

Many, many thanks to those who responded to my call for their favorite Mart scenes. This one is for those who love the end of Mysterious Visitor, when Mart secrets himself away in the Robin: Amygirl (Moms!), Anna, CarrieLynn, Chey, Deanna, Jenn, Laura (Motowngirl), Lydia, Mal, Marnie, Mary N, and Vivian. Thank you, ladies, for inspiring this story! There's also a mention of Mart keeping his hair short just for Julie (jstar8)! Thanks to Susan, Mary, and Julia for making this stronger. And most of all, thank you, Mary Carey, for being such a wonderful friend to us all. We miss you. {{HUGS}}

**Mart Belden in:
Pots and Pans and Coffeepots, Oh My!**
by Dana

Can I be honest here? Honest-to-goodness, *truly* honest? I'll even tell my story in words of one syllable if you'll let me get this off my chest. Promise!

Here goes!

I'd thought I was lucky escaping "sleepy" Crabapple Farm to go off to camp and be a camp counselor. I mean, going away to sleepaway camp and being *in charge* is pretty exciting, right?

Except....it wasn't.

Trixie was lucky only having to keep *one* small fry—Bobby—out of trouble. The many small fry *I* was in charge of over the summer didn't even have the sense Bobby had. Why-oh-why was "leaflets three, let it be" so hard to understand? There was picking up after them, trying to get them to eat, keeping them from falling out of the trees they climbed on like monkeys, making sure they didn't drown....in less than two feet of water, no less. It was *exhausting*.

Then, when I got home near the end of the summer, I realized the excitement had been in Sleepyside all along! I mean, really! People moving into the Manor House. With *horses*! And quite an attractive young lady, let me tell you. I can tell Brian likes her—so I'll back off—but I do need to say that my brother's quite lucky I already like someone else. If I were to let the Mart charm loose, Brian wouldn't stand a chance!

Anyway, that was just the beginning of what happened in my absence! Old Man Frayne died. His great-nephew ran away from his evil stepfather and ended up at Ten Acres and my sister befriended him. The mansion burned down (because of Jim's aforementioned evil stepfather, Jonesy, and his disgusting cigarettes), and then my sister and her new friend from the Manor House (Honey, a perfectly befitting name for the sweet maiden, I might add) got sanctioned by a *lawyer*, no less, to go running around the countryside trying to find Jim to let him know he had nothing to fear from Jonesy—and that he had inherited half a million dollars from old Mr. Frayne!

And they *did* find him! And in the process of solving *that* mystery, they solved not one but *two* others! They returned Joeanne Darnell to her family and caught two trailer thieves.

So, you can imagine how I felt when I returned from camp and realized that I'd missed so much.

Then, the morning Brian and I arrived home, Jim told us about the diamond Trixie and Honey had found. True, initially I figured that Trixie's imagination had run away with her, as usual, and that there was no way that she had found a real diamond. But lo and behold, Honey had appeared on the scene, not only confirming that they had found a genuine gemstone, but she had also produced the dazzling jewel for Brian and I to witness ourselves.

Finally! I was present for a bona fide mystery!

Yes, I was in Sleepyside for that mystery. But doggone it! Trixie, Honey, and Jim had more of a hand in solving that particular mystery than I did! Heck, Bobby—who had wandered around with the diamond in his pocket for a good portion of the time—had more involvement with the mystery than I did! I was at the movies when it all went down and Trixie, Jim, and Regan caught the dip (that's gangster lingo for a pickpocket).

Then school started, and I thought my chances for excitement were over.

Boy, was I *wrong*!

I'd long admired the fair Diana Lynch from afar. Ever since Trix had brought her home after kindergarten one day. I mean, how is any warm-blooded man ever able to resist a pixie face, violet eyes, and long, shiny, blue-black hair? It doesn't matter that said warm-blooded man is in the first grade, I tell you!

Anyway, next thing I know, we're all spending the weekend at the Manor House *with Di*—and Trixie's got us all embroiled in her latest mystery.

And, as much as I might have guffawed and ridiculed, well, let me tell you how excited I was to *finally* have been involved from the beginning! Trixie is *not* the only detective in this family!

And so, as I listened to Trixie's growing accusations against Di's long-lost Uncle Monty, I became convinced she was right. Yeah, my sister can most definitely jump to conclusions. But she's usually right in the end, and I knew better than to underestimate her. If she was suspicious about Uncle Monty, then so was I. Especially when she appeared after school one day looking as though she'd seen a ton of ghosts—and had forgotten it was her turn to look after Bobby. Trixie may pretend to despise taking care of Bobby, but I know my almost-twin, and she loves that little imp and would never knowingly let anything happen to him. Whatever had happened in town was important—and her terror wasn't related to Miss Golden's "scolding" about her math skills (or lack thereof).

So, since whatever Trix had found out that day indicated that Uncle Monty *was* guilty of something—and that he was definitely not Di's true Uncle Monty—it got me to thinking. How could I help prove Trixie's theory?

A confession. A taped confession. *That* would help the Bob-Whites prove Uncle Monty was a no-good crook! But how could I make that happen?

