

# The **TEN CENT** Treasure



**Sean McCartney**

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By

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Gunnison River-North Rim of Black Canyon, Colorado

"They are only dimes," Jackson Miller said as he cleaned water from his glasses.

"That's true," Tommy Reed said, "but can you imagine how much they must be worth now?"

"Isn't this like the old joke," Jackson said, "you know, how much is a two dollar bill worth and the answer is two dollars?"

"Paper isn't silver," Tommy said and smiled at his friend as he continued using his custom-made sifter to dredge through the river. "You could be by yourself like Chris," he said. "Besides, my Uncle Jack said this is the best place to look for the dimes."

"Then why isn't he here?" Jackson asked.

"He's in Florida with his crew working on a Spanish Galleon. He'll be here tomorrow to pick us up."

"Are you sure about these dimes?" Jackson said.

Tommy stepped out of the river, pulled a rag from his leather satchel and dried his hands.

"In 1903 the Denver mint sent six wooden kegs of dimes by wagon trains to Phoenix. There was a bad storm and the wagons never made it. They were lost somewhere between this canyon and Montrose."

"How do you know?" Jackson asked.

"Treasure hunters found the remains of four wagons around this area and a lot of dimes in the river."

"So if the dimes have been found why are we here?"

"They didn't find them all," Tommy said smiling. "In fact legend has it that the bulk of the dimes were hidden from treasure hunters somewhere in the canyon."

"So you think we can find something that's been lost for over 100 years?" Jackson said.

"Are we the Treasure Hunters Club or what?"

"Most of the time it's what," Jackson said laughing.

"Just keep looking," Tommy said and bounded back into the river.

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A mile up the canyon another treasure hunter was looking for the same loot-an old nemesis of the Treasure Hunters Club, named Slider. He watched the teenagers dredge the river by hand.

"Young fools," he said.

One of the three men working for him approached. "Boss, why are we following a bunch of kids? I mean don't we want "Diamond" Jack Reed?"

Slider ran his hand through his dark hair and rubbed his unshaven face. He shook his head feeling his age but the smoldering desire for revenge kept him focused.

"I owe Jack Reed," he snarled.

"His nephew to?"

"Small steps lead to redemption," Slider said. "I will reclaim what Jack Reed stole from me years ago and if I have to start with his nephew and his punk friends then so be it."

Slider spit on the ground and rubbed it in with his boot.

"Now keep on them and don't ever question me again."

\* \* \* \*

Chris Henderson stood near some old oak trees and scanned the area near the water's edge. He noticed a group

of small stones stacked like a pyramid against a larger boulder.

Chris stared at the formation and studied it. Looks man-made, he thought and ran toward the rocks.

On a hilltop one of Slider's men saw Chris and pulled his walkie-talkie.

"One of the kids is running up the river," he said.

"Follow him," Slider replied.

\* \* \* \*

The cell phone on Tommy's belt went off.

"Yes, Chris," Tommy said. "You're kidding," he smiled.

"We are on our way." Tommy closed the phone. "He found it."

\* \* \* \*

"The kid is stacking small boxes. Hold on," Slider's man said. He spotted two canoes moving up the river. "The others are coming."

Slider realized the search was over.

"Get the men into position and don't go until my signal."

"Yes, sir."

\* \* \* \*

Tommy and Jackson worked their canoes onto a small beach area near Chris's.

Running to Chris they stopped as he stood before them holding a handful of dimes.

"Where did you find them?" Tommy asked.

"They were hidden inside a small cave surrounded by rocks. Strange thing was, when I found them, they were all in neatly stacked boxes." Chris motioned for them to follow, "You've got to see this." The group walked a bit and saw the rocks. "Move those stones and see for yourself," he said.

Tommy moved the small stones and saw stacks of cigar style boxes in neat rows.

"I don't believe this," Tommy said.

"Why?" Jackson asked.

"The dimes had to be scattered everywhere. This is the work of more than one person."

"Didn't you say some treasure hunters found some dimes by the river?" Jackson said.

"Yeah, but why hide them inside a small cave?" Tommy wondered.

Jackson thought for a minute. "Maybe a treasure hunter put them there to keep safe and forgot where he left them."

"Could be," Tommy said. "But what kind of a treasure hunter would do something like that?"

"A stupid one," a voice said.

The boys turned and saw the imposing Slider flanked by three other men.

"So we meet again?" he said.

"Slider," Tommy said disgusted. "I should have known you would come here. Late, as usual."

"Nice to see all of you again," Slider said. "Where is your famous treasure hunting Uncle Jack?" Slider asked.

"Coming tomorrow to pick us up," Tommy said.

"Let's see, no uncle until tomorrow," Slider smiled, "I think I will be taking that treasure now."

"Slider," Tommy began, "we have already made the find and according to treasure hunter rules ..."

Slider cut him off. "Do you think I care about treasure hunter rules? I'll bet you don't even know how much those dimes are worth."

"Um, ten cents?" Chris answered.

Slider's crew laughed and he glared at them.

"Funny," Slider said, not laughing. "We are talking a million bucks and change."

