

WHEN THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS BLOOM

A Play By

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CHARACTERS

Morty: Overweight, hairpiece; Late 40's

Sandy: Cute, athletically slim; Mid 30's.

LOCATION

A typical bucolic northeast park constructed around a reservoir. There are concentric paths surrounding the reservoir used by joggers. The actor's point of view to the expansive park will be toward the audience.

TIME

Cool early fall day.

SYNOPSIS

Morty and Sandy are joggers who come upon each other in a park. Both carry scars from life altering experiences - for each decided to take the metaphorical short cut one evening with catastrophic consequences. It is only through MORTY'S kindness is he able to effect a change in the way SANDY perceives people, and ultimately accepts her physical disfigurement. And through SANDY'S understanding, is Morty able to begin to forgive himself for a devastating and tragic mistake.

WHEN THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS BLOOM

SCENE I

Cool Early Fall Day

A park bench in a typical northeastern park-surrounding a reservoir. At rise, SANDY warms up with several hamstring stretches. She is a seasoned runner wearing leggings, a runner's windbreaker with high collar, running gloves and a baseball cap. MORTY enters in a basic gray sweat suit - drenched in sweat and a wool cap. He slows his jog to a virtual stop, bends over tries to catch his breath as its obvious he is woefully out of shape. Complete sentences are difficult.

MORTY

(Lets out)

Jeez...

SANDY

(Startled)

Shit...

MORTY

(Still out of breath.)

Sorry.... I... didn't mean to startle you. I...

SANDY

Well, you didn't have to let out that horrid cry!

MORTY

Hey. Sorry. I just started this running thing. I'm trying to avoid another coronary, but it feels like I'm bringing one on instead.

SANDY

I see what you mean.

MORTY

(Checks pulse)

My God. I can't even count that fast.

SANDY

(A quick look over her shoulder)

I don't think you've found it.

MORTY

Found what?

SANDY

Your radial pulse. Try using two fingers and press lightly.

MORTY

(Searching)

Nah. Like I said. Everything's moving too fast to count.

SANDY

Look. They teach this stuff to 4th graders. Try your carotid.

MORTY

Car what?

SANDY

(A tad frustrated)

Carotid pulse. Take your fingers and place them along the outside of your windpipe. The carotid arteries flow blood to the brain. Much easier to pick up a true pulse.

MORTY

(Feels around his neck; looks at his watch)

Got it.

(Pause)

My God. 150!!

SANDY

(Refocused on her stretching)

You'll live. Ya' know walking isn't a bad place to start if you're that out of shape.

MORTY

Probably right.

SANDY

You could work your way up to running once you've... lost some of the weight.

MORTY

Gee, thanks for not sugarcoating it.

(SANDY, clearly wanting an end
to the conversation, says nothing)

MORTY

Jeez. Sorry...

SANDY

(Brusque, not looking at MORTY)

What's to be sorry for?

MORTY

Well. It just seems like we were talking, and suddenly you're...

SANDY

Look, if I was curt with you... it's just because I want to finish stretching and start my run.

MORTY

I get it. I'll just drag my body over on the grass and collapse.

SANDY

Whatever.

(MORTY stares at SANDY for a moment,
but finds it impossible not to talk.)

MORTY

So, do you know CPR? My heart feels like it's going to burst right through my chest.

SANDY

(The last few hamstring stretches.)

Trust me. You'll be okay.

MORTY

Trust you? I trusted my doctor when he told me to exercise, and look where that got me...

SANDY

I'm an oral surgeon. I'll take a professional leap of faith here and recommend a few minutes rest... you'll be as good as new.

MORTY

What if you're wrong? Ya know, people generally don't have the luxury of picking the time and place for a heart attack.

MORTY (Cont'd)

(Bends over and tries to catch his breath.)

Well Doctor... on your advice - do you mind if I sit?

SANDY

It's a public bench. Feel free.

MORTY

(Collapses on to the bench and starts to nervously babble.)

My name is Morty. Actually, it's Morton. We Jewish folk honor those passed by keeping their name alive in future generations. Why my Uncle Morton? What were my parents thinking? He was such an ass – but I got tagged with it anyway. So, people call me Morty. Not what you would call an in vogue name these days unless your seventy-five and living in Boca. They could have named me after my uncle Alexander who was relatively famous – a medical doctor. Alex is a great name don't you think?