After I had this brainstorm, Trix finally confessed her trip to Hawthorne Street—of all places!—to the Bob-Whites, and Jim and Brian were all for Trixie going to Mr. Lynch to tell him the whole story. But didn't they see? Trixie couldn't do that without any proof! We couldn't get Tom in trouble. No one would believe she tracked down Olyfant on Skid Row. Or that she'd had a fantastic chat with the supposed Uncle Monty in front of the fireplace on the Lynches' terrace. I argued my case about needing proof, and both Di and Honey agreed with me. That felt pretty good, let me tell you!

Real proof was needed. Hence, my taped confession brainstorm. I have to admit that I was feeling so giddy from the brainstorm that I bragged a little as our little impromptu meeting was breaking up.

“Now, I have a plan that will get us all the proof we need without endangering our lives in anyway whatsoever.”

“What is it?” Trixie demanded sourly. “Something simple, I’ll bet. Such as kidnapping him and torturing him until he confesses. Our clubhouse is just the place. No one will hear his screams.” She got up and bowed. “Allow me to be the first to congratulate you, Mastermind. I knew you’d think of something.”

I couldn’t resist. I returned the bow. “Thank you, Genius.” I was feeling wise and cocky. Why not compliment Trix? “How did you read my mind? That’s exactly what I plan to do: Force a confession from him.”

It didn’t matter that my elder brother thought I was a clown, just kidding around. I knew I was on the brink of proving “Uncle Monty” was a criminal. For once, I was going to be there for the kill! No one was going to catch me sitting in the air-conditioned comfort of the Cameo while a crook was being captured *this time*! I did my best to appear guileless as I discretely got Di to let me tour the *Robin* and got information about Monty’s schedule. I felt bad deceiving her, but I assuaged those guilty thoughts knowing I was going to be the hero and prove her “long-lost Uncle Monty” was a fake—saving her dad lots of money. A little deception—and its accompanying twinge—would be worth the outcome.

An outcome that, if I’m being completely honest, I hoped might include some appreciation from Di. I really wanted her to notice me as something more than Trixie’s “almost-twin.” I’d even gone to the great “lengths” (Ha! See what I did there?) to keep my hair in a close-cropped crew cut to further distinguish myself from my sister. I was really hoping that Di would notice there was a lot more to me than just being a brother or spouting off big words.

Anyway, it wasn’t much after that conversation that I was sneaking in the *Robin* between television shows and canasta sets and setting up my borrowed recorder under the bunk, ready to get Monty’s confession on tape. I had plugged in the recorder and had hit the “Record” button to test it when I caught movement out of the corner of my eye.

My jaw dropped. Was I really seeing what I thought I was? Was my almost-twin really sneaking out to the red trailer wearing nothing but flannel pajamas? She had bare feet, for goodness sake! I just stood there with my mouth open until she turned the handle on the door. I realized it was too late to shut the machine off. I barely had time to get into the shower compartment and close the door before Trixie walked into the trailer. I held my breath, hoping she wouldn’t ruin my plan to tape Monty’s confession.

I could hear Trixie going through Monty’s things, and then I heard the click of the door, and my heart sank. I knew, just knew, that Trixie had been caught. My fears were confirmed when I heard Monty say, “Drop it!”

I didn’t know what he wanted Trixie to drop, but all of my brotherly instincts kicked in, and I was reaching for the shower door to come help her when I heard Monty’s next line.

“Drop it,” he said again. “Can’t you see I’ve got a gun?”

A gun? A *gun*? I soooooo wasn’t ready for that. Dick had been easily captured simply through being called “laughing boy”—while staring down the barrel of an unloaded rifle, true, but he hadn’t been armed. It had never occurred to me that Uncle Monty might actually be *dangerous*.

Crap.

I knew I'd better stay put and see what happened next. Monty wasn't stupid enough to shoot Trix in the Lynches' driveway, and Trix—I prayed—wasn't stupid enough to provoke Monty, so I figured if I stayed put, I'd have the opportunity to be of some use later.

At least, I hoped that was the case.

As I hid in the shower, I heard Trixie expertly grill Monty, who apparently was actually a crook named Tilney Britten. I listened with satisfaction, knowing Ty Scott's recording machine was capturing the whole conversation.

I was relieved when the confrontation ended with the crook tying Trix up and not in gunfire. As soon as I heard the fake Uncle Monty leave and felt the trailer moving, I opened the door of the shower compartment and stepped out.

I clicked on the flashlight that I'd had the foresight to bring and was shocked to see tears streaming down my sister's face. Trixie was the toughest person I knew! She never let anything get her down. Ever. It made me happier than ever that I was here to help her.

She had a handkerchief on her face, and I yanked it off, angry at Uncle Monty for causing Trixie to cry.

"Oh Mart," Trixie said immediately. The relief and awe I heard in her voice was gratifying!

