

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Written by

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1 EXT. STREET - NIGHT**1**

The city is asleep.

In a dimly lit neighborhood walks a teenage BOY. The boy passes under a streetlamp.

But as he walks away, a *quarter* suddenly drops onto the pavement.

He turns around. He stares at the coin, confused. Stepping toward it, he kneels down to pick it up.

There's a deep howl in the wind. The boy looks back down the street.

In the distance appears a man's silhouette. The boy squints.

Then the silhouette darts toward him like a demon.

The boy flinches, tripping backward and shutting his eyes, the wind howling seemingly louder. But the wind stops.

He opens his eyes. His eyes widen in terror.

Above him stands the obscured face of a stranger - THE COIN COLLECTOR. He carries a heavy glass canister of coins on his back. There are easily hundreds of coins twinkling inside the glass canister, clanging as he takes a step forward. He wheezes and puffs.

Then, the streetlight flickers off into darkness.

HARRISON (V.O.)
And just like that, the boy and The
Coin Collector were never seen
again.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Woah.

2 INT. THE DINER - NIGHT**2**

Investigator HARRISON, a rugged man, chuckles and takes a sip of coffee. He sits in a booth. The young waiter DANIEL has pulled up a chair, smiling and shaking his head at Harrison's story. NICK, dressed in construction gear, sits across from Harrison in the booth.

NICK
That's B.S.

HARRISON
But it's a good story.

DANIEL
That's wild.

Harrison laughs. JENNY passes by to take Harrison's empty plate.

JENNY
Please don't scare off Daniel, he
just got here.

HARRISON
Sorry, Jen.

She walks off with his plate. She's on the younger side and wears a tag with her name on it. Jenny goes into the kitchen while the others continue in the back.

DANIEL
Were the people ever found?

NICK
Don't listen to him, Harrison just
likes telling ghost stories.

HARRISON
Watch yourself. Never know when
you'll be Coin Collector's next
victim.

Jenny rearranges some things as she listens. She's amused, yet distant, like she's distracted.

The others continue.

NICK
Look, he was just some bum. Crazy
people like him are a dime a dozen.

HARRISON
Dime you say?

Nick ignores the joke. Daniel pours Harrison a refill.

NICK
Still... I always wondered why he
did it - the coins.

HARRISON

Hm. Hey, Daniel, if you want to hear a first-hand account on The Coin Collector, then Nick's got quite the tale.

Daniel turns to Nick.

DANIEL

You've seen him?

Nick hates being put on the spot by Harrison.

NICK

...Yeah. Once.

Daniel leans in, intrigued.

3 EXT. THE LAKE - DAWN

3

FLASHBACK. A pickup truck pulls up to the side of a pond. It parks and out comes Nick.

NICK (V.O.)

A while back we were contracted to drain the lake near the Sanchez tollway. One morning I arrived early at the site to check something out.

Nick walks down toward the pond. He pulls out a cigarette but abruptly stops to stare at the other side of the water.

NICK (V.O.)

But when I got down there... I saw *him*.

The Coin Collector stands on the other side of the pond. He wades through the shallow end of the water, looking for something. Nick's eyebrows furrow.

NICK (V.O.)

He had like a huge green coat and a bit of a beard. I figured he was homeless.

The Coin Collector takes some coins out of the water. Nick needs him to clear the area.

NICK

Hey! You can't be here!

The Coin Collector turns to him and freezes, staring at him like a deer in headlights.

NICK (V.O.)
But when I tried to get him to
scram... he just... stared at me.

Nick stares back at him.

Suddenly The Coin Collector takes a step towards Nick - and Nick flinches back an inch. The Coin Collector notices and doesn't take another step. Instead, he turns around and slowly leaves.

4 INT. THE DINER - NIGHT

4

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT. Daniel stands next to Harry giving him a refill.

DANIEL
Were you scared?

NICK
No! But come on. I've met homeless people like him before. You give them an inch and suddenly they never leave you alone.