SANDY

I guess. And thank you for the lineage.

(Beat)

Hey, look. You don't like your name - change it.

MORTY

And you?

SANDY

(Slowly turns and gets ready to jog away.)

Just getting ready to leave.

MORTY

Wait!

SANDY

For what?

MORTY

What if I need someone to call 911?

SANDY

Well, Marty... I guess you're out of luck.

MORTY

That's Morty.

SANDY

(Beat)

Well Marty or Morty, I don't have a cell phone. So, I guess you're both outta luck.
Gotta go. See ya.

LIGHTS FADE

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

A raw day in November

SANDY is sitting on the park bench and is similarly attired. She is adjusting her ear-phones. MORTY, still wearing his gray sweat suit, runs by – still laboriously. He takes a second and third look, then turns and:

Hi.

MORTY

Hello?

SANDY

It's me. Morty? From a couple of months ago? The guy who was having a coronary?

MORTY

Oh yes. Marty. Still at it, I see.

SANDY

That's Morty...

MORTY

That's right...the name thing. The family history. I remember.

SANDY

I would hope so. I practically had an infarction three feet from you.

MORTY

I'm sorry I was so short with you, but I like to stay focused.

SANDY

Do you mind?

MORTY
(Points to the bench.)

SANDY
(Rises and starts her stretches.)

Feel free.

MORTY
Does all that help?

SANDY
What?

MORTY
The stretching?

SANDY
Of course. You have to be limber or you'll pull any one of a dozen muscles.

MORTY
Hm.

SANDY
You don't stretch?

MORTY
Not really. I figure my wind is so bad – why waste all that energy on the warm-up? The way I see it, I've got a better chance of making it once around the inner path if I just put the key in the ignition and start 'er up cold. Gotta' set goals. They say it's about a mile around the reservoir.

SANDY
(A sarcastic laugh.)
Once around the short path? Pretty pathetic goal.

MORTY
No argument here. But, they say each journey starts with a first....

SANDY
Exactly. I guess any goal is better than none at all.

(Laughs again.)

MORTY
You have a nice laugh.

SANDY
Please. A laugh is a laugh.

MORTY
No... I mean it. I like hearing you laugh... even if it is at my pathetic expense.

SANDY

You put yourself down an awful lot.

MORTY

Well, its substitutes for an ego. When you're this out of shape, there's no reason to put up a false front. The heart palpitations alone have a way of creating over-the-top honesty.

SANDY

That's about the lamest thing I've ever heard. Is that the sort of line you use to try and pick up women?

MORTY

Pick up women? Maybe you haven't looked too close at me. I pick up women about often as I pick up barbells. And I'm quite sure you won't see me replacing Schwarzenegger in Terminator...what number...V or VI...?

SANDY

I get it.

MORTY

Have you lived in the city long?

SANDY

I guess.

MORTY

I moved here recently. The park must be wonderful with everything in bloom.

SANDY

I suppose.

MORTY

You don't take in the all this beauty as you run?

SANDY

Not really. I try to stay focused on my running and time.

MORTY

You're missing a lot.

(Pointing)

You see those rows of cherry trees?

SANDY

Where exactly. All I see are branches and twigs.

MORTY

On the upper path.

(Points again.)

There. Across from the bushes...see?

SANDY

Yeah, I see them, but they still look like a bunch of twigs.

MORTY

Well in exactly 5 months they'll blossom with April snow.

SANDY

What?

MORTY

Cherry Blossoms.

SANDY

Oh yes.

MORTY

I remember, I used to try and get my wife and kid to take a trip to the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington.

SANDY

Sounds nice.

MORTY

They were planted all around the tidal basin... were a gift from the Japanese.

SANDY

Got off cheap.

MORTY

How do ya mean?

SANDY

Well the French went for a 300-foot statue. The Japanese probably just sent a few bags of seed.

MORTY

I never thought of it that way. I wonder if the French found that a bit arrogant.

SANDY

(Smiling)

That'd be a switch.

MORTY

Good point.

SANDY

Well thanks.

MORTY

Ya know? The Japanese have all these folk laws about their cherry blossoms...

SANDY

Sounds like you're planning a trip to Japan, too.

