



The Martian's Daughter: A Memoir

Marina Whitman

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Marina Whitman is the daughter and only child of John von Neumann, one of the five Hungarian scientific geniuses dubbed “the Martians” by their colleagues, a figure often hailed as the greatest mathematician of the 20th century and even as the greatest scientist after Einstein. He was a key figure in the Manhattan project; the inventor of game theory; the pioneer developer of the modern stored-program electronic computer; and, right up until his death, an adviser to the top echelons of the American military establishment. Whitman’s memoir is the story of how the cosmopolitan environment in which she was immersed, the demanding expectations of her parents, and her own struggles to emerge from the shadow of a larger-than-life parent shaped her life and work. Starting as, in her words, “a trailing spouse,” she rose to become a noted academic during the 1960s and ’70s, casting her teaching and writing in the framework of globalization before the word had been invented. She was the first woman ever to serve on the President’s Council of Economic Advisers and participated actively in U.S. efforts to reshape the international monetary and financial system during the early 1970s. She pioneered the role of women on the boards of leading multinational corporations, and became the highest-ranking female executive in the American auto industry in the 1980s, serving not only as GM’s vice president and chief economist but also as its Cassandra while the firm persisted along a path that led eventually to its collapse into bankruptcy.

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