HARRISON
Sounds like you were scared.

NICK
Oh, so I'm the weird one? Come on, guy has psychopath written all over him.

Harrison rolls his eyes.

QUINCY
Umm, 'scuse me.

From the booth behind Nick sits someone else - the scatterbrained woman QUINCY.

QUINCY
I think you have the man pegged all wrong.

HARRISON
(chuckling)
Here we go.

QUINCY

Don't laugh Harry, you've had your fun, now let me have mine.

Quincy gets up and moves to Harrison's table, shoving her way next to Nick.

QUINCY

Hi - Quincy. Look, Harry and the rest of the public will tell you *all* about how ominous this guy is, right?

HARRISON

I never called him ominous.

QUINCY

But! I know what he really is.

DANIEL

What?

QUINCY

(whispering)

...He's a vig-i-lan-te!

5 INT. OFFICE - DAY

5

CUT TO a random MAN in his office opening up a tabloid magazine, the camera zooming in on the front cover with the headline: "COIN-MAN SAVES MY LIFE?"

QUINCY (V.O.)

You probably missed my segment over it in my very own magazine, but I assure you it was a riveting story! I was coming home late one night...

6 INT. A HOUSE - NIGHT

6

FLASHBACK. Quincy walks up to open the front door of her house.

QUINCY (V.O.)

And when I opened the front door... There were TWO burglars trying to rob my house.

In her living room stands two ROBBERS carrying a TV. She screams and the two drop the TV. Then they draw their guns.

Quincy screams and drops her purse, raising her hands.

QUINCY (V.O.)
But when I dropped my purse, a
handful of coins burst onto the
floor... that's what signaled *him*
to arrive.

Suddenly, a loud bang comes from another door in the room.

A foot kicks open the door. The burglars are startled. Then enters The Coin Collector. He stands up proudly like a superhero. The burglars are as confused as they are terrified.

QUINCY (V.O.)
And there stood the man himself...
The Coin Collector!

The burglars immediately point their guns at him.

QUINCY (V.O.)
Little did they know The Coin
Collector had weapons of his own.

The Coin Collector whips out two guns, both of which have chords that connect back to his canister. He raises them.

QUINCY (V.O.)
And so a shootout commences!

Yet, instead of firing bullets, the guns shoot coins. The coins absurdly fly across in slow motion.

QUINCY (V.O.)
Next thing I knew, the criminals
were on the retreat.

Quincy gets up from hiding. Her front door is wide open, the criminals and The Coin Collector gone. She goes to the doorway to look outside, and at the end of the sidewalk stands The Coin Collector. He waves at her. Then he leaves.

7 INT. THE DINER - NIGHT

7

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

QUINCY
And thus, my life was saved that
very night.

HARRISON
...That never happened.

QUINCY
It absolutely did!

HARRISON
Coin shooters? You want me to believe coin shooters? And why didn't you ever report the robbery to the police?

QUINCY
I withhold the finer details to protect his identity.

HARRISON
Ha! Okay. Sure.

Quincy takes offense to his patronizing tone.

QUINCY
Wannabe detective.

HARRISON
Tabloid writer!

The tables go silent. Nick and Daniel would rather not press further on Harrison and Quincy's history together.

DANIEL
Uh, let me get you a refill.

Daniel walks off. Quincy sighs.

QUINCY
Still... I only wish I could have told him thank you.

Harrison looks back at her. He doesn't believe Quincy, but the remorse in her voice signals to him that maybe there *is* some truth to her absurd story.

HARRISON
Well, either way, we can certainly agree he was a man larger than life.

On the other side of the diner stands Jenny. She stares out the window at the bus stop across the street.

There's no one there.

Her mind seems preoccupied as she stares into seemingly nothing.

Meanwhile, Daniel pours Quincy a refill.

QUINCY
(to Daniel)
And you. What's your name?

DANIEL
Uh, Daniel.