MORTY

No, probably not even Washington. Why bother? You only see them when you've got somebody to share them with.

SANDY

Is that one of those folk laws?

MORTY

No, that's just a personal theory.

SANDY

It sounds like you have a real passion for them. It's a shame you're family couldn't share in it.

MORTY

Share in it? They used to ridicule me for it.

SANDY

Well, I think it's nice anyway.

MORTY

Thanks. I just recently acquired a love for all foliage. I had plenty of time on my hands and had a chance to read up on them a bit more. The cherry trees I mean. Do you know...?

SANDY

(Cutting him off.)

I'm sorry Morty. I'm sure many people find all this very interesting – but it doesn't do anything for me.

MORTY

Actually, it didn't do anything for my wife either. She never could understand why I'd want to fill my head with useless facts. And my son... I'm pretty sure he just thought I was a fairy.

SANDY

(Laughing)

Fairy?

MORTY

You know. Gay.

SANDY

I know what you meant. I just never heard anyone older than five use the term fairy.

MORTY

You should laugh more often. Preferably with me, and not at me.

SANDY

You just seem to be a bit out of sync. Like...some sort of time traveler stuck in a place he's not quite familiar with.

MORTY

You see a lot for someone who doesn't even stop to look around.

SANDY

(She sits, ties her left shoe, adjusts her earphones. Then pats MORTY on the leg.)

Well Marty. I'm off. Perhaps I'll see you when the cherry blossoms bloom?

(Rises and takes her first stride)

MORTY

Name?

SANDY

What?

MORTY

Your name.

SANDY

Oh. Sandra...Sandy.

MORTY

Well Randy. Take a look around from time to time. You might grow to like what you see.

SANDY

Touché.... Maybe I will.

(SANDY jogs off as lights fade.)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

Several weeks later.

MORTY sits on the bench in dress slacks, button down shirt and windbreaker. His appearance is reminiscent of an ad for the big men's section of JC Penny. Beside him is a paper bag. He reaches into the bag and retrieves a sandwich and a container of coffee. He opens up a tabloid newspaper and starts to read. SANDY runs by at an athlete's pace, proceeds offstage, and then returns to the bench. MORTY hardly notices.

Morty?

SANDY

Well, hello.

MORTY

See? I remember.

SANDY

I'm glad I had such an impact.

MORTY
(Less than excited.)

Do you mind if I sit?

SANDY

Won't this mess with your rhythm... timing, or something like that?

MORTY

No, actually I have an appointment today... so I have to cut it short.

SANDY

Would you care for half a tuna sandwich?

MORTY

No thanks.

SANDY
(Laughs)

MORTY
It's nice to see you.

SANDY
Thanks.

MORTY
Mild for first week in December.

SANDY
I guess.

MORTY
The park just isn't the same this time of the year. It's sort of...

SANDY
Barren?

MORTY
Just asleep.

SANDY
Ya know. I remember when I was running track back in college, I always hated training when things were so bare.

MORTY
Wait. Aren't you the one that called a cherry tree a bunch of twigs?

SANDY
I think I said "branches."

MORTY
Twigs. I remember.

SANDY
Yeah, well... about all that. I guess I have sort of a confession to make.

MORTY
I may not be the right guy for confessions... you're probably better off with a priest. My wife used to say I was a tad gossipy.

SANDY

This you can share with anyone you like.

(Beat)

I started running the longer path as soon as I moved here. That first spring, when I saw the cherry trees bloom... it was amazing.

MORTY

I'm aghast. But you said...

SANDY

Never mind what I said. That's why this is a confession.

(Gazes up toward the path.)

It seemed so sudden, so glorious... all these blossoms were just there... and they transformed the whole park. I wanted them to last forever. But one day, just like a spring snow, the blossoms started drifting down to cover the ground, and... the trees were just trees again. It was like a spell had been broken.

(Softly)

I cried. The next spring, I told myself not to enjoy the blossoms... that way I wouldn't miss them when they disappeared.

MORTY

(Moved)

In my 20 years of marriage, my wife never confided such personal things.

SANDY

She never discussed her feelings?

MORTY

Well, she had "feelings," but not the kind you mean.

SANDY

Like?