Jackson blurted out, "More like three point two million and change," he cocked his head and said, "three million, two hundred and sixty seven thousand one hundred and sixty four...to be precise."

Slider looked at Jackson. "Are you the smart one?"

Jackson shook his head no. He lied.

"Then shut up. This has taken up entirely too much time," Slider said. "I will take the dimes now." Slider motioned to his men, "Start packing the boxes in the canoes."

"You're taking our canoes too?" Tommy said.

"Yes," Slider replied coldly. "Want to stop us?"

Slider's crew stacked the cigar boxes into two of the three canoes while he supervised.

Jackson leaned over to Tommy and whispered, "What do you want to do?"

"He is not going to take those dimes," Tommy said. "As soon as his men are done we break for the boats."

Jackson nodded to Chris who responded in kind.

"I am sure you have already thought of this Slider, but with the extra weight of the dimes you are going to have a tough time navigating the canoes through the rapids," Jackson said.

"I thought you were not smart?"

"I'm not. I just think you might have some trouble."

"We can handle it," Slider said.

One of Slider's men approached, "All the boxes are loaded sir."

"See now that wasn't so," Slider stopped in mid-sentence as the Treasure Hunters Club sped past him, pushed the canoes into the water and started down the river.

"Get them!" Slider screamed.

\* \* \* \*

Chris and Tommy paddled fast ahead of Jackson.

"Tommy," Chris said between strokes, "no matter how far ahead we get, Jackson is right, we'll never get past the rapids."

"Leave that to me," Tommy said.

Slider and his men started after the group in the remaining canoe.

"We're almost to the rapids," Chris yelled, "you got a plan?"

Tommy pulled a rope from his backpack. "When we get close to one of those old oak stumps I'm going to throw the rope around it. That should hold us, while Slider and his goons drift down river."

"What about Jackson?"

"I've got enough slack for him," Tommy said. "But I am going to need all of your strength for this one."

"No problem," Chris said.

The canoes started to bounce against the force of the water. Foam spilled into the boats.

"Any time now," Chris yelled. "The current is getting stronger."

Tommy swung the rope and threw it toward an oak stump. The rope wrapped around the stump and Tommy pulled hard.

"Hang on," Tommy yelled to Chris and flipped him part of the rope.

When the slack of the rope ran out it tightened around the stump and stopped the canoe causing it to hop on the water. Waves slammed against the boat as water flowed over the side.

"Tommy we've lost some of the boxes," Chris said his face strained.

"Tommy," Jackson yelled, "throw me the rest of the rope."

Tommy released his right hand and felt the canoe slip a bit.

"I got it," Chris said, "just get Jackson."

Tommy took the slack of the rope and threw it toward Jackson.

The young man grabbed the rope and wrapped it around his forearm and braced himself.

The water took the canoe a few feet and then it stopped. Jackson held the rope tightly as the water's speed increased.

"Hang on!" Tommy yelled over the fury of the foaming river.

Slider and his crew got closer and reached out for Jackson's canoe but the rush of waves pushed them away.

"Paddle back to them," Slider screamed as his men fought against the rapids.

"We can't," one man said. "The water is too..." He never finished the sentence. The canoe capsized, dumping the men into the raging water.

The Treasure Hunters Club watched as the river busted the canoe to pieces. None of the men resurfaced.

"Okay, let's pull to shore," Tommy said.

"Tommy!" Jackson yelled, "The rope is not going to hold!"

Tommy turned and saw the last thread of rope snap and Jackson and his canoe drifted away.

"Jump," Tommy said. "I'll throw you more rope. Just jump!"

"But the dimes?" Jackson said.

"Forget about them," Tommy yelled. "Jump!"

Jackson closed his eyes and leapt into the raging waters. The current's angry hands grabbed him just as Tommy's rope arrived, bouncing off his head.

Jackson blindly grabbed the lasso and wrapped it around his waist. Chris and Tommy pulled him into the boat.

Jackson's canoe drifted aimlessly into the rapids with the boxes of dimes falling off along the way.

"Well at least we have some of the dimes," Chris said.

"True," Tommy said. "Are you all right?"

As Jackson nodded the back end of the canoe ripped off taking the boxes of dimes with it.

"No!" Tommy shouted and lunged for the last box. But it slipped from his wet hands.

The group clung to the rope as the water continued its assault.

"Chris, can you get us to shore?" Tommy gasped as water slapped his face.

"I'm trying," Chris said his arms bulging, "but I am going to need your help."

Using every muscle in their bodies the club members pulled themselves to shore.

They all lay down and breathed sighs of relief. Finally, Tommy looked up and stared at the rapids and shook his head.

"The Gunnison River gets the ten-cent treasure," Jackson said.

"Looks that way," Tommy said.

"Let's go back to camp and get some dry clothes,"  
Chris said. "We leave tomorrow."

The Treasure Hunters Club started up the hill and  
headed back to their camp.

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A mile further down the river Slider dragged his tired  
and beaten body out of the water. He rose slowly, cursed  
the Treasure Hunters Club and walked back to his own  
camp...alone.

The End

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