

# Small Change

by Virginia Apperson

**G**ot a call from Bill who got a call from Don. An article, they want an article. I peek inside. Absolutely and immediately convinced - **nothing** within interesting enough for print. A quandary. It's my turn! Nothing responds. Where are my tennis shoes? Walk. Go for a walk. An escape? An avoidance tactic? Out the door for what my husband calls a 'forced march.' If I walk fast enough, will the request go away? Step, step, step, right step. My stride is strong, sure, dependable. But that lump in my stomach is still there. It's the "I'm sure **nothing**'s there" lump. A dark cloud of an unwritten article pursues. Soldier on - trudge forward. Full-out retreat. Staring, glaring into the pavement.

And then I remember: **Pennies!**

Sometimes when I walk, I find pennies. Finding pennies makes my day. All of a sudden, my heart thrills and my step lightens. I'm rich. I'm lucky. In a split second the world becomes my oyster. Write about finding pennies. Write how it's about as good as it gets. A crummy day all of a sudden glistens. The cloud quits oppressing me and begins to cast intriguing shadows. The lump is shrinking. My gaze towards the asphalt loosens. Head up. Eyes begin to see. Turns out there is a fascinating world surrounding me. I hadn't noticed.

Gazillions of camellias are happily burdening their tiny, flexibly forgiving branches. A single leaf plunges from his 3-story penthouse birthplace, spiraling and swirling from the treetops. I hadn't planned on a ballet today. Birds flit and twitter modeling a flashy cardinal red and sunny chickadee yellow high fashion. A lavender hydrangea is unwilling to give up the summer daze, while crimson berries dangle, forecasting chillier times to come.

I've been delightfully transported from a barren mind into a shocking spectacle of a planet, one that surprises, engages and dazzles my senses and cracks open my heart. A realm dripping with 'penny moments.' The woods embrace me in such a tender way that I'm on the verge of grateful tears. Now I eagerly look up, down, deep into the forest that I've entered and so often neglected, as I tromped over her in the past.

Most of the leaves have already jumped ship, leaving the trees shamelessly buck-naked. Look at the way that limb has grown straight and then switches back and over. It's crooked and doesn't mind a bit. How about the gnarled and knobbly protuberances bulging off that oak. "It gives me character," she tells me without apology for her odd, some-might-call-it grotesque bustle-bottom. Farther down the hill, a majestic arbor

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stands straight, strong, strident in his stature, while in stark contrast, slithering from his side is a serpent-like limb slinking into the wild blue yonder. Meanwhile, a lone, heroic lemony-colored butterfly flaps along towards who knows what?

How many times have I walked this walk and bypassed this irreverent excellence? Brooding over this or that. Rushing to get fit. Nose diligently attentive to the proverbial grindstone. In the midst of my narrow existence, miracles are performing all around me, hardly bothered by their ignorant audience. Spare change popping up here and there where one least expects. Are these extraordinarily ordinary marvels always swarming around my oblivion? Have I been too preoccupied, too blind, too bone-headed to notice the shiny little currencies that are haphazardly scattered about, so eager to capture my attention?

Some say that the angels drop pennies because they miss you. Angels missing me?!?! Longing to play, to experience the marvelousness with me. How that changes my daily routine, from drudgery and toil to whimsy and persistent playmates. Surely, even I could write an article with an angel perched on my shoulder. I'm slowly getting it through my very numb skull. "Pennies" are everywhere. Where is my piggy bank? I'm finally discovering and collecting this necessary, but easily overlooked prima materia. And not just the occasional copper

coin that sneaks out of pants pockets or billfolds. But other teeny currencies that seem so insignificant and commonplace, so ubiquitous and irrelevant that their value has been long forgotten. Move over Columbus; I've discovered the New World.

Welcome to the copper zone!!! Such a metal is guaranteed because it has been well initiated, fired into shape. Because it has survived that torturous, inflammatory, calcifying process, it ably serves as a stepping-stone to new opportunities. Throw a penny in a fountain, and let the alchemical stew handle your heart's desire. Furthermore, a copper penny in our sweaty palms means that we have entered none other than Venus/Aphrodite's domain, where Her ruling principle invites the beautiful, the amorous, the fertile pleasures to step up to center stage and finally get their due.

The truth is everybody's got a special penny story. Writer Annie Dillard had an exceptionally generous way with her personal pennies. As a 6-year old girl, instead of hoarding her coins, she sprinkled them around her little world, gleeful at the thought of someone happening upon them. She even gave clues that a special surprise was just around the corner. And how about Bing Crosby's confidence that the necessary clouds aren't just there to storm and thunder but are actually drizzling "pennies from heaven" to be traded "for a package of sunshine and flowers" (for a listen, check out [www.lyrics.com](http://www.lyrics.com)). Or a friend's loving curiosity, offering a Penny when you're lost in thought. And **Mary Poppins'** assurance that for a tuppence, you can have the remarkable privilege of feeding the birds.

As I leave the woods to return home and face the inevitable, THE UNWRITTEN ARTICLE, I'm positively sure that you'll never guess what happened ½ a block from my house. Well, I stumbled upon a small, ragged, barely recognizable Lincoln, tire-flattened penny. An angel must really and truly be missing me! And I best welcome her back. From now on, I'll make sure that my "umbrella is always upside down!!!" Because I have been changed by this small, spare change ■