

Pennies

Background: The nice thing about writing songs is being able to embellish reality to create a story. The song ends up not exactly factual, but not pure fiction either, just the truth stretched a bit. Springsteen is a master of it. He made a tiny boardwalk in the average beach town of Asbury Park seem like the Vegas strip with a set of real-life characters emulating West Side Story on a daily basis. None of it is untrue, probably, at least not in his recollection, but it's not entirely real either. Taking on the full perspective of someone else is wild too. Hell, Bruce once wrote a song where serial killer Charles Starkweather is the narrator!

Everything in this song is true, just a bit stretched and embellished.

This is a song themed around pennies, but it's about various aspects and perspectives of growing up. Some of it is true, some pure cliché, and some exaggeration, all leading up to the story of a young classmate who passed away, which is true save for her name.

In second grade, a classmate developed brain cancer. She left our class, had brain surgery, and came back a while later to visit us wearing a ski cap to cover her shaven head and bandages. She never fully returned to school. Despite the surgery, she died in April that year shortly after my birthday. She was 7. She just...disappeared. Her name was Tina, not Penny, but, well, "Tina" didn't rhyme nor fit the theme of the song. It was hard to understand something so tragic like this when we were so young. It's even harder now as a parent. But I remember the funeral, and in particular the very odd, uplifting, cheery song they strangely chose for the entrance to a child's funeral. It's been 47 years, and she still crosses my mind once in a while for no reason. It's strange to think that she still lives on in the memories of people this long afterwards and not directly connected with her family, and that they don't even know this. Outside of her family, she's lost in time. Or is she?

And of course there's a train in this song. I like trains, as do most songwriters given how often they show up in songs. They make for a great metaphor and also contain a bit of lost Americana nostalgia. "Sleepers" are the small wooden cross beams laid atop the gravel beneath the rails to allow the train load to distribute to a wider area; they ultimately are what supports the train. It's not always obvious as to who or what is really carrying a burden.

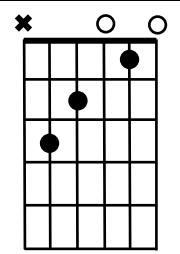
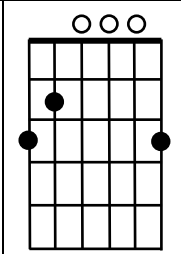
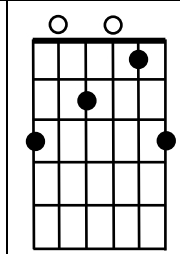
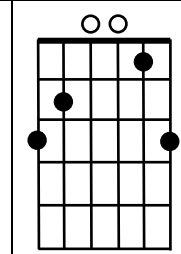
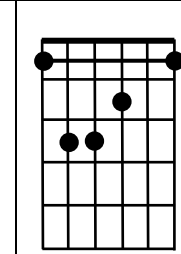
Written: 2023

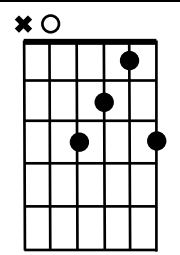
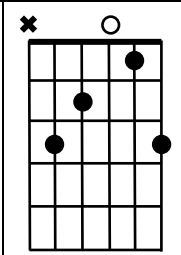
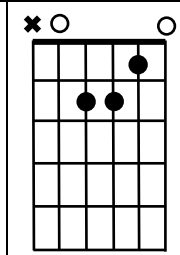
Pennies

Arr.	Key	Time	Tuning	Tempo	Style	Capo
1	G	4/4	Standard	135	Jangly rock like the Byrds, Petty, Wallflowers	2

Arrangement	1
Intro	Intro and transition from chorus back to verse: Am F C G Gsus6/9 G
Verse	C G Gsus6/9 G Gsus6/9 x2 F C G Gsus6/9
Chorus	Fadd9 Cmaj x3 G Gsus6/9 Fadd9 Cmaj x3 G Gsus6/9
Bridge	Am F C G Gsus6/9 G x2

Chords Used in this Song

C	G	Gsus6/9	Gadd11	F
				

Fadd9	Cmaj	Am
		

Pennies

Verse

C
A penny for your thoughts
G Gsus6/9 G
That's all I can afford today
C
I know you can't be bought
G Gsus6/9 G
But it's a small price to pay
Am
You know the old cliches
F
And all the lessons learned
C
For every penny saved
G Gsus6/9 G
You spend many pennies earned

Verse

C
We used to pitch pennies
G Gsus6/9 G
In the grade school halls
C
Until the teachers caught us
G Gsus6/9 G
Their shouts echoed off the walls
Am
Summers we'd go to this coal town
F
It was mostly blue collar
C
They had penny candy stores
G Gsus6/9 G
Fill up a bag for a dollar

