

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Miss Zorn Has Work to Do: Rachel Zorn wants all her dates to have a chance to shine. So she calls their moms. Also, Kate McGovern connects with others through storytelling.

Tony Kahn:

Hi everybody. This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston. There are plenty of places to learn that honesty is the best policy. There's grammar school, high school, Sunday school. If you miss any of those, there's the school of experience. And for a few unlucky single dudes in Manhattan, there is Rachel Zorn. Rachel is the fictional creation of a young writer named Liz Skillman. Miss Zorn fights for truth and decency in the dating scene of New York, armed only with her Blackberry, an online phone directory, and the Golden Rule. We call Liz's story *Miss Zorn Has Work To Do*.

[Mexican music]

Liz Skillman:

[Typing a text message on her Blackberry] "At least fifty pounds heavier than his picture." Rachel Zorn, high school teacher, hits "send." The text to her friend disappears just as her date sits back down. It is her third Internet suitor in two weeks. There was no passion with Jason, the handsome and boring stockbroker Rachel dated for nine months.

In his next email, the fat man says he had a nice time and would like to do it again. Rachel does not reply. Then, inspiration strikes. [beeps of phone dialing] Rachel turns on her computer and goes to an online phone directory. Moments later, she has found a listing for the fat man's parents. [sound of phone ringing at other end of line]

Rachel Zorn:

May I speak to Mrs. Braun, please?

Mrs. Braun:

[over phone line] "This is she."

Rachel Zorn:

I'm calling about your son, Elliot.

Mrs. Braun:

Is he all right?

Rachel Zorn:

Mrs. Braun, your son is nice, but the picture he put online is outdated.

Mrs. Braun:

From before he got fat?

Rachel Zorn:

Yes. And, the thing is Mrs. Braun, there are women out there who would be happy to be dating your son.

Mrs. Braun:

Fat women.

Rachel Zorn:

Perhaps some thin ones too. But his current weight is so surprising, he never gets a chance to shine.

Mrs. Braun:

Is that what happened with you?

Rachel Zorn:

Yes.

Liz Skillman:

Mrs. Braun's voice is serious.

Mrs. Braun:

I am going to have a word with Elliot as soon as I can get a hold of him.

[Music and background restaurant conversations]

Liz Skillman:

Richard takes Rachel out a week later. He is tall with wide blue eyes. Conversation flows. Ten minutes after it has been placed in front of him, Richard still has not looked at the bill. "Okay," Rachel thinks, "he's playing it cool. He's been out with a lot of feminists and thinks he should give me a chance to offer." She smiles. "Would you like for me to put in?" "Sure," he says, "Let's split it -- \$34.60 each." When the word "sixty" clears his mouth, it is official. Rachel is out with a cheapskate. He smiles. "I'll buy you ice cream if you get the cab."

The following evening, Rachel plunks down on the couch, [sound of dialing beeps] phone in one hand and bag of pretzels in the other.

[Phone ringing at other end of line]

Rachel Zorn:

May I please speak to the mother of Richard Johnson?

Person at other end:

This is his aunt.

Rachel Zorn:

Would you mind giving me her number?

Person at other end:

What's this for?

Rachel Zorn:

I'm calling about Richard's behavior.

Person at other end:

Who is this?

Rachel Zorn:

A friend, a teacher.

Person at other end:

Richard is thirty-six.

Rachel Zorn:

Mrs. Johnson, there's a school called "life" and your nephew is in the class known as "cheapskate." If he doesn't change his ways soon, he's going to be doing summer school.

Liz Skillman:

There is no response from Auntie for thirty seconds. And then there is.

Person at other end:

Gotta pen?

[Background restaurant noise]

Liz Skillman:

Kevin takes Rachel to an expensive sushi restaurant in TriBeCa. He is a far cry from Richard – rich, handsome, and, one-and-a-half hours into dinner, not a single laugh, just his Rolex, glowing. Rachel agrees to one drink at his place. Kevin is all smiles, but when Rachel says "no" an hour later, irritation passes over his features. Kevin does not call the next day even though he had said he would. [typing followed by ringing] There are only five Warners listed in Greenwich. Rachel hits pay dirt on attempt number two.

[Sound of phone being picked up]

Rachel Zorn:

Hi! I thought you'd like a progress report on Kevin. I went out with him on a date. He never called again. Mrs. Warner, I believe Kevin to be suffering from an affliction. He is a good-looking, successful man in a city full of single women. He's never going to settle down at this rate. To be frank, Mrs. Warner, it makes the prospect of grandchildren questionable. Does Kevin have siblings?

Mrs. Warner:

Yes.

Rachel Zorn:

Tell him that those with the grandkids get the biggest piece of the farm.

Mrs. Warner:

Excuse me?

Rachel Zorn:

Mrs. Warner, I think you heard me.

Mrs. Warner:

As a matter of fact, I did.

[Music]

Liz Skillman:

A week later, there's Peter, who drinks too much, Adam, who makes a highly improper proposition in the back seat of a taxi [gasp followed by slap], and Michael, who keeps Rachel waiting for two hours at a bar. A few nights later, Rachel goes online, [sound of typing] and, to her surprise, sees that Elliot, the fat man's, personal has been updated with a recent photo, that isn't, Rachel thinks, half bad. That night, [sound of cork coming out and wine pouring] Rachel goes to her refrigerator and pours herself a glass of sparkling wine. Champagne would be more appropriate, but it is, after all, a school night. And Miss Zorn [phone ringing at other end of line] has work to do.

