

13B Spare change

(A is sitting on a bench with a sign that reads 'hungry and homeless' propped up beside him. There's a collecting box in front of him and he's wearing a suit. In contrast, C is sitting a little further on, dressed in shabby, dirty clothes, the coat tied up with string and using a hat for collecting. Almost every passer-by puts money in C's hat. C acknowledges the donations with 'Thank you, sir/ma'am. God bless you, sir/ma'am.' This continues in the background all the time that A and B are conversing. None of the passers-by put money in A's box)

A Spare change? Can you spare any change for a cup of tea?

(Passer-by stares and walks on)

A Spare change? Can you spare any change for a cup of tea?

(Another passer-by stares and walks on)

A Could you spare any change, sir?

(B stops. Puts money in the collecting box and walks on)

A Thank you, sir!

(B pauses and walks back)

B I hope you don't mind my asking, but are you really hungry and homeless?

A Yes, just what the sign says. *(He motions to his sign)*

B It's just that you don't look as if you are.

A What d'you mean?

B You're too smart.

A Smart?

B Yes, tramps, *(Corrects himself)* ... I mean, people in your situation don't usually wear a suit.

A I see what you mean, but the truth is, it's the only decent thing I've got left. I've lost my job and been evicted from my house. I had to sell everything. I used to work on the buses, but there's no call for bus conductors nowadays.

B I see. *(Moves off, pauses and comes back)* Well, I don't mean to be rude, but it'd make a lot of sense to sell your suit, if you need the money. That's a nice suit you've got there.

A Believe me, the thought has crossed my mind, but I've got my dignity you know ... although that's about all I've got! *(Laughs sarcastically)* Besides, I need it to look for a job.

B Isn't it difficult to apply for a job when you haven't got an address?

A Ah, but that's where you're wrong! I have. It's here! *(Points to the bench)* 'The Bench, Queens Park, Queen's Square.' It's even got its own postcode. Didn't you read about it in the papers? It's a new experiment by the council to help homeless people like me find jobs.

B That sounds like a good idea. But, if you're not going to look the part, so to speak, why don't you do something?

A Do something?

B Yes, you know, do some busking, read poems, or stand still like a statue. *(He poses)*

A I would if I could, but I can't. I'm not very artistic. If only I were!

B *(Shrugs his shoulders)* Oh, well, I must be going. It was nice talking to you. Here, take this and buy yourself a meal. *(Hands A a five-pound note)*

A Much obliged, sir!

(People continue to walk by. Some ignore A, some stare, none give anything. Finally A gives up, picks up his sign and box and leaves. A few more people pass by and throw money into C's hat)