MORTY

Well... she would get feelings about people... put them in categories, or judge them one way or another for the strangest reasons. "I've got a feeling about that man," she'd say. Like, when she saw someone with a large head, she'd say: "I bet he's a smart one." If we were shopping, or hiring someone to do work around the house, she would always choose someone with an abnormally large head. She had a lot of strange notions like that.

SANDY

(Laughs)

Wait. I know. Why would God give somebody a large head and not fill it to the brim with brains. Right?

MORTY

Did you know my wife? Kind of pear shaped with red...?

SANDY

No, I didn't.

(Beat)

You know you're kind of refreshing... in a weird, goofy kind of way.

MORTY

There's that smile again. And so it seems, once again it's at my expense.

SANDY

No. Actually, at your wife's.

MORTY

To me, she'd say, "Why would God give someone a mouth so big that it could put away a herd of cattle a year, and then let him talk about the most meaningless things?" But to her, anything that wasn't meaningless was too private to discuss, so after awhile, we didn't do a whole lot of talking.

SANDY

That's ridiculous. If you ask me, you're better off without her.

MORTY

I do miss, Eric. My son.

SANDY

Why... why aren't you together anymore?

MORTY

That's... that's all my fault. I...

SANDY

(Cutting him off.)

Morty, wait. Maybe this is none of my business.

MORTY

No. It's okay. I don't mind.

SANDY

Morty, your wife was wrong not to share her feelings with you... not to confide in you. But it's different between you and me...we're basically strangers. We hardly know each other.

MORTY

No. No. First impressions are so important.

SANDY

Over-rated. You could be an ax murderer or a postal employee ready to go berserk for all I know.

MORTY

Postal worker? When was the last time you saw a postal worker this big? I wouldn't last two blocks. An as for an ax-murderer...well I'm intimidated by large tools.

SANDY

Look. I'm just saying whatever led to your divorce, or separation, or whatever... maybe you shouldn't tell me.

MORTY

Well, I'll stop if you're uncomfortable. But if you want to listen, it might feel good for me to get it off my chest. I mean... It's been eating away at me... and making me eat everything in sight.

(Beat)

Ya know I wasn't always this...well...portly. I used to be 170 lbs. And not very long ago.

SANDY

Well, in the interest of your health, then, I'll listen.

MORTY

(Sarcastically)

Gee that's sweet. Thanks.

SANDY

Don't mention it.

MORTY

(Turns and faces her.)

You see. I was an accountant. A CPA actually. Not terribly exciting. Sorta' like a Leo Bloom.

SANDY

Leo Bloom?

MORTY

The Producers? The timid accountant?

SANDY

Oh. I remember the movie. I never saw the show.

MORTY

Well. I had a nice quiet life. A house in the burbs. A son who thought I was a fairy. A wife that didn't understand me. And a constant stream of repairmen with large heads in and out of our home over the years. In short, a normal mid-life American man.

SANDY

What happened? Mid-life crisis? Certainly sounds like you were in need of a change.

MORTY

No. Despite everything, I was fairly content. I even got used to my German Shepherd showing its teeth when I returned at the end of the day. Maybe he sensed how difficult it was for me to show affection to...well ya' know... something German. It's the Jewish thing I guess. Anyway, he loved my son and was loyal.

SANDY

For someone waiting to get something of his chest, you seem a bit reticent.

MORTY

I guess you're right.

(Beat)

Well. I've never been much of a party guy, but my buddy Sol was leaving the firm, so we took him to a nice sushi restaurant to give him a nice send-off.

SANDY

And?

MORTY

Well, as I said, I'm not much of a drinker. In fact, we just ate and ate for hours. I guess I just drank too much as well. I never thought that I was incapable of driving, just tired.

SANDY

Go on.

MORTY

(His demeanor changes with his regrets)

I was on the Parkway, which was almost a straight line from the restaurant to my home. I'd driven it a thousand times and felt completely comfortable. There was some sort of tie-up. The traffic was at a standstill, so I got off the parkway and took a short cut through the residential streets. At least I could keep moving. The street was dark...

SANDY

So what happened, did you have an accident, DWI or something?

MORTY

(Despondent)

The police told me I ran a stop sign. I just don't remember seeing it. I also don't remember seeing the bike, or the girl riding it.

SANDY

Oh... oh God.

