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COVER PAINTING BY CHESLEY BONESTELL

(1380 miles out from earth on the way to Mars. Ships in plane of ecliptic. South America below. Isthmus of Panama in upper distance.)
Painting from "The Exploration of Mars," by Werner von Braun, Willy Ley, and Chesley Bonestell. To be published soon by The Viking Press.

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Science-fantasy represents only a small part of Miriam Allen deFord's prolific and varied output. Of all the many topics she's treated, she's probably best known for her skillful stories of crime, fictional and factual; now she brings us a criminous fantasy, in which an adventure (or one might, like Moberley and Jourdain, capitalize that to An Adventure) enables an elderly woman to save a girl from a snatch that has gone awry in time.

Martie and I

by MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD

I KNEW IT ALL, THE MINUTE I SAW the man again — one of the two who were in the doorway that day. I saw him downtown, when I was on my way to police headquarters to report Martie missing. It all came flooding back to me, just as clear as if it had happened yesterday instead of nearly 50 years ago.

And Martie had been gone for three days.

I had to rescue Martie. Nobody else could do it — nobody else could understand what had happened to her. But I realized at once that if I told the police about seeing that man, they'd ask right away why I connected him with Martie. And then if I told them the truth, they would simply lock me up as insane. The man was obviously not more than 30 years old.

Of course I could have pretended that I'd seen them together once —

and heavens knows she's been running around with some pretty awful characters — but I knew what would happen next if I did that. They'd give me pictures to look at from the rogues' gallery, and then if I recognized the man — and I knew he must be a member of some criminal gang — they'd pull him in and question him; they'd have me down to identify him, and of course he'd say he'd never heard of her, and ask me when and where I ever saw them together. And naturally, I never did. It was *me* he was with, that day when I was twenty-one instead of 69. So they'd have to let him go for lack of evidence, and that would warn the gang — and if Martie was still alive, that would finish it.

Please believe me, Martie isn't truly a bad girl. I know; I ought to know. I've raised her since she was two. She's wild, perhaps, and dis-

contented and rebellious, but I'll never believe she's done anything really wrong. She got into bad company, working in that restaurant — the kind of people she was ashamed to let me meet. And way back in high school, she'd stopped bringing even her nice friends home. I could understand it, though it hurt. When Joe bought this house, it was a nice house in a nice neighborhood. But the town has grown so, with all the new workers coming in during the war, that now this street is next door to a slum, and the house is shabby and run down too. It's no home for a girl like Martie. But it's all I have since Joe passed away, and even if I become the last respectable person left in the block, this is where I'll have to live till I die.

I oughtn't to say, perhaps, how pretty Martie is, because she's the spitting image of me when I was her age — but I guess that doesn't matter, now I'm old. She's always been just as loving and sweet to me as she could be. But there's no getting away from it; a grandmother is no fit person to raise a child all alone. There's too much gap between the generations; and I'd raised my own and it was hard to have to start all over again. I had no choice, though. Gertrude was our only child, and when she and her husband, Fred, were killed in that bus crash there was nobody else to look after Martie. Joe had been gone five years, then.

I did everything I could for her. She had the same things as other

girls, and she had proper food and I taught her good manners and sent her to church and Sunday school. And I loved her — I do love her. Only you can't expect much in the way of confidences between a girl of twenty-two and a woman of nearly 70. I wanted her to do office or store work, or get in some nice trade like being a beautician, and I never approved of her working in that showy restaurant — but how could I stop her? I scolded a lot at first, when she began keeping such dreadful hours, and when men I didn't like the looks of at all began driving up to the door and never even got out but just honked till she flew out to drive off with them. She was using too much make-up, too, and I thought it was terrible when she bleached her pretty light brown hair that was just like mine used to be. But scolding would only have driven her away from me altogether, so I kept my mouth shut after a while and just stood by to be there if she needed me.

And now she did need me.

And now I was sure that that strange, impossible thing, that happened to me so long ago, in some queer outlandish way was the explanation of what had happened to her.

But nobody, nobody on earth, would believe me.

I kept remembering how for a week before she disappeared she would come home every night after work and mope around the house. I

could see she was worried about something, and finally I said, "Martie, is anything wrong?" "Certainly not!" she snapped at me; and then she kind of got hold of herself and laughed and put her arm around me and said, "That's all the gratitude I get for being a good girl and staying home with you for a change!" But I didn't like the laugh, and I screwed up my courage and asked, "Martie, are you in trouble?"

