meaning in their lives, so they're running all the time looking for it. They think the next car, the next house, the next job. Then they find those things are empty, too, and they keep running."

Once you start running, I said, it's hard to slow yourself down.

"Not so hard," he said, shaking his head. "Do you know what I do? When someone wants to get ahead of me in traffic—when I used to be able to drive—I would raise my hand . . ."

He tried to do this now, but the hand lifted weakly, only six inches.

". . . I would raise my hand, as if I was going to make a negative gesture, and then I would wave and smile. Instead of giving them the finger, you let them go, and you smile.

"You know what? A lot of times they smiled back.

"The truth is, I don't have to be in that much of a hurry with my car. I would rather put my energies into people."

He did this better than anyone I'd ever known. Those who sat with him saw his eyes go moist when they spoke about something horrible, or crinkle in delight when they told him a really bad joke. He was always ready to openly display the emotion so often missing from my baby boomer generation. We are great at small talk: "What do you do?" "Where do you live?" But *really* listening to someone—without trying to sell them something, pick them up, recruit them, or get some kind of status in return—how often do we get this anymore? I believe many visitors in the last few months of Morrie's life were drawn not because of the attention they wanted to

pay to him but because of the attention he paid *to them*. Despite his personal pain and decay, this little old man listened the way they always wanted someone to listen.

I told him he was the father everyone wishes they had.

"Well," he said, closing his eyes, "I have some experience in that area . . ."

The last time Morrie saw his own father was in a city morgue. Charlie Schwartz was a quiet man who liked to read his newspaper, alone, under a streetlamp on Tremont Avenue in the Bronx. Every night, when Morrie was little, Charlie would go for a walk after dinner. He was a small Russian man, with a ruddy complexion and a full head of grayish hair. Morrie and his brother, David, would look out the window and see him leaning against the lamppost, and Morrie wished he would come inside and talk to them, but he rarely did. Nor did he tuck them in, nor kiss them good-night.

Morrie always swore he would do these things for his own children if he ever had any. And years later, when he had them, he did.

Meanwhile, as Morrie raised his own children, Charlie was still living in the Bronx. He still took that walk. He still read the paper. One night, he went outside after dinner. A few blocks from home, he was accosted by two robbers.

"Give us your money," one said, pulling a gun.

Frightened, Charlie threw down his wallet and began to run. He ran through the streets, and kept running until he reached the steps of a relative's house, where he collapsed on the porch.

Heart attack.

He died that night.

Morrie was called to identify the body. He flew to New York and went to the morgue. He was taken downstairs, to the cold room where the corpses were kept.

"Is this your father?" the attendant asked.

Morrie looked at the body behind the glass, the body of the man who had scolded him and molded him and taught him to work, who had been quiet when Morrie wanted him to speak, who had told Morrie to swallow his memories of his mother when he wanted to share them with the world.

He nodded and he walked away. The horror of the room, he would later say, sucked all other functions out of him. He did not cry until days later.

Still, his father's death helped prepare Morrie for his own. This much he knew: there would be lots of holding and kissing and talking and laughter and no good-byes left unsaid, all the things he missed with his father and his mother.

When the final moment came, Morrie wanted his loved ones around him, knowing what was happening. No one would get a phone call, or a telegram, or have to look through a glass window in some cold and foreign basement.

In the South American rainforest, there is a tribe called the Desana, who see the world as a fixed quantity of energy that flows between all creatures. Every birth must therefore engender a death, and every death bring forth another birth. This way, the energy of the world remains complete.

When they hunt for food, the Desana know that the animals they kill will leave a hole in the spiritual well. But that hole will be filled, they believe, by the souls of the Desana hunters when they die. Were there no men dying, there would be no birds or fish being born. I like this idea. Morrie likes it, too. The closer he gets to good-bye, the more he seems to feel we are all creatures in the same forest. What we take, we must replenish.

"It's only fair," he says.

The Twelfth Tuesday · *We Talk About Forgiveness*

"Forgive yourself before you die. Then forgive others."

This was a few days after the "Nightline" interview. The sky was rainy and dark, and Morrie was beneath a blanket. I sat at the far end of his chair, holding his bare feet. They were callused and curled, and his toenails were yellow. I had a small jar of lotion, and I squeezed some into my hands and began to massage his ankles.

It was another of the things I had watched his helpers do for months, and now, in an attempt to hold on to what I could of him, I had volunteered to do it myself. The disease had left Morrie without the ability even to wiggle his toes, yet he could still feel pain, and massages helped relieve it. Also, of course, Morrie liked being held and touched. And at this point, anything I could do to make him happy, I was going to do.

"Mitch," he said, returning to the subject of forgiveness. "There is no point in keeping vengeance or stubbornness. These things"—he sighed—"these things I so regret in my life. Pride. Vanity. Why do we do the things we do?"

The importance of forgiving was my question. I had seen those movies where the patriarch of the family is on his death bed and he calls for his estranged son so that he can make peace before he goes. I wondered if Morrie had any of that inside him, a sudden need to say "I'm sorry" before he died?

Morrie nodded. "Do you see that sculpture?" He tilted his head toward a bust that sat high on a shelf against the far wall of his office. I had never really noticed it before. Cast in bronze, it was the face of a man in his early forties, wearing a necktie, a tuft of hair falling across his forehead.