MORTY

Witnesses said that I wasn't going that fast, that she probably would have been fine if she had gone up... onto the hood. But she... she went under... under the tires. I actually ran her over and kept right on going until I hit a lamppost.

SANDY

Did you... did she die?

(MORTY can only nod.)

MORTY

I never forgave myself. She was seventeen, young and gifted. She was on her way to college in several months on a soccer scholarship. People... the whole community... loved her.

SANDY

No doubt.

MORTY

I felt like the Frankenstein monster. I half expected her neighbors to come after me with sticks and torches and chase me into some fortress. "Give us the creature!"

SANDY

Morty, this isn't a joke. You don't have to try and make it funny for me.

MORTY

I know... I can't help it. Your laugh just makes me feel so much better.

SANDY

(Unsympathetically)

But this is serious. You're telling me... you *killed* somebody.

MORTY

(He removes his wool cap)

I know it's serious! Look, I had a full head of hair before the accident. I lost it in blotches over several months. It's just starting to grow back. The doctor said it was from stress. Alopecia, I think was the name.

SANDY

Well... there are worse things.

MORTY

The point is that sometimes, when your life turns to shit, all you have left is your sense of humor. It's what remains when your ego is systematically destroyed. I would have given my life to bring her back.

SANDY

Were you arrested? Was there a trial?

MORTY

My wife told me to take out a second mortgage, get the best defense attorney I could, and try to beat the rap. She said we could fight it ... make it into nothing more than a first-time bad judgement and a dreadful, tragic accident. If that didn't work, we could go after the girl; maybe say she was on drugs, or erratic and rode right into my car. My wife said, "nothing will bring her back, so why destroy your family as well?"

SANDY

But... you couldn't do that.

MORTY

What?

SANDY

Blame the girl. Please say that you didn't do that.

MORTY

Oh. I mean, you're right. I ended up pleading guilty to DWI, vehicular manslaughter... a whole list of things. There were the death threats, the embarrassment to my family and friends.

(Beat)

But you know... the worst thing was knowing that my stupidity ended a beautiful life. It's that I'll never get over.

SANDY

(Tentatively)

Morty, last time we met... you said that you recently had plenty of time to read. You were talking about prison, weren't you?

MORTY

Twenty months. Then six months in a halfway house.

SANDY

(She squeezes his hand again.)

It was the right thing to do. Face the consequences.

MORTY

I lost my family, my livelihood. I'm a convicted felon, so I can't practice as a CPA anymore. If I ever find a candidate worth voting for, I can't even do that. I'm reduced to selling extended automobile warranties and living in a dump of a studio apartment. My father used to tell me that you never ever stop paying for a mistake. I guess he was right.

(SANDY pauses, and looks at MORTY in a new light. An expression of anger comes over her face.)

SANDY

You never stop paying? What about the girl on the bike? You lost your job and your house... but she's dead! And what about her family? Her friends? What about the scars they'll carry for the rest of their lives?

(MORTY is taken aback by Sandy's outburst. It takes him a moment to speak.)

MORTY

(Suddenly uncomfortable. He checks his watch, then starts to pack up his lunch and newspaper.)

Well, I... I have to go. Have three more appointments this afternoon. Promising Subaru dealership.

(MORTY gets up and slowly starts to walk offstage, looking like a man defeated. SANDY looks down at her shoes, clearly regretting her reaction.)

SANDY

Morty, wait! I didn't mean... I'm...I'm... sorry...

(Unheard. Continues to walk. SANDY rises and exits in the opposite direction as lights fade to dark.)

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

Following Spring

MORTY is reading his favorite newspaper while sipping a container of coffee. He is again dressed in slacks and a button-down shirt; SANDY enters stage right. She is fashionably dressed in a skirt, turtleneck sweater and light jacket.

SANDY

Hello Morty. How's the warranty business?

MORTY

(Surprised)

I can't believe it. You're actually dressed and relatively immobile.

SANDY

Well time to get back to work. Besides, I had a terrible case of shin splints shortly after the last time I saw you.

MORTY

Sound painful.

SANDY

Yes, they were.

MORTY

So that's it for the running?

SANDY

For now.

MORTY

I'm sure you'll miss it.

SANDY

Oh, I'll go back to it eventually. When I'm running towards something, instead of away.

MORTY

That's an odd way of putting it. I mean, for someone who usually just comes out and says what she's thinking.