QUINCY
What's your story?

She invites him to sit down. He does.

DANIEL
Oh, uh, well I'm new to the city
and I started working here two days
ago.

QUINCY
Ahhh, so that's why you're new to
The Coin Collector mythos.

HARRISON
Hope you aren't already tired of
seeing our faces, let alone hers.
(motions to Quincy)

DANIEL
Do you all come in often?

QUINCY
We do. The diner is a great place
to find stories.

HARRISON
Mhm, it's true. In fact, it was
about a year ago now that I started
investigating The Coin Collector.
It's how I met Quincy and
eventually Nick.

He takes a sip.

HARRISON
Alas... My investigation on The
Coin Collector has reached a dead
end.

Daniel is disappointed to hear such but stays optimistic.

DANIEL
Oh, well I mean anything's
possible, right? Maybe you'll still
find him one day.

Harrison doesn't say anything. Daniel wonders if he said something wrong. Quincy and Nick also shrink in their seats.

DANIEL
What?

Jenny walks up to all of them.

JENNY
...Coin Collector's gone, bud.

Everyone is surprised to see Jenny enter the conversation. Daniel is confused.

HARRISON
Aye.

Jenny leaves again. Daniel wants answers.

DANIEL
Gone?

Harrison nods.

HARRISON
Six months ago, I was researching reports about the so-called Coin Collector in this city. It was going to be an exciting entry in my investigative career.

Daniel listens. The others know the story all too well.

HARRISON
I heard a lot of stories. Some of them are the ones you've heard tonight... But then came the night of October 8th.

CUT TO a bridge at night. Gunfire is heard.

8 EXT. THE BRIDGE - MORNING

8

FLASHBACK. Harrison walks underneath the bridge, following along the stream of water.

HARRISON (V.O.)
Someone had heard gunfire down by
Chisholm Bridge. I joined the
police the next morning to
investigate and...

A police officer walks up to Harrison. He's holding
something.

HARRISON (V.O.)
It was him.

The police officer holds the remnants of The Coin
Collector's canister, now shattered and barely
recognizable.

HARRISON (V.O.)
...Forensics had found more
shattered glass and blood at the
top of the bridge. They think
someone attacked him and... pushed
him off.

9 INT. THE DINER - NIGHT

9

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT. Daniel is chilled.

DANIEL
Why?

Harrison shrugs at the senselessness of the crime.

HARRISON
Homicides against homeless people
are more common than you'd expect.
Most of the time people think
homeless folk are the people to be
afraid of. But really, it's us.

Daniel is shaken.

HARRISON
The killer was never found. The
police didn't even care.

Jenny sits in the back of the room, almost hiding.

QUINCY
It's a terrible thing.

Harrison nods.

DANIEL
Can't believe people could be so
cruel.

NICK
No?

Harrison glares at Nick.

NICK
I mean really, is anyone surprised?

HARRISON
What are you getting at?

NICK
All I'm saying is if maybe The Coin
Collector hadn't drawn so much
attention to himself-

QUINCY
Jesus, have some humanity.

NICK
Okay, but come on... He couldn't
have been so naive. We live in a
cruel world with terrible people.
Meanwhile, The Coin Collector's
walking around like he's some kind
of, what, Batman? Why?

JENNY
Because that's who he was.

The others turn to Jenny in the back, surprised to hear her
speak up.

Jenny can't hold it in anymore.

JENNY
...And he wasn't a freak or some
superhero... I don't even know if
he was homeless...

HARRISON
Jenny, you don't have to share if
you don't want to.

She shakes her head and stands up and starts walking toward
the others.

JENNY

No. Daniel should hear the whole story.

DANIEL
...You knew him?

Jenny glances at Harrison, signaling him to start the story. The others look to him.

HARRISON
...6 months ago, when the incident at the bridge happened, I looked around trying to find any leads on The Coin Collector. Something on the attacker. A witness. *Anything*.