"That's me," Morrie said. "A friend of mine sculpted that maybe thirty years ago. His name was Norman. We used to spend so much time together. We went swimming. We took rides to New York. He had me over to his house in Cambridge, and he sculpted that bust of me down in his basement. It took several weeks to do it, but he really wanted to get it right."

I studied the face. How strange to see a three-dimensional Morrie, so healthy, so young, watching over us as we spoke. Even in bronze, he had a whimsical look, and I thought this friend had sculpted a little spirit as well.

"Well, here's the sad part of the story," Morrie said. "Norman and his wife moved away to Chicago. A little while later, my wife, Charlotte, had to have a pretty serious operation. Norman and his wife never got in touch

with us. I know they knew about it. Charlotte and I were very hurt because they never called to see how she was. So we dropped the relationship.

"Over the years, I met Norman a few times and he always tried to reconcile, but I didn't accept it. I wasn't satisfied with his explanation. I was prideful. I shrugged him off."

His voice choked.

"Mitch . . . a few years ago . . . he died of cancer. I feel so sad. I never got to see him. I never got to forgive. It pains me now so much . . ."

He was crying again, a soft and quiet cry, and because his head was back, the tears rolled off the side of his face before they reached his lips.

Sorry, I said.

"Don't be," he whispered. "Tears are okay."

I continued rubbing lotion into his lifeless toes. He wept for a few minutes, alone with his memories.

"It's not just other people we need to forgive, Mitch," he finally whispered. We also need to forgive ourselves."

Ourselves?

"Yes. For all the things we didn't do. All the things we should have done. You can't get stuck on the regrets of what should have happened. That doesn't help you when you get to where I am.

"I always wished I had done more with my work; I

wished I had written more books. I used to beat myself up over it. Now I see that never did any good. Make peace. You need to make peace with yourself and everyone around you."

I leaned over and dabbed at the tears with a tissue. Morrie flicked his eyes open and closed. His breathing was audible, like a light snore.

"Forgive yourself. Forgive others. Don't wait, Mitch. Not everyone gets the time I'm getting. Not everyone is as lucky."

I tossed the tissue into the wastebasket and returned to his feet. Lucky? I pressed my thumb into his hardened flesh and he didn't even feel it.

"The tension of opposites, Mitch. Remember that? Things pulling in different directions?"

I remember.

"I mourn my dwindling time, but I cherish the chance it gives me to make things right."

We sat there for a while, quietly, as the rain splattered against the windows. The hibiscus plant behind his head was still holding on, small but firm.

"Mitch," Morrie whispered.

Uh-huh?

I rolled his toes between my fingers, lost in the task.

"Look at me."

I glanced up and saw the most intense look in his eyes.

"I don't know why you came back to me. But I want to say this . . ."

He paused, and his voice choked.

"If I could have had another son, I would have liked it to be you."

I dropped my eyes, kneading the dying flesh of his feet between my fingers. For a moment, I felt afraid, as if accepting his words would somehow betray my own father. But when I looked up, I saw Morrie smiling through tears and I knew there was no betrayal in a moment like this.

All I was afraid of was saying good-bye.

"I've picked a place to be buried."

Where is that?

"Not far from here. On a hill, beneath a tree, overlooking a pond. Very serene. A good place to think."

Are you planning on thinking there?

"I'm planning on being dead there."

He chuckles. I chuckle.

"Will you visit?"

Visit?

"Just come and talk. Make it a Tuesday. You always come on Tuesdays."

We're Tuesday people.

"Right. Tuesday people. Come to talk, then?"

He has grown so weak so fast.

"Look at me," he says.

I'm looking.

"You'll come to my grave? To tell me your problems?"

My problems?

"Yes."

And you'll give me answers?

"I'll give you what I can. Don't I always?"

I picture his grave, on the hill, overlooking the pond, some little nine-foot piece of earth where they will place him, cover him with dirt, put a stone on top. Maybe in a few weeks? Maybe in a few days? I see myself sitting there alone, arms across my knees, staring into space.

It won't be the same, I say, not being able to hear you talk.

"Ah, talk . . ."

He closes his eyes and smiles.

"Tell you what. After I'm dead, you talk. And I'll listen."

The Thirteenth Tuesday
We Talk About the Perfect Day

Morrie wanted to be cremated. He had discussed it with Charlotte, and they decided it was the best way. The rabbi from Brandeis, Al Axelrad—a longtime friend whom they chose to conduct the funeral service—had come to visit Morrie, and Morrie told him of his cremation plans.

"And Al?"

"Yes?"

"Make sure they don't overcook me."

The rabbi was stunned. But Morrie was able to joke about his body now. The closer he got to the end, the more he saw it as a mere shell, a container of the soul. It was withering to useless skin and bones anyhow, which made it easier to let go.

"We are so afraid of the sight of death," Morrie told me when I sat down. I adjusted the microphone on his collar, but it kept flopping over. Morrie coughed. He was coughing all the time now.

"I read a book the other day. It said as soon as someone dies in a hospital, they pull the sheets up over their head, and they wheel the body to some chute and push it