

"Pocket Change"

by Nick Yetto

(John and Nick sit facing each other. Gazing at one another. Tension-building pause. Play this out until the audience begins to squirm.)

John: So. Here we are.

Nick: Yup.

John: It's been a long time.

Nick: Uh-huh.

John: Man to man.

Nick: Mano a Mano.

John: Just you and me. Together.

(Without warning, Nick turns his chair so it is facing away from John.)

John: We're not together anymore.

Nick: Nope.

John: All alone.

Nick: As God intended.

John: Two different people.

Nick: That's right.

(turns his chair to face John)

John: You've returned.

Nick: Looks that way.

(Fidgets. Eyes watch. Looks around. Eyes watch.)

John: (long pause) Do you have somewhere to go?

Nick: Not really.

John: Then why do you keep looking at your watch?

Nick: It's a nice watch. That's all.

John: Where did you get it?

Nick: No.

John: What?

Nick: I'm not going to tell you. You'd go and buy it.

John: Could I?

Nick: No way.

John: Why?

Nick: It would kill me to see you with it.

John: What the hell are you talking about?

Nick: Three years ago. I took a look in the mirror.

John: I look in the mirror every day.

Nick: This was a *spiritual* look, John. A *soul* look. I was gazing at my soul's reflection.

John: Gotcha.

Nick: And John... I didn't like what I saw. I'd been trying for years to make myself happy. Nothing worked. I saw that man in the mirror, and at last, I knew what he wanted. What he'd been *missing!* Everyone else had a timepiece. I didn't. Clarity, John! Charity at last! I set out on a mission: a mission to find the perfect watch. A watch that would transcend. Like a fool, I expected to be satisfied the first place I went. Bradlee's had a sale, all watches for ten dollars. Couldn't find one I liked. I continued on. Wal-Mart, Ames, Joy's, K-mart. I tried them all and struck out at every one. My quest came to dominate my life. It was an obsession! A drug! My wife thought I was having an affair, and in a way I was, but the other woman wasn't a woman at all, but a marker of time, a piece of jewelry with a winding knob and an attractive leather strap. Mary left me. That didn't stop me. I was free! From that day forward, my search was my life. I wouldn't trade it for the world. (Nick illuminates the face of his watch)

John: That's pathetic! You spent three years looking for a watch!? That's not a quest. That's indecisive shopping!

Nick: It lights up.

John: Why don't you get a hobby? My grandfather had a coin collection. He'd been gathering it since he was a boy. I used to love sitting around the fire with him, talking about his collection. It was the only thing that he seemed to care about after grandma passed away. I always went over to his house after church. My mother would give me change for the collection basket, and I'd always keep it. When I got to Grandpa's house, I would show him the money and ask if there were

any good ones. He'd sift through them, reciting the value of each. He had memorized the book. "It's a keeper." That's what he would say when I had a good one. He never looked excited, but I could tell he was. He was a stone of a man. He never smiled. One time I bought a candy bar at the corner store. In my change, I got an Indian head penny. He had been looking for one all his life. I tried to give it to him, but he would never take it. He got arthritis early. He kept his coins in those special folders, the ones with the punched-out holes, and it got hard for him to fit them in there. He let me help him. Some of my happiest days were spent on the floor of his den, cleaning and organizing his coins into those folders. He would sit in his rocker as I worked. He was like a teacher. He was never happier than when we were together. He died on my fourteenth birthday. A heart attack. I got to see him in the hospital before he passed. "John," he said, "the collection is yours. I hope it brings you good times." I took his hand. "All except this one," I said. I put the Indian head penny in his hand. I expected him to give it back, even then. But he didn't. He grasped it tightly and looked at me. There were tears in his eyes. He died shortly after. The penny was buried with him.

Nick: That's a very nice story, John. What's the point?

John: I can't believe you! You haven't changed a bit.

Nick: What are you...

John: ...No Nick. I tell you something that...

Nick: ...It's not useful information, John.

John: That coin collection meant something.

Nick: Yeah, that he could always call home on a payphone.

John: It's better than your goddamn watch.

Nick: Could any of paw-paw's coins do this?
(Nick illuminates his watch)

John: We didn't look at them in the dark!

Nick: John...

John: I don't want to hear it.

Nick: Fine. I regret our whole interaction.

(Another long pause. Both men begin to look around until the silence becomes uncomfortable. Nick squeaks his boots against the floor as he looks out the door)

John: Stop that.

Nick: What?

John: Your boots squeak.

Nick: I know.

John: Are you going to return them?

Nick: No. They're brand new.

John: They look old.

Nick: They're supposed to.

John: Why would you buy brand new boots that looked old?

Nick: I like my boots broken in.

John: If they're broken in, why do they squeak?

Nick: They're not really broken in. They just look that way. I still have to wear them around.

John: My shoes don't squeak. They never did.

Nick: They're sneakers.

John: For sneaking.

Nick: Well I'm going to leave.

John: What about your boots?

Nick: What about them?

John: They squeak!

Nick: I'm going to leave anyway. Through that door I can go anywhere.

John: You can go outside.

Nick: Outside is the world. You can go anywhere from outside.

John: I guess. Remember when school lunch cost fifty cents?

Nick: No. I remember it being seventy-five.

John: It was. But before that, it was fifty.

Nick: How much does it cost to take the bus?

John: About 50 cents. You really want to go?

Nick: Yeah, I really do.

John: Let's go then. Together.

Nick: Together?

John: Yeah. I have four quarters. Two for you and two for me.

Nick: Where are we going?

John: We'll get on the first bus we see.

(There is a slight pause as Nick considers. Then he smiles.)

Nick: Okay John. Let's try it.

John: Great!

(Both start towards exit)

Nick: What if one of those coins is valuable?

John: They're not. I've memorized the book.

(Both exit)