

DAD'S PENNIES

by Shawn Deal

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SYNOPSIS: A strange gift of five pennies from her father becomes her most treasured possession. This dramatic monologue from Shawn Deal tugs on the heart strings.

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Bare stage.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female)

NARRATOR (f)

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NARRATOR: It was last year when my dad gave me five pennies. This was before he got sick. This was even before we knew that there was anything wrong with him.

He walked into my bedroom, without knocking, again, and told me to close my eyes and stick out my hand. I thought I was going to get a candy bar. Dad would often go to the store and buy a treat for everyone, usually their favorite piece of candy. Mine is a nutrageous candy bar. But instead I got a small, tiny really, leather sack with a drawstring.

He told me to open my eyes; I looked at the sack curiously. I looked at my dad's face and saw a mix of happiness and pride. I opened the sack to find five pennies. And they were bright and shiny pennies like they had just been freshly struck and given straight to the bank. Never touched by anyone before. He must have used some sort of polish or something to make them look like that.

When he gave me the pennies, I didn't understand at first. Okay, I didn't understand, second, third, fourth or fifth, for that matter. I just looked at him quizzically and he just smiled his big toothy smile.

He took the sack, grabbed my hand, opened it and very carefully pulled out each penny and placed them into the palm of my hand.

This is your family, he told me then.

Admittedly, I was a bit perplexed. I didn't understand how five pennies were supposed to be my family. It was all symbolism and everything. I was never very good at getting that, just ask any English Literature teacher I've ever had. Symbolism, foreshadowing—it's all over my head. We didn't know that in a little more than two months from then he would find lumps on the side of his body. And that a week later he'd be diagnosed with cancer—Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma to be precise. When he gave me those pennies, when he went around to everyone's bedroom that day and gave them each a sack with five pennies, he had no idea he would

be dead within a year. None of us did. Symbolism and foreshadowing—they suck.

I stared at the five pennies and then I stared back at him.

I understood then that this was a moment, between my father and I, and that it was potentially an important moment. I could feel his love for me. I could feel his pride in me as well. He didn't have to say anything. It was the way he looked at me. The way he stood. The way his face melted from a stern expression to that big toothy smile. He never had to tell me he loved me, although he did every day, I could see it when he looked at me. There was something my father was trying to tell me right there and right then and I just wasn't getting it. I shrugged my shoulders just slightly, and he explained.

(Holds up or refers to a penny.) This penny represents my brother. It's a 1994 penny.

And this penny represents my older sister—a 1997 penny.

My mother's penny is from the year 1967.

And my penny, of course, is from 2003.

These were the years we were all born.

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