

# PROPHECY — A Nickel & A Doughnut

By Jim Golden — Chapter Five

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It was a beautiful spring day. The kind of a day that made living in a humid region worthwhile. Still cool from the departing winter, the fragrance of lilacs and lilies of the valley filled the air. It was a most difficult time to be a grammar school student. My already short attention span was reduced even more by the possibility of some great outdoor quest. The explorer's heart beating within me could not be stilled. The entire world was made of the material used by fruitful imaginations to create great adventures.

The back porch of our new house on Montello Avenue became the deck of a great pirate ship from which I surveyed the kingdoms I was destined to conquer. The alley behind my house became the pathway leading to the city of the evil king whose realm I had just overthrown. At its end, my coronation as the new wise and merciful benefactor awaited. Young men bowed and beautiful maidens curtsied as they sang my praises.

"Sonny, SONNY, where is your mind boy? I've been calling you for five minutes." "I don't know mom," I said. "I was just pretending..." "Never mind that now," Doris said. "I need you to do something very important for me." "What mom: I can do it, I can do it. What is it?" I shouted. "I want you to take this note and this money, don't loose it, and go to the store at the bottom of the hill. Give the note to the man in the store and bring me back the change and what he gives you." "O.K. mom, I can do it. You can count on me."

Unbelievable, she is going to let me go on a real adventure. I had never been allowed out of the yard without an adult before. Now I was actually being given not only liberty but an assignment. It was like being a secret agent or some important courier on a royal mission. Setting my face like flint towards the store I let nothing deter me. Entering the store I quickly found the man behind the counter and gave him the package I was entrusted with.

Peering over the top of his spectacles his scrutinizing gaze made me feel a little uncomfortable. "You sure your momma wrote this note boy?" "Yes sir," I said, quickly holding out my hand for the package he was about to give me. "From now on tell her to call before she sends you to buy cigarettes. I can get into trouble for selling them to a minor." His voice had softened as he reluctantly handed me the package of KOOL cigarettes.

I looked inside the bag to see just what had aroused such concern in this big man. Inside the bag I saw not only the three packs of cigarettes but a dime, a nickel and a penny. Suddenly

the overwhelming aroma of freshly baked gloriously glazed doughnuts filled my nostrils. I became fatigued from my mission. The pain of hunger began to cloud my mind and rack my body. I was almost overcome by nausea due to hunger. Slowly I reached into the bag, pulled out a nickel and said, "Mister give me a glazed doughnut please."

Outside in the alley, kneeling against the back of the store I slowly consumed my recently acquired treasure. It was truly a culinary delight. A glazed doughnut ranked in the same category with a bag of peanuts and a trip to the zoo. This one was even better because I didn't have to ask for it. I bought it all by myself. As I languished in the aftermath of my feast a strange unseen voice I had never heard before began to speak to me. In later

years I came to know this voice as my conscience.

This voice began to tell me that the nickel wasn't mine and I had stolen from my mother. Not only wasn't the nickel mine but I was never supposed to eat anything that wasn't given to me by my mother.

No matter how slow I walked or how much I meandered, the walk back up the alley to my house ended much too quickly. What was I to do? What would she think? Wait a minute, she might not say a thing. If she did I could just say I didn't know where the nickel was.

With my sweetest smile I opened the creaking back door and slowly entered the screened in back porch. "Mom, I'm home." Placing the package on the kitchen table I broke the land speed record from the kitchen table to the sand box. Trying to look like your having fun when you are miserable is a learned skill that few six year old children naturally possess.

"Sonny I am so proud of you. Did the man at the store say anything to you?" In my most cheerful voice I said, "Yes mom, he said he could get into trouble for selling me cigarettes and that you should call him next time." "Is that all he said?" Then before I could answer radar look came over my mother face. Somehow I knew she knew that I knew she knew something was wrong "What's wrong Sonny?" "Nothing mom."

She was holding the bag in her hand and for some reason she began to inspect it. "What's that sticky stuff on the bag?" "I don't know," I said sheepishly. Why is it, when we know the jig is up we keep on dancing. Looking inside the bag she pulled out a slip of white paper. After a quick glance she said, "Sonny there is a nickel missing, where is it?" "I don't know," I said.

The first time I ever jumped off the diving rocks at Great Falls I knew I had made a mistake I could never correct. With my arms and legs flailing wildly I wished desperately that I could reconsider my decision to jump. As the last words dribbled down my chin I wished that I could turn back time and do it all over again. "Tell me the truth," she said.

I don't think a more wretched six year old ever lived on Montello Avenue or on planet earth for that matter. My mother's probing patience and Sherlock Holmes inquiries soon got to the bottom of things. I think the traces of glazed topping on my upper lip and a call to the corner store where prime factors in solving the case. Even with my sorrowful confession and my mother's assurance that I was forgiven I never felt quite as trustworthy again.