[Phone is answered.]

Rachel Zorn:

Hi. May I please speak to the mother of ...?

[Music – piano jazz]

Tony Kahn:

[singing along with the piano jazz music from the story, “dee dooby dooby doo boom boom boom”] That’s Liz Skillman with today’s *Morning Story*, *Miss Zorn Has Work to Do*. I’m sitting here in the listening room of WGBH with Gary Mott, which looks very much like a bachelor’s pad, come to think of it. [laughter] Don’t you think?

Gary Mott:

Lots of audio equipment around ...

Tony Kahn:

The equipment, hi-fi lo-fi, couches,

Gary Mott:

... video, flat screen TV. Boy that story strikes fear into the hearts of all single men everywhere.

Tony Kahn:

It’s something I have nightmares about, you know? I wake up in the middle of the night and immediately reach for my wife to make [laughter] sure I don’t have to start dating again.

Gary Mott:

I recall this one girl that I had a relationship with, not necessarily a dating relationship. We parted ways, remained sort of friends, but I got married and I felt like things had to change. She wrote me a lot of letters about her dating life, and it felt weird, because I was now married.

Tony Kahn:

What do you think she was asking of you in those letters?

Gary Mott:

Nothing, absolutely nothing but a listening ear. It was a friendship, but I felt like it wasn’t appropriate. So I wrote her a letter, “I don’t want you to write me any more.” She was very hurt, very hurt. Several years after the fact, she got married, and she was talking to her husband about this friendship damaged by me, and her husband said, “You need to contact him.” She called me up; you know, I apologized.

Tony Kahn:

Did you ever tell your wife ...

Gary Mott:

Oh, yeah.

Tony Kahn:

... at the time, and what did she say to you?

Gary Mott:

She said, "Mmmmm, Gar, I, I don't think that was the right thing to do." But I was convinced.

Tony Kahn:

Not so long ago, I, I ran into an old girlfriend from thirty-five years ago.

Gary Mott:

Wow.

Tony Kahn:

We went out and we had dinner and, the first thing that I did when I came back was to tell Harriet that I had run into this old flame. You know what she said to me? This is after twenty-five years of marriage. She said, "So tell me, did any of the old feelings come back?" And I said, I said, "Yeah." And she just smiled. And that to me was like, just a reminder of how wonderful our marriage is.

Gary Mott:

You've had twenty-five years of, of trust and ...

Tony Kahn:

Making repeated amends. [laughs] Making amends. We got an interesting email the other day from one of the people who's been involved in our transcription project. The great thing about the transcription project, besides the work that's being done, are the opinions. One of our transcribers, named Kate McGovern, happened to be transcribing one podcast told to us by a fellow named Tom Cottle called *You Just Don't Know The Whole Story*. This is what she had to say after having done that transcript.

She says, "There's something magical about how a story is hatched, kind of like the way a photo emerges from the memory of light captured on film and hidden in the dark until it emerges in the chemical process. We're all like old-fashioned film, I suppose. Something important happens in our life; our souls are exposed to intense feelings like film is exposed to light. Most of the time, we process our film immediately and share the photos, the good ones and the bad ones, the good feelings and the bad. Sometimes, though, we let the canisters sit, or we forget about it altogether. What an extraordinary moment, when that one one-hundredth of a second flash of light, invisibly memorized on celluloid actually becomes a photographic print. In that magical transfer that once-quiet memory takes on a new life, ignites emotions, and promotes possibilities to connect in new ways with those around us. Thanks to *Morning Stories* for being such a welcoming place for stories to be hatched and shared." And thanks to you Kate, for feeling what Tom Cottle certainly provided for us - a moment of recaptured history from long, long ago, that he processed, in a way, and developed for the first time.

Gary Mott:

What an amazing letter. I mean, these transcribers are, they're a rare breed, [Tony agrees] thoughtful, meticulous, ...

Tony Kahn:

Yes. And, they have formed a community of their own, one which they welcome anybody to join, either if you want to be a transcriber, or if you just want to share opinions about some of the stories that maybe you'll end up reading. You can get in touch with Liz Cooksey, who has been managing this whole thing for us, as well as doing some of the transcripts. And she can be reached at ...

Gary Mott:

Transcripts underscore Liz, that's transcripts with a T-S, at bellsouth dot net. <transcripts_liz@bellsouth.net>.

Tony Kahn:

Along with other things we appreciate, we, we got a contribution – the first contribution of 2008 – the best way to transfer some spare change in your pocket to a story somebody might tell you that could change your life.

Gary Mott:

There you go.

Tony Kahn:

What a bargain! [Laughter] And we should probably end with the proviso that Rachel Zorn is a fictional character. [Mexican music] If she resembles anybody in your life, well, good for you. And the scene that we set in the Mexican restaurant at the beginning is also entirely fictional. It just comes from the fact that some of my best dates have gone really wrong in Mexican restaurants. [laughs] We'll see you next week. Adios.

[End of Recording]

Transcribed by Susan MacLeod.