Quincy nods.

HARRISON
Then one day, I walked in here. Into this diner. And that's when I met Jenny...

Jenny stands to the side.

HARRISON
...The last person to ever see The Coin Collector alive.

Daniel is amazed and turns back to Jenny.

DANIEL
No. Were you there when the incident happened? Were you able to identify the killer? Did you-

Jenny raises a hand to slow Daniel down. She pulls a chair up to the booth, sitting in the middle of everyone.

JENNY
As much I wish I could say I was the key to solving the case, or had some useful tip to give... I didn't see any of it.

Daniel is a little disappointed.

DANIEL
Oh. So... what did happen?

Jenny thinks back.

JENNY

...Just a small conversation.

10 INT. DINER KITCHEN - EVENING

10

FLASHBACK. Jenny opens a backdoor into the kitchen. She's on the phone while tightening her apron. It's smoky and loud.

JENNY (V.O.)
I started working at the diner a
year and a half ago.

JENNY
(on the phone)
Yeah, I know... Yes, I promise I'll
be able to pay tomorrow, but I-

Jenny's MANAGER passes by.

MANAGER
Jen, I told you no phone calls on
duty.

JENNY
But it's about my car-

MANAGER
Jenny, off! Now!

Jenny hangs up.

JENNY (V.O.)
I was struggling with rent. My car
was dead. I just... wasn't in a
good place.

CUT TO Jenny taking out a trash bag from the bin.

11 EXT. ALLEY - EVENING

11

Jenny exits into the back alley and tosses the trash into the garbage bin.

She lets out a sigh. Then she takes a step back, leaning against the cold brick wall.

It's quiet outside. If only for a moment, Jenny can ignore everything and just breathe.

Beat.

12 EXT. THE BUS STOP - NIGHT

12

Jenny walks down the sidewalk, her face drained. She approaches the bench of the bus stop.

Jenny takes a seat on the left side of the bench, alone.

A long moment passes as Jenny becomes lost in thought. Her focus is interrupted as she hears the sound of small clinking coming from down the sidewalk.

A man approaches the bus stop. *It's The Coin Collector.* Only now as he steps into the light from the streetlamp do we see his weary eyes and humble exterior.

He walks up to the bench, removing his coin backpack to place it next to him as he sits down.

Jenny glances at him from the corner of her eye. She can't believe what she's seeing. Then she focuses forward again.

The Coin Collector turns to look at Jenny. She doesn't acknowledge his glance.

He studies her for a moment. He recognizes an emptiness in her face.

Without saying a word, he reaches behind and unlatches something in his backpack.

He then delicately holds a penny in the palm of his hand. He looks back at her.

THE COIN COLLECTOR
...Would you like a penny?

Jenny is caught off guard.

JENNY
What?

He extends his hand to her, encouraging her to take it.

She is hesitant at first, but she accepts, picking it up from his hand.

She looks at it, a little puzzled.

JENNY
Thanks...

THE COIN COLLECTOR

A penny for Jenny.

She is taken aback by him saying her name.

JENNY

H-how do you know-

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Nametag.

Jenny glances down at herself, relieved he isn't some stalker. The Coin Collector chuckles at her panic.

The Coin Collector returns to his own world, taking out some coins from his jacket and examining them.

She slowly turns to take another look at The Coin Collector.

He's not what she expected him to be. He's quiet and gentle.

She looks at his canister of coins, fascinated by its intricacy. The coins sparkled inside the strange glass case.

Jenny is curious to know more.

JENNY

I... I like your coins.

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Oh, why thank you.

The two sit in silence a bit longer. Finally, Jenny musters up the courage to ask what she's really wondering.

JENNY

...Why do you do it?

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Hm?

JENNY

The coins.

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Well... Because I like them. Every one of these coins has a story to it.

JENNY

Every single one?

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Mhm. Places I've been. People I've met. Coins are memories... Coins are people.

