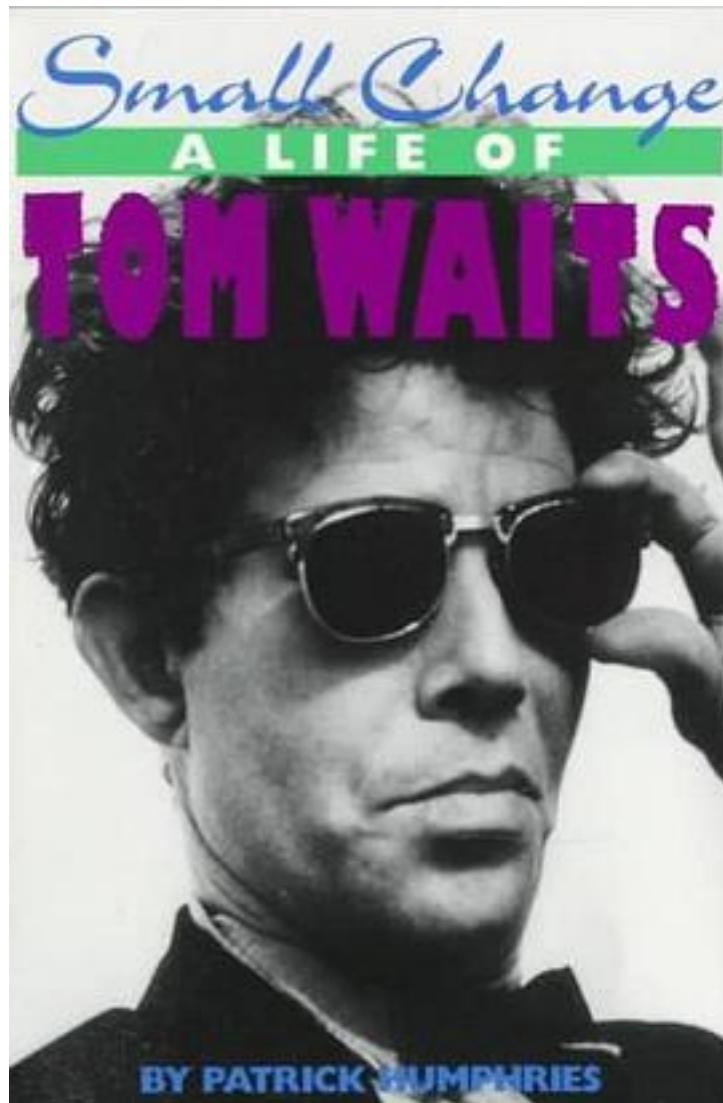


Small Change



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In 1965 Penny Burford takes a single nickel from her husband's overflowing mound of change on the bedroom dresser and hesitantly slips it into the pocket of her housedress. He won't miss it, she decides. With that single act Penny changes the course of her life -- and the lives of untold others. Roy is a good husband, Penny reminds herself, but he can pinch a nickel until Thomas Jefferson hollers "Uncle." A hard, dominating man, he bristles when Penny offers to roll the coins -- no wife of his needs to waste time rolling mere pennies. Penny has never kept a secret from her husband, but as her hoard of castaway change grows, she discovers that having money of her own gives her the power to make her own decisions. Beginning with something as small as a furtive trip to a fast-food restaurant in a Georgia town, she finds that small change can eventually lead to big changes. Thirty-four years later, Roy finds a check for \$1,500 drawn on an account bearing only Penny's name. He is bewildered, wondering how his wife, who has never worked outside their home in her entire life, managed to come by so much money. His quest to unravel this mystery leads him to other discoveries about the woman he thought he knew so well. Roy learns just how many lives Penny has touched and just how well his wife had known his secrets all those years -- and her example shows him how to begin life anew. Small Change is a deceptively simple story that explores the human condition in a rich emotional portrait. A remarkable tale of an ordinary housewife who leaves an extraordinary legacy, it reminds us of the true spirit of charity, the effects of poverty, and the tragic self-silencing that limits the richness of far too many women's lives.

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