Chorus

Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Pennies that we pinched
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Pennies we picked up
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
We worked all day
 G Gsus6/9
Still felt so outta luck
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Spinning in circles
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Falling off the ground
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
You wanna cut your losses
 G Gsus6/9
But you're in for the pound

Verse

C
We grew up on the east side
 G **Gsus6/9 G**
Just below the tracks
C
They split the city
 G **Gsus6/9 G**
You could feel the cracks
Am
We put pennies on the rails
 F
Right in the train's route
 C
Then watch the train pass by
 G Gsus6/9 G
Flatten those pennies out

Chorus

Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Pennies on the tracks
Fadd9 **Cmaj**

Hidden in the grooves
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Slipping through the cracks
 G Gsus6/9
Lost as she moves
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Pennies on the tracks
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Along the rails she rode
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
The burden's on her back
 G Gsus6/9
But sleepers carry the load

Interlude

Bridge
Am
Her nickname was Penny
 F
Short for Penelope Rayne
 C
She died of brain cancer
 G Gsus6/9 G
In just the second grade
 Am
At the time it was too much
 F
For us kids to comprehend
 C
But I remember that funeral song
 G Gsus6/9 G
And the smell of burning incense

Chorus
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Penny went to Heaven
Fadd9 **Cmaj**
Enter, Rejoice and Come In
Fadd9 **Cmaj**

She was only 7

G Gsus6/9

Life had yet to begin

Fadd9 Cmaj

Pennies fell from Heaven

Fadd9 Cmaj

Falling like the spring rain

Fadd9 Cmaj

She never had a childhood

G Gsus6/9

But she's out of pain

Pennies

Verse

A penny for your thoughts
That's all I can afford today
I know you can't be bought
But it's a small price to pay
You know the old cliches
And all the lessons learned
For every penny saved
You spend many pennies earned

Verse

We used to pitch pennies
In the grade school halls
Until the teachers caught us
Their shouts echoed off the walls
Summers we'd go to this coal town
It was mostly blue collar
They had penny candy stores
Fill up a bag for a dollar

Chorus

Pennies that we pinched
Pennies we picked up
We worked all day
Still felt so outta luck
Spinning in circles
Falling off the ground
You wanna cut your losses
But you're in for the pound

Verse

We grew up on the east side
Just below the tracks
They split the city
You could feel the cracks
We put pennies on the rails
Right in the train's route
Then watch the train pass by
Flatten those pennies out

Chorus

Pennies on the tracks
Hidden in the grooves
Slipping through the cracks
Lost as she moves
Pennies on the tracks
Along the rails she rode
The burden's on her back
But sleepers carry the load

Interlude**Bridge**

Her nickname was Penny
Short for Penelope Rayne
She died of brain cancer
In just the second grade
At the time it was too much
For us kids to comprehend
But I remember that funeral song
And the smell of burning incense

Chorus

Penny went to Heaven
Enter, Rejoice and Come In
She was only 7
Life had yet to begin
Pennies fell from Heaven
Falling like the spring rain
She never had a childhood
But she's out of pain

Pennies

<p>Capo on 2</p> <p>Verse G Gsus6/9 G Gsus6/9 x2 Am F C G Gsus6/9</p>	<p>Chorus Fadd9 Cmaj x3 G Gsus6/9 Fadd9 Cmaj x3 G Gsus6/9</p> <p>Bridge: Am F C G Gsus6/9 G x2</p>
<p>Verse 1 A penny for your thoughts That's all I can afford today I know you can't be bought But it's a small price to pay You know the old cliches And all the lessons learned For every penny saved You spend many pennies earned</p>	<p>Chorus 2 Pennies on the tracks Hidden in the grooves Slipping through the cracks Lost as she moves Pennies on the tracks Along the rails she rode The burden's on her back But sleepers carry the load</p>
<p>Verse 2 We used to pitch pennies In the grade school halls Until the teachers caught us Their shouts echoed off the walls Summers we'd go to this coal town It was mostly blue collar They had penny candy stores Fill up a bag for a dollar</p>	<p>Interlude / Solo</p> <p>Bridge Her nickname was Penny Short for Penelope Rayne She died of brain cancer In just the second grade At the time it was too much For us kids to comprehend But I remember that funeral song And the smell of burning incense</p>
<p>Chorus 1 Pennies that we pinched Pennies we picked up We worked all day Still felt so outta luck Spinning in circles Falling off the ground You wanna cut your losses But you're in for the pound</p>	<p>Chorus 3 Penny went to Heaven Enter, Rejoice and Come In She was only 7 Life had yet to begin Pennies fell from Heaven Falling like the spring rain She never had a childhood But she's out of pain</p>
<p>Verse 3 We grew up on the east side Just below the tracks They split the city You could feel the cracks We put pennies on the rails Right in the train's route Then watch the train pass by Flatten those pennies out</p>	