

PENNIES

Written by

Sean Elwood

2146 W Lake Ave
Littleton, CO 80120
512.694.3399
elwood.sean@icloud.com

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Soft, serene MUSIC plays.

Family members, guests, and funeral home employees stand about the lobby and converse with each other.

Sitting on the sofa is NORMA (60s) with her purse in her hands, solemn. She watches everyone around her.

Nearby, OTTO (17) stands against a wall looking bored as ever.

CHRISTIE (40s) walks over to Otto.

CHRISTIE
Go talk to your grandmother.

OTTO
I don't want to.

CHRISTIE
This is a very hard time for her,
for everyone. She needs the
company.

OTTO
Then you go talk to her.

Christie SIGHS. She walks over to Norma, sits with her.

Otto looks the other way, down a hallway toward a room with an open door. He thinks, has an idea.

Christie touches Norma's hand gently.

CHRISTIE
How are you doing, Mom?

Norma looks at Christie with a soft smile.

CHRISTIE
You're the only one who hasn't seen
him yet.

NORMA
I don't think I need to. I know
what he looks like, honey.

CHRISTIE
That's not the point of this, Mom.
It's to help you move on.

Norma looks down at her purse in sadness.

CHRISTIE

The funeral director over there, he told me his belief that when someone passes away, their soul remains within a six foot radius of their body until they're laid to rest.

(beat)

Dad's in there, Mom. He's there, waiting for you to be with him one last time. Listening to whatever you have to say to him. One last goodbye.

(beat)

You may not see him, but he's there.

Norma squeezes her purse.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

The door opens, and Norma stands at the doorway with Christie by her side.

Norma looks at Christie, who smiles back softly.

CHRISTIE

Are you sure you don't want any of us to come in with you?

NORMA

I'm sure.

Norma takes a DEEP BREATH, and steps into the viewing room. Christie shuts the door behind her.

Norma slowly walks up to the casket, her eyes diverted from looking inside.

She reaches the casket, takes another DEEP, SHAKY BREATH. She looks down into the casket. Her eyes grow WIDE--

EXT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

(O.S.) Norma CRIES OUT.

Christie, now alert, opens the door and rushes inside--

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

--to find Norma facing away from the casket with her face buried into her hands as she CRIES.

CHRISTIE

Mom!

Christie rushes up to Norma and hugs her, to which Norma SHOVES her off. She points at the casket.

NORMA

Who did this?!

CHRISTIE

Did what?

NORMA

That!

Beyond Norma is the casket, and inside is her husband, PAUL, with PENNIES ON HIS EYES.

NORMA

Is this some kind of sick joke?!

All the funeral guests look inside the viewing room.

NORMA

My husband is dead and someone is playing a prank?!

Christie walks up to Norma.

CHRISTIE

Mom, I'm so sorry. I'll find out who did this--

Norma PUSHES Christie away.

NORMA

Don't touch me. You told me to come in here--

She SNATCHES the pennies off of Paul's eyes and SHOVES them in Christie's face.

NORMA

--and this is how I'm going to remember him!?

She tosses the pennies to the floor.

She looks from Christie to the rest of the guests and GRUNTS in frustration, storms out of the viewing room.

Christie stands awkwardly in the middle of the viewing room, the casket behind her.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Norma's car drives out of the parking lot while Christie watches.

A FUNERAL DIRECTOR walks up to Christie.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
I can understand why she's upset.

CHRISTIE
Who would do such a thing?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
It's actually a tradition, placing pennies on the eyes or in the mouth of the dead. Some believe it provides payment for the soul to travel across River Styx and into the afterlife.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

Otto bends down and picks up the two pennies. He stands with a devilish smile on his face. He CHUCKLES.

OTTO
Worth it.

Christie grabs Otto by the ear. He YELPS in pain.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

Christie drags Otto through the funeral home by his ear.

CHRISTIE
I knew this was all your doing.

OTTO
Ow! Ow! It was just a joke!

CHRISTIE
You're apologizing to Grandma first thing tomorrow morning.

OTTO
Where are we going?!

CHRISTIE
Home.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Otto walks into the bedroom dressed in pajamas. He grabs his suit jacket off of his desk chair and the two pennies fall out of the pocket.

The pennies roll beneath the bed. He SCOFFS, rolls his eyes.

Otto hangs up his suit jacket in the closet and climbs into bed. He turns the lamp off--

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Otto sleeps soundly--

The house CREAKS, waking him up.

Otto looks up, out the bedroom door and into the hallway. Someone is there.

Otto slowly sits up, reaches for the bedside table lamp.

The figure in the hallway MOVES.

Otto's eyes grow wide.

CLICK. The lamp doesn't illuminate. Otto tries again, CLICK, but to no avail.

The figure in the hall turns its head--

TWO EYES GLOW IN THE DARK--

Otto HIDES beneath the sheets.

UNDER THE SHEETS

SOMEONE walks into the bedroom, FOOTSTEPS CREAK on the floor.

Deep, raspy BREATHS.

Louder and LOUDER.

Otto's BREATHING turns to HYPERVENTILATION.

A shadow GLIDES along the sheets.

PAUL (O.S.)
(raspy, deep)
WHERE...ARE...THEY...?

Footsteps DRAG along the floor as this FIGURE moves about the room.

PAUL (O.S.)
(raspy, deep)
I KNOW...YOU TOOK THEM...

Otto covers his mouth to silence his BREATHING.

PAUL (O.S.)
(raspy, deep)
I...NEED...THEM...

The figure continues to DRAG around the room.

PAUL (O.S.)
(raspy, deep)
IF YOU DON'T GIVE THEM BACK...I
WILL HAVE TO TAKE...SOMETHING
ELSE...

Everything becomes SILENT...

Otto waits, then slowly pulls the blankets away from his face...

Nothing is there.

He looks around the room. It's empty. He grabs his phone, turns on the flashlight.

Otto jumps out of bed, looks underneath for the pennies.

Eureka! They're still there!

Otto reaches for the pennies. They're far beneath the bed. He struggles to reach for them, but manages to grab them.

He pulls the pennies toward him, but freezes when he notices TWO FEET on the other side of the bed, shining in the flashlight beam.

He slowly rises from the floor to check above the bed--

Nobody is there.

He looks back beneath the bed.

PAUL IS BENEATH THE BED, HIS PALE, DEAD FACE IN THE BEAM OF THE FLASHLIGHT!

Otto SCREAMS--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HOME - DAY

The morning sun shines in the peaceful, still air. Birds chirp happily. Calm. Serene.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

A KNOCK at the bedroom door.

CHRISTIE (O.S.)
Otto, honey, time to get up. The service starts in two hours.

No answer. The door opens and Christie pokes her head in.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
Hey! Wake up!

Otto remains asleep in bed.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
Alright, if you're not out of bed in fifteen, then you're in for a rude awakening. Literally.

Christie shuts the door.

REVEAL: Otto, still in bed. Pale. Dead. Mouth open wide in a frozen scream. And PENNIES ON HIS EYES.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.