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I Was Betrayed: I was eight or nine years old. In those days, my mother often took me along when she went shopping in downtown Chicago. I hated going downtown with my mother, being schlepped from store to store, even if she was buying me something. Some trips, I got left in a special room for children at Marshall Field's department store. There I sat at a small table, where I could hammer small geometric shapes into the cork top of the table, using tiny nails and a mallet. Oh, what peaceful hours away from my mother!

I asked where we were going, by way of complaining about being dragged from store to store. We are only going to one place, my mother assured me, naming it to give her assurances some heft. Having won that much of a victory, off I went. When we left the only one place we were going to, it turned out that there was yet another place we had to go. Lied to again and believed it again! I was furious.

At that time, throughout my extensive family of two sisters, twenty-four first cousins, and nine aunts and uncles (all my mother's side of the family), I was well known as a misbehaved and unruly child. Someone had given my mother the apparently sound advice to ask the help of a psychiatrist, and that is where we were going, the true destination of the trip – all of which I learned only years later, of course.

In the psychiatrist's office is where I finally understood that my mother's assurance that we were going to only one place was designed to conceal her guilty knowledge of the true reason for the trip, which was to see this man in this office. I didn't understand the purpose, but I did understand that I had been had!

Honor demanded nothing less than the maximum objection. I left the office and kept walking. Eventually, I wound up on Wabash and Madison, where I was sure my mother would inevitably arrive on her way home. We had come downtown by way of the elevated train, the "L" as it is called in Chicago. The L forms an ellipse that encircles downtown Chicago, which for that reason is called the "Loop."

As evening fell, streetcars and autos filled Wabash Avenue. L trains came and went on the tracks above the street. Thousands of people emerged from nearby buildings. My mother was not among them. I stood at the southeast corner of Wabash and Madison and cried. Boy did I cry!

I wasn't crying because my mother hadn't showed. I was crying because L fare for a person under twelve years of age was three cents, and I didn't have a penny in my pocket.

Finally, a kind lady stopped and asked me what's the matter. I explained that I had gotten separated from my mother and didn't have any money for L fare to get home. Unfortunately, despite my succinct and cogent description of my predicament, I was blubbering so badly that the kind woman didn't understand a word I said. She walked on. I suppose that in misfortunes not of one's own doing, an attempt to help is all that one owes to the victim. After that, one who is beyond help may be guiltlessly abandoned.

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After a while a second kind lady stopped and asked me what's the matter. I am nothing if not a fast learner. I mastered my blubbing enough to make sure that I was understood. This kind lady gave me a nickel.

In due course, I arrived home – after dark and after dinner. My mother fed me and said nothing about the events of the day. I learned much later that the psychiatrist had advised her not to make a big deal out of my running away, so as not to encourage my unruly behavior.

When I was getting ready for bed, my mother could hold out no longer. “Nu, Teddy,” she asked, “what did you get out of it?”

In the open palm of my left hand I displayed what was left of the kind lady's nickel. “Two cents,” I said.