



Hiding A Penny, by Annie Dillard

When I was six or seven years old, growing up in Pittsburgh, I used to take a precious penny of my own and hide it for someone else to find. It was a curious compulsion; sadly, Iâ€™ve never been seized by it since. For some reason, I always â€œhidâ€• the penny along the same stretch of sidewalk up the street. I would cradle it at the roots of a sycamore, say, or in a hole left by a chipped-off piece of sidewalk. Then I would take a piece of chalk, and, starting at either end of the block, draw huge arrows leading up to the penny from both directions.

After I learned to write I labeled the arrows: SURPRISE AHEAD or MONEY

THIS WAY. I was greatly excited, during all this arrow-drawing, at the thought of the first lucky passer-by who would receive in this way, regardless of merit, a free gift from the universe. But I never lurked about. I would go straight home and not give the matter another thought, until, some months later, I would be gripped again by the impulse to hide another penny.

The world is fairly studded and strewn with pennies cast broadside from a generous hand. But â€” and this is the point â€” who gets excited by a mere penny?

It is dire poverty indeed when a man is so malnourished and fatigued that he wonâ€™t stoop to pick up a penny. But if you cultivate a healthy poverty and simplicity, so that finding a penny will literally make your day, then, since the world is in fact planted in pennies, you have with your poverty bought a lifetime of days.

It is that simple.