SANDY

Perhaps... I'm just terrified. Can I sit?

MORTY

Terrified of what? Of me?

SANDY

In part. How I treated you. And of what I have to face.

(Beat)

I spent the last few months trying to find you.

MORTY

(Overwhelmed)

Me. Morton Greenberg?

SANDY

Well that's just it. I didn't know your last name – so I would come to the park from time to time hoping I would find you. You always seem comfortable here.

MORTY

I don't know what to say. You're my first stalker.

SANDY

(Sits)

No jokes this time. Just listen. I... have something else I want to confess.

MORTY

This isn't a good idea. I may be Jewish, but I think I understand about confession now. It's not about getting something off your chest and feeling better... it's about someone else judging your sins and letting you know if you can be forgiven, or if you're a lost cause. Whatever it is you want to tell me, I'm in no position to judge you.

SANDY

Oh, Morty. I never meant to judge you. When you told me about your accident, my reaction was... well, it wasn't even really about you, or what you did. It was about me... about something that happened to me. If you'd just let me explain...

MORTY

(Tentatively)

Oh...okay. Go on.

SANDY

Morty. You're were the kindest man I've met in a long time. And I've been so guarded for too long.

MORTY

Why? You're pretty, smart and...brutally honest. I mean honest to the point of...

SANDY

Morty. I get the point.

(Beat)

You shared your scars with me, and I understood how deep they were and how difficult it was. But how did I react? Like a victim. And treating you like some sort of criminal. I was blinded by my anger until I realized how much your giving meant to me - on so many levels.

MORTY

Couldn't be many - I'm not that deep... Sorry.

SANDY

Remember when you told me to take a look around from time to time... that I might grow to like what I see?

MORTY

(Dismissive)

It was just a line.

SANDY

No Morty. It wasn't a line. It took a special man to share with me. To share with me something that I could never share of my own life... with anyone.

MORTY

I don't understand?

SANDY

Look. I know I was a cold bitch to you at first. But, I did listen, and I came to appreciate what I saw - including the cherry blossoms. I thought I was being smart by ignoring them—because then it wouldn't hurt so much when they died. I thought that after the blossoms fell the branches looked bare, unadorned... and.... damaged. But maybe the real reason why they're so beautiful is that they are so fragile... and fleeting.

MORTY

(Uncomfortable)

Look, Sandy. I'm just an accountant...or was. I was just trying to impress you... get you to talk to me maybe. When you're kind of a goofy guy who's sum total knowledge of cherry trees came from the prison library, that's what you lead with.

SANDY

I don't think so.

MORTY

Look. I married my high school sweetheart. I went to prison and she divorced me. What was I supposed to do? Try my pick up lines on the Black Muslims or the White Supremacists in the can? I tell you a secret; they're not many gangs an overweight middle age Jewish man can join.

SANDY

Morty. Shut up and listen.

MORTY

I can't. It's my time to be terrified. I babble when I get nervous. In the can, I got my ass kicked every day for a month 'cause I couldn't shut up. Didn't matter, Peurto Ricans, Muslims... even a very angry dwarf kicked me in the nuts. He was a bunko...

SANDY

MORTY!

MORTY

Okay.

SANDY

(She moves closer and turns and pulls down the neck of her sweater to reveal scars on the right side of neck and jaw.)

You see my scars.

MORTY

Yes?

SANDY

(Rolls up her sweater to reveal her hands.)

You see these?

MORTY

(Uncomfortably)

Ye...Yes

SANDY

Did you ever wonder why I always wore running gloves – even when it wasn't really cold out?

MORTY

Not really. Don't women always have circulation problems? My wife's hands were like ice cubes...

SANDY

Morty?

MORTY

I'm sorry. I'm uncomfortable since I know how you feel about...well you know...the accident. Prison.

SANDY

(Sensitively)

Morty. These scars are knife wounds. There are more on my arms and back.

MORTY

My God. Someone attacked you?

SANDY

(Points up at the audience)

You see the fork that leads to the upper path?

MORTY

The long path?

SANDY

Yes, it's exactly a mile and a half around, but with grades. It's the path I usually ran, not this shorter one with all these people.

MORTY

(Points at the audience.)

So, you were attacked up there right by those bushes and the cherry trees?