The tears came to her eyes — and I hadn't seen Martie cry since she was ten. She kissed me and laughed again — it was a real laugh this time — and said, "Not the kind you're afraid of, you dear old-fashioned thing! I can take care of myself."

There was a pause, and then she said, very low, "Or can I? What worries me is, I know too much."

She shut up then like a clam, and not another word could I get out of her.

It was only two days later that she didn't come home all night.

That had happened once or twice before, and I didn't get really scared till the next afternoon, when the manager of that restaurant called up and wanted to know why she hadn't come to work. I told a lie for her, said she wasn't feeling well and would be in the next day — but she'd never missed work before. I didn't know what to do. Maybe, I thought, she'd just got into some party or something that had lasted so late she'd stayed with one of her girl friends. Then she'd surely be

home soon or at least would call me. But it got to be evening, and she hadn't. I went out and bought a paper and went over it column by column to see if there was news of any auto accident or anything like that, but there wasn't any with a Marta Wood involved — or with any unidentified girl. To tell the truth, I was afraid to phone the hospitals or the police; in the bottom of my heart was the dread that at last the way she's been going on had caught up with her. Every time I thought of the possibility that my granddaughter might be under arrest for something, I felt sick.

But when it was the second night and still no word, I knew I had to face it. The next morning I put on my hat and coat and put some snapshots of Martie in my bag, and started down to headquarters to report her missing.

It was a lovely day in May, just like that one 48 years ago, though a few days later in the month. I even passed the same street where they kidnaped me — though I was in a bus this time, instead of walking as I was then.

It was when I'd got out of the bus and was walking the two blocks to police headquarters that I saw the man. I recognized him right way; it was like a sword going through me.

He was just walking down the street past me, minding his own business. But the instant I laid eyes on him, the whole thing came back

to me, every last frightening detail of it.

And I realized then what must have happened to my Martie.

I nearly fainted, right there on the sidewalk. I had to stop and look in a store window till I could get over being dizzy.

Because at the same instant I realized it would be no use whatever to tell the police or anyone else what I knew, or to get myself tangled up in it by going to the police at all. Anybody on earth would decide I was crazy. I could just hear some polite police sergeant: "Now, Mrs. Newcomb, you mustn't let your imagination run away with you. Things like that don't happen."

I know they don't. But this one did.

And suppose I still tried to tell them, suppose they showed me the rogues' gallery pictures and I could identify that man, what good would that do? The police can't hold even a gangster, or go after his accomplices, on no grounds except a girl's remark that she knew too much and her grandmother's crazy tale about something that happened before anybody concerned was born. All I'd accomplish would be to get myself committed to an asylum. Any doctor would certify me on the basis of my story.

I know — I keep putting off telling it. It's so weird I wouldn't believe it myself if somebody else told me about it. But it did happen, and I'm not crazy.

I can remember every last little bit of it — even what I was wearing. It was a white challis with little violets sprinkled all over the material, and I wasn't wearing a coat because it was so warm for May. I had a leghorn hat on, with a white tulle bow. And I wore white silk gloves, because mother always said no lady ever went out of the house, even to the corner mailbox, without gloves.

She was making a summer dress for me that day. She had it almost done, but she needed — don't laugh — some short whalebones for the basque (yes, even in a summer dress) and some of the little lead discs we used to sew into tape inside the skirt hem, to keep our long skirts down so nobody would ever see our ankles.

You can see how long ago it was!

It was such a lovely day I decided to walk downtown and take the trolley back. Downtown was only about a mile from our house. The town was so much smaller then, more compact — there were only three trolley lines, and we walked a lot more than they ever do now. We didn't wear such high heels, for one thing.

So there I was, just strolling along, not thinking about anything in particular (except maybe about Joe; I'd just met him), and I'd got as far as Moore Street between Haven and South, about halfway to the store. There was a vacant lot on one side, full of weeds, and a factory on the

other. There wasn't anybody around but me, that I could see. It was about three o'clock, and most people were indoors at work.

I heard footsteps behind me, but I didn't pay any attention. And then all of a sudden my heart felt as if somebody had grabbed hold of it and squeezed it. Something round and cold and hard was pressed against the back of my neck, and a man's voice said quietly, "Don't look around and don't make any noise. Just keep on walking."

