



A Lucky Coin Is What You Make Of It

By:
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Paul watched Phyllis walk down the street and wondered at the fact that after all these years of competing with each other she had called today of all days. Her board meeting crisis and his bank meeting crisis had brought them together. Who knows? Perhaps she'd had a visit from Rafe as well. Paul recalled one of Buddha's sayings: *To be awake is to be amazed all the time.*

It was only one thirty, so Paul took the long way around to the lot where he'd parked. As he walked along Main Street, the feeling of déjà vu that had pervaded his whole day became almost overwhelming. It climaxed when he looked down a dark alleyway. Just past a big blue garbage Dumpster a man was stretched out on the ground under a makeshift blanket of newspapers. Paul's head spun with the odor of garbage; there was no mistaking that he'd been here before. The alcoholic was sound asleep, empty bottle not far from his head, just as it had been in the dream. Paul watched the wall for a moment; when no picture appeared, he knelt and pulled another newspaper over the man's shoulders. He knew that if he walked on down the alley, he'd see an old man and a little boy waiting at the bus stop; he also knew there was no need to go look.

Back out on Main Street Paul stopped at a newsstand for a chocolate bar. It was one forty-five. He stepped into a phone booth and dialed. "Mr. Weatherford's office, please. . . . Hi, this is Paul Peterson. Would you please let Marty know that I'll be about fifteen minutes late. Apologize for me, but I've been unavoidably detained. Thanks. Oh, sorry, one more thing. Could you check some account balances for me?"

Paul read his account numbers into the receiver and waited for a moment. Then he smiled and instructed that money be transferred into his two mortgage accounts and a receipt be given to Mr. Weatherford prior to their meeting.

The whole time he talked on the phone, his eyes never left the entrance to the alley. In his dream they had been running late for the bank meeting. He recalled the dashboard clock reading one fifty-six when Rafe stopped time for their alleyway sojourn. Paul unwrapped his chocolate bar and leaned against a lamppost. It was one fifty-one. A

police car coming down Main Street slowed at the alley's entrance, then accelerated past. Paul took a bite of chocolate.

He never saw the car. Not really. The image just sort of hung there in the back of his eyes, like the psychedelic fantasies that float by in the aftermath of a camera flash. Frozen car, frozen driver, two lines of frozen motion in the alleyway, then nothing. Gone. Just a fading flash at the back of the retinas. Or a fragment of the frontal lobes. No telling which. Had he been watching himself watching himself? Or buzzing out on chocolate? No telling.

WHETHER SOMETHING IS A RANDOM COINCIDENCE OR A MEANINGFUL CONNECTION DEPENDS UPON HOW YOU CHOOSE TO INTERPRET IT.

One thing Paul had grown to believe during his ten years of working with Shay's Point school was this: There is no such thing as a coincidence. Things always happen for a reason. Too many times the phone had rung at just the right moment, the caller offering just what he needed to keep it all together, for him to write it off to blind luck. It is only blind if you aren't looking for the connections.

Serendipity. The knack for making neat discoveries without planning to. *I might not be able to manage a shoeshine stand*, Paul thought, *but I've got serendipity and I've got luck*. He smiled at the thought, but it was true. He trusted his luck. And the more he trusted his luck, the less he had to rely upon it. No matter what happened, things would always work out for the best. What was it Rafe had said—with faith fear becomes an ally.

Paul stopped at his car door. There on the ground at his feet was a coin. He leaned over and picked up a silver dollar.

What sign might a guardian angel leave to signify that you're on the right track? What if it were a guardian angel who knew that the main thing preventing you from achieving some important goal was the fear of running out of money?

Rafe had been there.

WITH FAITH FEAR BECOMES AN ALLY.