SANDY

I was trying to finish my laps... it was already dusk. I should have realized how isolated I was and how dangerous it could be.

(Emotionally)

But...but you never think it will happen to you.

MORTY

What happened... exactly?

SANDY

It was getting so dark, I thought I would just cut through those bushes and out to the street. It would save time. Out of the corner of my right eye, I saw a man jump out of the bushes right behind me. I ran as fast as I could.

(Beat)

I remember thinking, this wasn't happening. But at the same time, I realized that I had to get closer to the street so I could yell for help. I was running on pure adrenaline. Each time he would get close, he would take a swipe at me with his knife.

MORTY

Jesus...

SANDY

Sometimes his slashes would only reach my hand, arm or my back, but as I tired, he was starting to reach out toward my face. I can't even remember how many times, but as I closed in on the street, I started to scream, and he finally backed off.

MORTY

Thank God.

SANDY

(Looking up at the audience.)

I finally collapsed at the end there... between the bushes and the trees. I don't know how long I laid there until someone called for help. In and out of consciousness, I could see the barren branches of the cherry trees. I remember seeing everything in this grayish hue. Even my own blood.

MORTY

(Pauses. Then softly.)

But you survived. You fought to keep living... you didn't just give up. Do you know what courage that took? Maybe the rest is just picking up the pieces and moving on.

SANDY

Look at me.

MORTY

I am. I always have. I noticed the scar on your cheek- but it didn't change the way I felt about you.

SANDY

(Emotionally)

I am an oral surgeon. For over a year, the thought of getting my face so close to a patient scared the hell out of me. I thought...who's going to be worked on by a freak?

MORTY

Sweetheart. No disrespect, but it can't be any worse than what you guys have to look into everyday.

SANDY

(Sternly)

No jokes, remember?

(Beat)

Remember the last time we met? I told you I had an appointment. Well I was meeting with my ex-partner to discuss buying back into my practice. To get on with my life. In part, your goodness helped me to see the world in color again. To believe that there's beauty in something as simple as a tree. It made me feel...well... perhaps it's time for my rebirth.

MORTY

(Reaches out and takes SANDY'S hand. Then moves toward her face. She recoils.)

Don't. It's okay. Feel my hand.

SANDY

(Sobbing)

No...I can't...no, please.

MORTY

You've discovered the hard part is over. I may not know much...but maybe our real wounds are only in our memories. And we can choose to let them chase us down or put as much distance between them and who we are now. Look, we've admitted things to each other that we never told anyone else, and while our secrets are very different... they're alike in one way. We've both been letting them hold us back and keep us from connecting with the world around us. Maybe it's time we move on...

(A beat; Then tentatively)

Together?

SANDY

(Still sobbing)

What am I going to do with you...you...? (Beat) Beautiful man.

(She folds into his arms as lights fade to dark.)

END OF SCENE 4

Scene 5

Following April. A bright sunny day

An empty bench as we hear the sound of runners. MORTY and SANDY stop at the bench. Both are wearing fashionable running attire. MORTY has lost the wool cap.

MORTY

What do you say we break off and take the long path this time? No more short cuts.
(Both look up at the long path)

SANDY

The path will take us right through the row of cherry trees.

MORTY

I see.

SANDY

(Excited)

Look they've started to blossom already. They're so beautiful.

MORTY

Yes...yes they are.

SANDY

Like you said, like April snow.

MORTY

I remember an old Japanese saying, "a life devoted entirely to searching for the perfect blossom would not be a life wasted."

SANDY

It's still a shame they can't stay like this forever.

MORTY

They'll always be there... with blossoms or without. It's a mistake to think that they're beautiful for only a few weeks out of the year, because they're never really barren... just dormant. Even in the coldest times, those blossoms are inside somewhere, just waiting for the right moment to bloom in all their glory.

SANDY

(Childlike)

Can we stop and look at them?

MORTY

Of course. For as long as you want.

SANDY

Just a moment is fine.

(Grasps MORTY'S hand and kisses him.)

The longer path is tough... and it's going to take us awhile to get used to it. So, I don't want to hear any talk about coronaries. I just hope you're up for it.

MORTY

If you don't complain about your shin splints. I think I'm ready to move on.

SANDY

I think we're both ready.

(As they jog off, lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY