

## MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

**Spare Change:** While on a walk in Boston's Public Garden, Rich Borofsky received an unearthly gift from an unlikely giver.

### **Tony Kahn:**

Hi everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH, in Boston. You know, we all, I'm sure, have experiences with panhandling, asking for money from a stranger on the street, and, and maybe we've experienced it from both sides of the coin. One winter in Milwaukee it was as usual, freezing cold; I saw this guy who was waiting for me to cross the street. I figured that with the bitter wind and that look in his eye, I'd better come up with something. So I dug into my pocket and I came up with three bucks, which was about, oh, two bucks more than I was planning to give but my fingers were kind of numb and anyway I thought he's gonna be so grateful, I'll get a little buzz out of how amazed he is at how generous I am. So! I give him the three bucks; he takes the money; he looks at me and he stares me right in the eye, and he says, "Hey! Is this the best you can do?"

Like most situations with panhandling, it left me with a number of questions [laughing] that I'm still thinking about I haven't quite answered. The other day we got a visit here in the studios from a man named Rich Borofsky, with his own story to tell about giving money to a stranger; this time in a public park in Boston. It not only left him with questions he still hasn't answered, in some way I think it changed his life. We call his Morning Story: *Spare Change*.

### **Rich Borofsky:**

[Sounds of birds, people on the street]

Just last week there was a man who couldn't get home to Fitchburg. He needed the fare for the train. I think in earlier days I would've, I would've said, "Well, maybe that's just a story; maybe he's gonna go out and buy a bottle of liquor." [sound of change going into change box on bus] I don't have that suspicion any more. [sound of change clinking, sound of bus traveling]

A few years ago I was attending a conference downtown in Boston. During the lunch break I decided to go for a walk in the Public Garden. [sounds of children talking] It was a beautiful spring day. I knew there was a statue over there with an angel.

Beautiful, huge wings, just starting to land on this pedestal. The statue, by the way, is a memorial to a great philanthropist and the two cornucopia on either side is a symbol of plenty and abundance. Then I saw ahead of me on a bench, a man, dirty; he had a large paper bag, looked like it was filled with clothes. [sounds of a train stopping; people talking] He didn't have plenty from most anyone else's point of view.

[sounds of conductor on train]

I decided not to look at him, expecting that he would ask me for some money and I heard him say, "Would you like a quarter?" I stopped; he looked at me again and got up from the bench and walked towards me extending his hand with a quarter in it. And he said, "Would you like a quarter?" Was he offering me a quarter; was he making fun of me? And he put the quarter in my palm and I looked at it and I could see his blue eyes were smiling. So kind. I felt disoriented. I was the one who was supposed to be giving him something. So I reached into my pocket, I took out of my wallet and I took a dollar and I said to him, "Here. I would like to give this to you."

He looked confused. [laughs] Then his expression changed. He took the dollar and he said, "Okay! Now I have four more quarters that I can give away." [chuckles] Delighted! And he turned around and walked back to the bench. I went about another twenty steps, turned around and looked; he had ... uh ... disappeared. And his bag was gone; I looked on the street, I looked around that part of the Garden and I couldn't see him, any trace of him. Who was he? I looked back at the statue, it was so beautiful, so kind and that's what made think, ooohh, oh my God.

[Sounds of birds, people talking, followed by flute music and people chatting on the street underlays next paragraph ]

I told this story to my youngest daughter, she took twenty dollars of her own money, changed it into quarters and walked around Harvard Square giving quarters to people and saying to them, "Please pass this on." Some people were suspicious as I had been at first, but by the end of an hour people all over Harvard Square, [laughs] were coming and going up to strangers giving people quarters. [chuckles]

[Birds chirping, children talking, sounds of a train chugging away]

A few months after that I was visiting a friend and saw on the refrigerator a poem entitled: *Kindness*

*"Before you know what kindness really is, you must lose things,  
so you know how desolate the landscape can be between the regions of kindness.  
Only kindness makes sense anymore.  
Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt receive it after many days."*

Who knows, who knows who he was. He had nothing – but kindness.

And I like the, the image of Elijah, from Jewish tradition, who's this angel who appears in many forms. My grandfather used to say prayers; Friday night he would do the, the Shabbat service. My mother once asked him, she says, she said, "Do you really believe

in this stuff?" And he said, smiling at her, "Well, just in case." [chuckles] Since then whenever I see somebody who is asking for money, I make sure that I have something to give. [bus stopping, announcer asking people to move all the way to the back]

**Tony Kahn:**

That was Rich Borofsky with today's Morning Story: *Spare Change*. And I'm here with Gary Mott.

**Gary Mott:**

Tony? What about you? Do you believe in angels?

**Tony Kahn:**

Do I believe in angels? No, I don't think so, but I do believe that, that everything we think of, in religious terms, as some other place that would be better, is probably a way of describing some part in ourselves that maybe we could get to, that maybe heaven is actually next door. [chuckles] And I think that for Rich maybe was the question. Is there something special enough in all of us that we could call angelic?

**Gary Mott:**

Well, I absolutely believe in angels.

**Tony Kahn:**

You do?

**Gary Mott:**

Yeah.

**Tony Kahn:**

Based on experience?

**Gary Mott:**

I'm the father of three young kids and my youngest, one day, got out of the house and started playing in the street; every parent's nightmare. I heard the doorbell ring. Out on the street, an old blue Lincoln Continental, very unusual car for Massachusetts. Standing on the front steps was an elderly woman holding the hand of Sonja, my youngest. She had a long ash hanging off her cigarette. She was an angel. You know, whatever your religious affiliation, I think angels are universal.

**Tony Kahn:**

I'm so glad your kids are well.

**Gary Mott:**

Partially thanks to the woman with the, the terrible vice.

**Tony Kahn:**

From the smoking section of heaven. [Tony and Gary laugh heartily]

We need that angel around, especially with the way they drive in Boston. Anyway, we got email which we're always delighted to get.

"Howdy Tony and Gary, I am a misplaced New Englander, formerly of Kingston, Massachusetts." (And this comes to us from Texas) "I am now living in Central Texas. You've been a cyber-link to Boston for me ever since I stumbled onto your podcast several months ago." (Think of us as road bumps in cyberspace) [Tony laughs] "I listen to your programs while seated at my computer, designing custom stained glass windows and light fixtures. I click on a folder in iTunes and listen to one Morning Story after another." Why, thank you! "I also take you home with me on my iPod and listen to you, all late at night when I need to unwind a little and fall asleep. My brother in Pembroke, Massachusetts is also a fan of *Morning Stories*. He listens while working on restoring wooden boats out of his barn. This is a connection that he and I can share over 1500 miles of separation. "Did you hear the Morning Story the other day, when -- When we read your letter! Thank you very much Brian. He adds in a little postscript, here: "Why am I still in Texas? Well, I married a Texan and life would end for her if she ever crossed over the Red River."

**Gary Mott:**

And I'm a Texan who married a Massachusetts native who, you know, wouldn't be caught dead in Texas.

**Tony Kahn:**

[Laughs heartily]

Gotta arrange a meeting here and, and knit up the country again. [laughs, again]

**Gary Mott:**

Got a letter from a guy named Chris "Sully" Sullivan: "I toil in the music business as a concert front-of-house mix engineer, currently touring with country artist, Toby Keith and Joe Nichols. Traveling by tour bus and air affords me a perfect opportunity to listen to your show on my iPod. Additionally, I've used the dulcet tones of Tony Kahn, to check the final tuning of P.A. systems in many of America's and Europe's largest arenas." [Tony laughs heartily]

**Tony Kahn:**

I'm like Drain-O. [continues laughing]

**Gary Mott:**

No! It gets better, it gets better! (Chris continues): "When I need to check vocal articulation around an arena or shed, I've found that the recorded voices of Tony Kahn and Patrick Stewart are the perfect test material. [Tony continues laughing heartily] While testing a system in Switzerland, be advised: You've had a great time touring this year in binary form." And he also gives a shout out to Ipswitch...

**Tony Kahn:**

Yeah.

**Gary Mott:**

[Chris continues]: "Also I'm fairly certain more people than you expect have been advised of Ipswitch, too. Keep up the excellent work. Sully."

**Tony Kahn:**

We got in touch with Sully and asked him if he could send us a clip or two of Mr. Stewart and me at our other jobs, clearing the pipes for a Toby Keith Concert.

[Clips of recordings overlapping each other:

**Patrick Stewart:** "...to bestow the greetings of the season on the clock; who cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge..."

**Tony Kahn:** "...WGBH in Boston. Summer on Cape Cod is definitely over..." ]

**Tony Kahn:**

I'm very touched and honored to be considered and even used in the presence of Patrick Stewart and we're of course, also, unspeakably grateful for the mention that Ipswitch is getting as we are grateful to Ipswitch itself. They've been our sponsors pretty much since the start. Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software. You can get them at their website: <[ipswitch.com](http://ipswitch.com)> that's I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H.

**Gary Mott:**

And please get in touch with us at <[morningstories@wgbh.org](mailto:morningstories@wgbh.org)>

**Tony Kahn:**

See you next Friday! Take care.

[Mixes of music, Patrick Stewart speaking and Tony Kahn talking on *Morning Stories*]

[End of recording] Transcribed by: Lynn Relyea