My knees shook, but I managed to keep going while I tried to figure out what to do. I remembered stories I'd read about white slavers, and that was the only thing I could think of. I looked around frantically for somebody to help me, but there wasn't a soul in sight. He took the thing away from my neck but I knew he had it ready if I made a false move, and I knew that it was a pistol.

And everything around me looked all funny and different. A few people who appeared on the street paid no attention to me — I suppose to them it just looked as if the man happened to be walking behind me. They were all dressed queerly; one woman who passed us showed her legs clear above her calves. She did glance at me, but only as if my perfectly ordinary appearance was something odd.

The trolley tracks were gone, and a big thing was lumbering down the block that looked like an old-fash-

ioned stagecoach without horses. There wasn't a horse and wagon or a carriage in sight, only strange-looking automobiles.

I'd seen plenty of automobiles, of course — horseless carriages, we mostly called them then. But they were like real carriages, as much as possible — some of them even had a place for the whip. And they were open cars, with a door in the rear. These I saw now were closed, with doors on both sides, and they were awfully long and low and sort of slinky-looking. I see hundreds like them today, but I don't think a single closed car had been manufactured at that time.

At the corner the man said, "Turn left. And don't open your mouth or I'll shoot."

We walked another two blocks that way, and then we turned into Green Street. We came to a big building that looked like a warehouse, but empty and marked "For Sale." It had a deep doorway, and two men were standing in the shadows in the back. And at the curb in front of the building was one of those huge automobiles.

The man behind me, the one who had the pistol, ordered, "Stand still. Make out like you're looking around for some address in the block."

He must have given some kind of signal then, for the two men in the doorway stepped out quickly. I got a good look at the face of one of them — the only one of the three I ever saw to recognize him again.

He was the one that tied my hands together behind my back. The other one with him stepped quickly behind me and blindfolded me with something that felt like a silk handkerchief. Then he tied something over my mouth — I was too scared to scream, if they'd known it — and I felt them pushing and hustling me into the car. They must have waited till the block was clear, so nobody would notice them. I was too frightened and confused to wonder at the strangeness of everything — and I was still certain sure I was being abducted by white slavers.

We started out, and for a few blocks I kept track of the direction, but then we kept turning and going on for what seemed miles and miles. I knew we must be way outside the town limits, and yet the car kept running smoothly over what felt like a paved road — when I knew that the macadam paving stopped only half a mile or so from where we had started, and that all the roads outside that were rough dirt.

We stopped at last, and two of them pulled me out of the car and across a sidewalk and up some steps. I could hear a bell buzz somewhere, and then we went through a door and up a hallway.

The next thing I knew we were in an elevator. By this time I was half out of my mind. I couldn't begin to imagine where we were; to the best of my knowledge, there were just four elevators in town, two in hotels and two in stores. I wondered if we'd

just driven round and round and wound up at the Grand or the Palace; but surely you didn't need to ring a doorbell to get into a hotel in broad daylight!

The elevator went up and up — far higher than in any building I'd ever heard of, in our town or in any other city either. It stopped, and the door opened and they shoved me out and over a threshold. They just left me standing there.

There was a moment's silence, and then a man's voice said, "Who's this?"

I'd heard the voices of all the three men, and this was a new one.

The man who had the pistol said, "It's the girl you wanted, chief."

"You damned fool," the new voice exclaimed. "That's not the girl!"

"Not the girl? Are you sure, chief? I couldn't go wrong from those pictures you gave us."

"Of course I'm sure, you idiot! There's a resemblance, but just look at her! She looks like a refugee from a costume ball. Where on earth did you find her?"

"But I was certain —"

"I'm telling you that isn't the little rat. You've made a bad mess of things. Now get her away from here, quick."

One of the other men said, "Chief, she might talk if we let her go. Better let us take care of her."

The man they called chief sounded angry, though he didn't raise his voice.

"I give the orders here," he said

sharply. "Do as I tell you. I've got enough on my shoulders already, with that dame singing, without a beef like this to handle too. Take her far enough away and turn her loose."

I was bewildered — if he was talking about me, I certainly hadn't been singing, or felt like it; I was a girl, not a dame, which is an old-fashioned word for an elderly lady; and I couldn't imagine what any of this had to do with beef.

Then his menacing voice sounded right in front of me.

"As for you, miss — you keep your mouth closed about all this or we'll find you, wherever you are, and close it for you. Do you understand?"

I was too frightened to do anything but nod.