I didn't really know what to say, and the next thing I knew, cheesy dialogue was escaping my lips. "Take it easy, kid," I said gently as I freed her hands. "Don't worry, we'll get out of this scrape." That's when I felt my anger sweep over me, and I just let it all out. No one hurts my sister! "And when we do get out, I'm going to be sure to black both of that guy's eyes."

Trixie wanted to know how I'd got in the shower compartment, but I knew there was time to explain that later. Right then, we needed to get out of this fix. Trix was shivering, so I gave her my sweater and told her my plan.

"About five miles from here, the road merges with Main Street at the intersection to the highway. Unless it's his night off, Spider Webster will be on duty. If the light is red, Monty will have to stop and we can yell out of the window. If it's green, we've somehow got to attract Spider's attention as we pass him."

Trixie nodded. "But how?"

"That I don't know," I admitted. "I just keep hoping that the light will be red, and at that point my mind goes blank."

"I know what we can do!" Trixie cried. "There are lots of pots and pans in the kitchenette. We can throw them at Spider. That'll make him so mad he'll surely jump on his motorcycle and go after the driver of the tow car. *If*, as you say, he's on duty."

"Any cop will do," I said. I was feeling so optimistic and magnanimous that I continued, "You've got a brain, Sis." Then I had a very satisfying thought. One so satisfying that I couldn't help the wicked grin I felt spread across my face. "And boy, will it ever be fun to throw things and not get arrested for it."

Trixie grinned in agreement, and we continued to discuss the situation, including what we'd do if the cop at the intersection wasn't there because he'd gone after some speeding car. I refused to believe that could happen to us, and I tried to sound brave for Trix, even though my stomach suddenly felt like it was home to a very active bat colony.

It was then that Trix and I realized that Monty might be able to see my flashlight—and that the tow car and its trailer were hardly moving! I barely had time to tie her hands together while Trix re-gagged herself. I hurried to the shower compartment again with a sense of *déjà vu* as I shut the door, once again barely making it in time as someone entered the little house on wheels.

I held my breath, dying a thousand deaths as I realized that Trixie now wore my sweater, when she hadn't before. Then I realized that the windows were all open, and they'd been closed before. What if Monty realized this? He'd explore the trailer, find me, and then my sister and I would both be sunk.

I exhaled a small sigh of relief when I heard him say, "Thought I saw a light in here. Guess it was the reflection of my own headlights."

Even as I heard him say this, I have to admit I felt a little superior. Reflection of your own headlights? *Really?* They shoot *forward*. The trailer is *behind* you. Are you *that much of an idiot*? Maybe if you'd said tail lights, I'd might've gotten on board. But those are *red*. Flashlights are *not red*. *Do you know the difference?* I doubted it.

Tool.

Once I knew the tool was gone, I came out of the compartment and released Trixie, expressing my fears about all the things that the fake Monty might have noticed. Trixie's response resonated with me.

All I could think about was that this is a deserted road and he had a gun in his hand.

I did my best to push the consequences of someone aiming a gun at my sister aside and peered out of a window of the trailer. "It won't be long now. We'd better get armed."

"And man the portholes," Trixie said with a nervous giggle.

With a relish I didn't know I possessed, I grabbed a frying pan with one hand and a coffeepot with the other. "We're almost there, Trix. Ready....on your mark....get set....*go!*"

I let the frying pan and coffeepot go with glee and then looked at my crazed almost-twin. She was kneeling on the bunk, and I watched as she threw her ammunition out of the window wildly. We looked out the tiny window, seeing only a faint, dizzy glimpse of a policeman as we passed them.

I sank back, relieved. Spider was there. The pots and pans and coffeepot would get his attention. And, holy cow! How *fun* was it to throw a bunch of aluminum things out a window at a cop? I might seriously relive this one in my dreams forever!

As heady as I was feeling, when my sister suddenly stuck her head out of the window and yelled, "Help! Help! Spider! Help!" I knew what I had to do, and I dragged her back. I was so worried no one would come to our rescue. Yes, it was an irrational fear since I had just seen Spider, but I didn't want to count my chickens before they were hatched.

My fears were unfounded, though. Sure enough, Spider was zooming toward us, letting out a shrill whistle as he roared up on his motorcycle, with the wail of its siren.

Now I realized it was I who was yelling, although I stopped once I realized Spider was in control. I chuckled only a little on the inside as Trixie took a deep breath and screamed, “Watch out, Spider! He’s got a gun!”

I have to admit that it was pretty comical watching Tilney Britten, aka “Uncle Monty”, feign surprise at us kids being in his trailer, trying to pretend it was normal to drive down a road with some teenagers *throwing pots and pans out the window in the middle of the night*. I mean, really? Did he think that was going to fly in this “sleepy” little town?

We all got hauled in to the police station, especially since Trix was wearing pajamas, my sweater, and bare feet. She was definitely a bizarre and amusing sight. And because no one would listen to me that I had *the greatest evidence ever* on tape.

In the end, it was *my* evidence that led to Tilney Britten’s conviction.

I may not have been there to discover Jim, or find him upstate, or be there when Dick the Dip was apprehended, but I proved myself on *this* case. Mysterious visitor, indeed!