

# Coins

by Brian Michael Barbeito

I was reading *The Transmission of Doubt* by Adi Da, and since it was just shy of five hundred pages, I had become tired and needed air. It was funny because Eglington Square Mall had only one floor and was more like a mini mall than anything, with a beer store on one side, and inside, the liquor store right beside the library. I boosted books as I needed them, from the library, because I always had large fines for tardy returns or no returns. After a few polite notices the letters would come that said things such as, *As of such and such date, our records indicate that you have not returned A, B, C, D, and E. If you do not return A, B, C, D, and E, you will be required to pay one hundred and seventeen dollars and forty seven cents. This is the total cost that the library has paid to acquire A, B, C, D, and E.* I never tried to steal anything from the liquor store. That was when you could still smoke in malls, and the old men stayed in chairs at antiseptic laced tables all day wiling away their time. Some had prayer beads, and I used to watch that, because there was something about the beads, some brown, some bordering on a sort of beige. Well, they pawed at the beads, recited something to themselves and sometimes they just held them. I like those beads, but if somehow I had acquired a set of my own, it would be disingenuous and not the right thing at all. I too wanted to believe in something, to have the proverbial anchor that people talked about, though I didn't think there was an anchor in Proverbs. But it was not to be anyways. I didn't even have a boat. So I waited and watched and counted quarters and other change. I saw one day that Jude was there, and we talked and he said, *If you got another few dollars we can go in and buy something together.* I said, *Nah.* And when he left I used the coins that I did have and just got two king cans of Heineken and then left the men and the prayer beads and those starch white tables so unwelcoming. I was kind of a tabula rasa myself, and I walked along the back walkways out to the residential crescents and such in order to head back to where I had been in

wait, in a sort of quietude that was supposed to be a gestation period for something grander but was instead just a low-volume limbo that stayed always. At least I had the two Heinekens, and Adi Da. Between the couch cushions there was probably, or at the least possibly, some more coins waiting for air.