Jenny tries to understand, but she doesn't fully get him. Another thought comes to The Coin Collector. He quickly reaches over to another compartment in his canister, pulling out a silver dollar coin.

THE COIN COLLECTOR

See, take this dollar coin for example. It's one of the first coins I ever got. My mother gave it to me... I'm old now, and my mother is long gone... but when I look at it, I remember her.

It's a sweet thought. Jenny can see just how genuine he is.

She looks back down at her penny.

JENNY

So... What's the story of *this* penny?

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Hm. You tell me.

She isn't sure what to say next.

JENNY

I'm not exactly the best storyteller. And most of my stories aren't very interesting.

THE COIN COLLECTOR

Well... Tell me about your day.

Beat.

JENNY

Just another day at work. Just like before. Worried about my car. Worried about my rent. Tired of the people I have to deal with every day. And now I'm waiting for the bus just to start it all over again tomorrow.

She looks back at her coin. She flips it over in her hand.

JENNY
...But then a kind stranger gave me
a penny.

The two smile at each other, understanding one another just
a little more now.

Then the headlights of a bus approach from the very end of
the street. Jenny glances back at them.

JENNY
That's my bus.

She stands up.

JENNY
It was nice talking with you.

The Coin Collector nods.

THE COIN COLLECTOR
Take care, Jenny.

Jenny smiles back, then leaves.

13 INT. THE DINER - NIGHT

13

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT. The others stare, waiting for her
to finish her story.

JENNY
And that was it. We just talked.

Jenny remembers The Coin Collector fondly. But her smile
fades away as she returns to the present.

JENNY
That night was October 8th. The
Coin Collector's canister was found
the next morning.

Everyone sits in silence for a long while.

JENNY
...I always wished I had asked him
what his name was.

Beat. Quincy puts her hand on Jenny's.

NICK
I never knew that story. I'm sorry.

Harrison plays with his coffee.

JENNY
...I think what I remember most...
is that he was happy.

The words hang in the air for a moment.

Jenny clears her nose. Then she stands up.

JENNY
Alright. It's way past closing.

HARRISON
Yeah, I suppose you're right.

Everyone adjusts themselves in preparation to leave.

JENNY
Daniel, could you get the trash?

DANIEL
Oh yeah of course.

Daniel leaves. Jenny stands up as well to gather the last of the empty plates and drinks. The others think back on their memories of The Coin Collector.

NICK
You think we'll ever know who he
really was?

HARRISON
...Hm. I'm not sure.

Beat.

QUINCY
Maybe, he was just a man who chose
to live his own way.

Jenny finishes putting things away in the back. She's still torn about everything. She reaches into her pocket.

In her hand, she holds the penny the Coin Collector gifted her.

She recalls one last thing The Coin Collector told her.

JENNY (V.O.)

Isn't it ever difficult? Doing what you do? I mean... Aren't you ever afraid of getting hurt by people?

THE COIN COLLECTOR (V.O.)
 ...People are complicated. There's a lot of anger and fear in the world, but... there's also a lot of good. Small moments of joy, kindness, love - they can make a world of difference... It all depends on how you look at it... Even in something as small as a penny.

Jenny returns to the present. She smiles at the thought, firmly closing her hand around the penny.

Quincy and Harrison start to stand up.

QUINCY
 You know one thing that I've never been able to shake off?

HARRISON
 What?

QUINCY
 ...They never found a body.

Harrison grins at this.

HARRISON
 Well. That'd make a good story.

14 EXT. ALLEY - EVENING

14

Daniel exits the back of The Diner into the alleyway. The evening air is quiet save for the slight breeze.

He throws the trash bag into the garbage bin and wipes his hands off on his pants.

Then there's a clang from the back of the alley.

Daniel whips his head toward it and stares into the darkness.

There's nothing there.

He waits a moment. Then he shakes it off and walks back inside.

PUSH OUT of the alley. There's no one there.

Then a dime falls onto the pavement.