

1940 What I Wanted

by Estelle Bruno

When I was a kid we lived in Queens, a suburb outside of New York City.

It would take about an hour to walk to the subway closest to home. I was 12 and had day dreams of going to Central Park in the city just to see that park's zoo.

Moma wouldn't take me, my older siblings wouldn't either.

They had their own busy lives to attend to and couldn't be bothered with me, the baby in this huge family. But this ache wouldn't leave me. I would lie in bed and dream about the animals like the ones in books. I wanted to pet them and love them.

So, one day I made a plan:

- 1 steal 2 dimes from Moma's change cup
- 2 walk at least 5 miles to reach that subway
- 3 when I got there, ask the lady in the change booth which train would take me to the city (she told me)
- 4 when we reached the city, ask people "how do I get to central park zoo?" (I was pointed in the right direction)
- 5 I asked and asked people, each time I crossed a street, so I would be sure I was going in the right direction
- 6 I finally got there. Again I had to ask where is the zoo? I found it. I saw some seals, but was so scared I don't think I stayed more than a few minutes, afraid I wouldn't find my way back to the train and home
- 7 I repeated the same scenario, asking for directions to the subway, holding on tightly to my dime so I wouldn't lose it

I did get home, secretly proud but still scared of what I had done. I never told a single soul about my secret trip.