"And you, you —"

"Honest, chief, I —"

"Well, I guess, at that, I ought to've sent somebody along who really knew her — only I thought that might make her suspicious. O.K., forget it; I'll manage it better the next time.

"They really do look a lot alike, except for the color hair and the wild clothes — she even had me puzzled for a second or two at first.

"Take her away, boys."

That was the last I heard; they were pushing me out of the room again.

We went down in the elevator and out of the building and into the car, and this time they drove zigzag for about ten minutes. Then they

pulled me out, and one of them untied my hands and said hurriedly, "You'll be all right now, miss. Just a little mistake, and no harm done." But another growled, "You heard what the chief told you. Don't pull off that blindfold or the gag till you've heard us leave — or you'll be plenty sorry."

I couldn't have moved if I'd wanted to; my hands were cramped and stiff from being tied. I heard the car go, and then I fumbled at the knots a long time until I got both the things off. One was a silk handkerchief, as I'd thought it was, and the other was a man's tie, cut in a shape I'd never seen before, and with hideously bright colors.

I found myself standing by the side of a dirt road, way out in the country somewhere. There wasn't a house in sight, only thin woods on both sides of the road.

And yet I'd felt that automobile drive on some kind of smooth paving right up to the minute it stopped; and I hadn't moved two paces from where they'd left me.

I held on to the handkerchief and the tie, thinking maybe they'd be some kind of evidence, if I could ever get up the nerve to talk. I stood there wondering how I was ever going to get back to town. I looked at my silver chatelaine watch, and it was quarter to five. The whole thing had happened in less than two hours.

I started to walk along the road, without even knowing in which direction I was from home. After a

few minutes I heard a clip-clop, and a rig caught up with me; it was a trap with an old man in it who looked like a farmer. I held up my arm and he stopped.

"Which way is it to Middle City?" I asked.

He stared at me curiously — I certainly wasn't dressed for a walk in the country, and I must have looked pretty mussed and upset besides.

"About eight miles down this way," he said, pointing ahead in the same direction we were going. From the position of the sun that meant that I was north of town.

"I don't suppose you could take me some of the way?" I glanced inside my purse. All I had was 50 cents.

He looked me over some more in silence. Then he said grudgingly, "How'd you get out here in the first place?"

I had an inspiration. "I — I was buggy-riding with a friend," I faltered.

He cackled.

"Had to get out and walk, eh? Well, I admire your spunk, young lady. Hop in. Happens I was on my way to see my daughter in town anyway."

"Oh, thank you!" I breathed fervently. "Just drop me at the end of the nearest trolley line."

I got home before six. It wasn't till I was walking through our front gate that I realized I'd left the tie and the handkerchief in the old

man's carriage. I didn't even know his name, or he mine, so I never could get them back to use as proof that I hadn't dreamed the whole thing.

"Well, what kept you so long?" mother demanded. "And where are the things I sent you for?"

I knew by then that I simply couldn't tell her or anyone the truth. It was too fantastic, and heaven knows what she'd have thought I was trying to hide by making up such a wild story. So I improvised feebly: "I'm sorry, mother, I never got to the store. I met Maud and she made me go home with her. I'll go downtown again for you tomorrow."

"Of all the scatterbrains!" she scolded. "Well, go set the table. Supper's nearly ready and your father will be home any minute."

I don't know yet what really happened to me that day. I was reading an article lately in a magazine, about how time isn't real, or something — how maybe sometimes people get accidentally out of their own time and into another. It was mostly about two ladies who visited Versailles, in France. It was too deep for me — I couldn't make sense out of it.

Only, if they got somehow into the past, could I have slipped somehow into the future — the future then, that is the present now?

Anyway that's my story. And now you can see why I alone had any clue to a way to rescue Martie.

All I had was my memories and my reasoning power.

There were two places I could connect with — the warehouse where they kidnaped me, and the hideout where they took me. After three days, it wasn't likely that Martie was still being held in the apartment or penthouse or whatever it was. I might as well face it: if she wasn't dead she was being kept a prisoner somewhere while they decided what to do with her, and the warehouse was as likely a place as any.

If I could get into that, somehow, and find Martie and save her — *if!* — then I'd have a legitimate reason to go to the police right away, and it oughtn't to be too hard for them to locate the hideout of the rest of the gang and their chief. It must be in one of the northern subdivisions, about eight miles north — that would probably mean Homefield Acres — and there couldn't be many apartment houses in a suburb like that, especially tall ones with an elevator.

