

COINS

Molly McGovern and I were making out in the student parking lot of our high school, getting all hot and heavy in the back of her mother's Volvo, when a coin passed from her tongue to mine, and in the minutes that followed we played a great game of how long we could keep this coin moving back and forth between our tongues. It was very sensual, despite the metallic taste that filled our mouths and kept us from wanting to swallow. When we were done kissing that first time, I held the coin in the palm of my hand and smiled. "That was really cool," I said. "I never would have thought to put a nickel in my mouth before I kissed someone."

"What do you mean?" asked Molly. "I thought that was you."

"Wasn't me," I said.

We stared at each other for a few moments, waiting for the other to own up to it, but neither of us did.

"I guess that was some kiss," I said to Molly.

"Guess so," she said, gathering her shaggy blonde hair into a ponytail.

We started up again, hotter and heavier; only this time it was a quarter that appeared on our tongues, and we were forced to stop, due to its size.

"Molly," I said. "How are you doing that?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing," she said.

"Open your mouth," I said.

She opened wide and moved her tongue in all directions to prove that her mouth was empty. Then I did the same for her. Thirty cents worth of coin jingled in my loosely clenched fist. The whole time I was thinking this girl is magic. And probably she was thinking the same about me. It was such a lucky thing to experience with someone else. Lucky and strange. My hand wouldn't stop jingling the coins.

We kissed three more times—a nickel, a quarter, and a dime. The first two kisses were wonderful. Thirty more cents! And how fortunate we were to be doing this in a Volvo! The car was brand new and smelled of an older woman's perfume. Stickers on the dashboard hadn't been scraped off yet.

But then the dime showed up with its smallness, making it hard to pass back and forth with any amount of grace. We kept having to stop and start and stop again, the dime falling between us, slick with our saliva, until finally we stopped altogether, aware that our joined clumsiness had made us ugly somehow.

We sat in silence for a very long time, wiping our mouths on our sleeves. I did not know then that I would grow old thinking about Molly McGovern; that I would think of her at weddings and graduations and funerals. I did not recognize the face of my own luck when she took half of the coins and left me with the other half. The dime we agreed to leave on the pavement. Nothing was ever that easy again.