The warehouse, I knew, was on Green Street; I even knew the block. The rest was up to me. I wasn't being brave. I was just the only one who *could* do it, and I was too desperate to be frightened.

You know I did do it — it was in all the papers: "Grandma Rescues Gun Moll," and silly stuff like that: Martie was *never* a gun moll, just a foolish girl who fell in with the wrong kind of associates. She's on

probation now, and everything's going to be all right.

But till now, nobody has ever known the real story behind it.

The details aren't important. I'm not a fool; I know I'm 69 years old, and not as slender as I used to be, and with rheumatism in my right knee. I couldn't break into buildings or climb fire-escapes or face gangsters armed with submachine guns. I had to use my wits.

I went down in daylight to find the place. There it was, just as I remembered it; I'd probably passed it a hundred times since without thinking of it. It looked abandoned and the "For Sale" sign was dirty and faded, but I had to follow my hunch since I had nothing else to follow. The neighborhood is run-down and dilapidated: a few cheap-looking stores, another warehouse belonging to a small moving firm, and across the street a row of old, shabby houses, most of them low-class rooming-houses. I located a drugstore a block away with a pay phone in it, and went back home.

About 9 o'clock I went downtown again. In my bag I had a heavy piece of fused glass I've used for years as a paperweight. I got off the bus about two blocks away, went to the phone booth in the drugstore, and called the police.

"Somebody's trying to break into a warehouse on Green Street," I said. "I just saw two men sneak into the alley on the side and I heard a window break." I gave them the

exact location and then I hung up before they could ask who I was; let them think I was somebody snooping from a window of one of the houses across the way.

I hurried back, and thanked my stars when I saw there was nobody but me in sight. It was a dark night, and there was only one street light, half a block away. I tiptoed up the alley and picked a ground floor window next to a side door. I took the paperweight out of my bag and with all my might I banged it against the dirty glass. The window broke and I heard the splinters fall inside.

My idea had been then to hide somewhere and wait for the police. When they saw the broken window they would have to search the place, and if Martie was there they'd find her.

Only it didn't happen that way. Before I could move, a hand grabbed my shoulder. Then the door next to me opened with a rusty squeak and somebody reached out and dragged me through it into complete darkness. A hand covered my mouth and I was half-dragged, half-carried across a floor and up some steps.

They must have had a lookout posted at a window who had been watching me.

Another door opened, and I was pushed forward into what seemed a blaze of light, though actually, when I could see again, it was only one ceiling bulb in a large room.

There were some wooden chairs standing about, a table littered with

cards and beer cans and ash trays, and in a corner there was a cot with somebody lying on it. Two men stood up from the table when the door opened, and one of them said: "What have you got there?"

I'd never seen him before, but I knew his voice instantly. It was the man who put the pistol at the back of my neck that day. And the other one I recognized; he was the man in the doorway, the one I had just seen downtown.

As I say, you've read it all in the papers, so I'll cut it short. It was Martie, bound and gagged, on the cot; the two men were guarding her till their leader gave them orders to dispose of her. It seems he wanted her held till he could question her — and I know how they'd "question" anybody — to make sure just how much she'd talked, and to whom; then of course they would take her away somewhere and kill her. And now they had me to deal with too, though they had no idea who I was or why I'd tried, as they thought, to break into their hideout. I learned all this while they tied me up and dumped me in a corner near the cot. They had me gagged but I tried every way to catch Martie's eye. I couldn't; either they had her doped or she was sound asleep.

You've read all this, but what you'll never know is what I went through waiting for the police to come and wondering if they were coming at all. Maybe they'd just think it was a crackpot call and pay

no attention — though surely they'd at least have a prowler car stop by and see if a window was broken. I prayed they wouldn't use a siren, and they didn't. I don't know how long it was; it seemed hours but it must have been only about fifteen minutes before they came.

Then, when it was all over and the men were in custody and I was released — they had to put Martie under arrest too, for investigation, but they took her to the hospital first — they were willing and eager to listen to me about the apartment house in Homefield Acres. That's

how they got hold of the "chief."

Only, what they never found out and never will find out is how I knew where to find Martie in the first place — for it was easy to establish that I had nothing to do with the gang. I guess they figured she must have talked to me too, which she never had. It didn't matter, since the whole lot of those criminals were safe in prison.

I wonder what they'd have thought if I'd told them I'd been taken to that warehouse and then to the penthouse headquarters — neither of which had been built — in 1907!

