



## Chapter 1 – Spy-cleaning

Jane Blonde, Sensational Spylet, stepped out of the car wash and looked around her. Her slick black Ultra-gog glasses penetrated the shadows circling Abe ‘n’ Jean’s Clean Machines (MAKE YOUR CAR A STAR!). Somewhere out there, G-Mamma had set up some enemies to thwart. It was no longer enough simply to try to get out of harm’s way. Two missions in which she’d barely skirted death had taught them that. Jane Blonde had to learn to get ready. Be on the offensive. Fight.

Of course, it helped that this was no ordinary car wash. It had been set up by her father, Superspy Boz Brilliance Brown, when he’d used his amazing process of Crystal Clarification to transform himself into another human being, Abe Rownigan. With it, he’d gone into business with Janey’s mother, his wife, Superspy Gina Bellarina, who had been brain-wiped for her own safety and now led

a simple life as Jean Brown, mother of one Janey Brown, and cleaner extraordinaire.

Mrs Brown had no idea that the car wash was actually an enormous Wower – a spy shower into which a girl had stepped earlier, a girl with fine mousy hair and scabby knees like knots in string. Janey had giggled as angled jets of steam darted across her, enveloping her in glistening, transformational droplets. Unlike the Wower in the Spylab of G-Mamma, her SPI:KE (Solomon's Polificational Investigations: Kid Educator), which had a couple of robotic hands to impregnate her hair with a platinum gleam and coax it into a sleek killer pony-tail, this Wower-with-knobs-on had eight – enough to work on the largest saloon car. In no time at all she had been scrubbed of her ordinariness, wrapped in air-light, air-tight silver lycra, and buffeted into shiny Jane Blonde fabulousness complete with the most bouffant, bouncy top-knot of a pony-tail she had ever had.

G-Mamma's voice hissed from the SPI Visualator around Janey's neck. . "Remember – look for their Achilles heel."

"What was that again?" whispered Janey. Despite the powerful certainty that coursed through her whenever she had Wowed and become Jane Blonde, she was still a tiny bit nervous of what lay ahead. The most adventurous thing she'd done in the last few weeks was School Crossing Patrol, but now that school was over for the Easter Holidays G-Mamma was insistent that her spy training should be ramped up.

"Their weakness, Blondette. Use your strength against their weakness. Bogies, two o'clock."

Janey took a moment to realise that G-Mamma wasn't being disgusting, and spun around to her right. The enemy was approaching, racing at her with long blonde hair streaming out behind her and a Fur-Real Pet dachshund yapping at her heels.

“Ariel!” It was Janey’s first enemy, or rather, someone pretending to be Janey’s first enemy.

Ariel was nearly upon her, and Janey found herself staring down the barrel of a small bronze pistol. “Okay, Blonde,” she said under her breath. “Go to it.”

She banged down hard against the ground and the Fleet-feet she wore on her feet propelled her right over Ariel’s head. She had to turn herself into a moving target – much more difficult to hit than a fixed one – and make sure that her face, the only bit of her that wasn’t protected by her bullet-proof spy-suit, was out of harm’s way. Ariel spun round with the gun waving madly in Janey’s direction, and Janey knew she had her. Ariel wasn’t strong. She was little and wiry and devious, but not as power-packed as Janey. Taking her by surprise, Janey stopped abruptly, took a quick step backward so that Ariel cannoned into her with her arm still extended and now trapped under Janey’s armpit, and wrenched the gun out of

Ariel’s hand. She whipped around, trained the pistol on the enemy’s face, and pulled of the long, blonde wig to reveal G-Mamma’s boingy curls and beaming face. “My turn with the gun, Goldilocks,” she said with a grin.

“Good, Blonde girl,” squeaked G-Mamma, trying to imitate Ariel’s high voice. “Now get the gun out of my face, run once around the car wash, and I’ll be ready for you when you’re back.”

Janey took off around the shed from which she’d stepped only moments earlier. The last time someone had done a lap around it, it had been her cat, Trouble, trying to escape a hideous baying monster created from five snapping rats. This time the route was all her own, and threw her head back to the stars (clouded though they were) as she Fleet-footed around the car wash, as wild and free and lightning-fast as a cheetah.

In no time she was back at the front of the car wash. “What now?” she thought. Her last enemy had been another girl, Paulette

Solay, who had turned out to be the half-sister of her best friend and fellow spylet, Alfie Halliday, aka Al Halo. Maybe it would be the French girl, but Janey knew it would be a mistake to make assumptions. There was a scrabbling sound from the bushes; Janey braced herself for what was coming next. It was the rat-dog, or rather, G-Mamma on all fours gnashing her teeth, with Trouble on her head yowling like a werewolf and snapping his head back and forth. He'd seen the rat-dog at very close-quarters, so knew exactly what to do.

“Easy,” breathed Janey. They didn't like water. That much she knew. She couldn't get to the hose pipes before Big Rat-dog was upon her, but she had a water-substitute. With her left hand gripping her Girl-Gauntleted right hand tightly, she crouched down, forward-rolled until she was directly before the fake beast, then slashed across G-Mamma's sleeve with the pen-nib that she'd forced out of her Girl Gauntlet glove and squeezed with all her might. Midnight-

blue ink squirted all over G-Mamma's arm, and as the SPI:KE turned to stare in horror at the disastrous stain on her fuschia pink Spysuit, Janey forward-rolled again, planted a foot into the shoulder of both SPI:KE and Spycat, and shoved them asunder.

“Brilliant, brilliant. Cost me a Spysuit, girly-girl, but you can make it up to me with Easter eggs.” G-Mamma brushed herself down and checked that Trouble was okay. He was purring like a tractor. “Not had so much fun in ages, have you, Twubs? Right. Off around the block, Blonde, and back here in thirty seconds.”

And so they went on, Jane Blonde fighting off pretend enemies old and new with a mixture of gymnastic grace and good old gadgets, even using her gleaming pony-tail to dangle Trouble from the roof of the car wash when she guessed that this enemy's weakness was that he didn't like heights. In seconds she knotted her hair through his collar, shot up the side of the building on her ASPIC hoverboard (Aeronautical SPI Conveyor), climbed up the

metal chimney stack using the grip of her Girl Gauntlet, and whisked Trouble into the chimney with a flick of her head so that there was only thirty feet of blackness below him.

“Sorry, Trouble,” she said a moment later, cuddling him close as she clambered back down to G-Mamma.

“Don’t you fuss over him,” said the SPI:KE. “He’s quite happy to do it, and anyway, you never know when you might have to fight one of your friends.”

Janey shook her head. “I could never do that, G-Mamma.”

“Well, just remember how many of your enemies have tried to be your friend at some stage.” What G-Mamma said was true. Both Ariel and Paulette had befriended Janey as a way of getting what they wanted. “Achilles heel. Remember that.”

Janey did think about it, all the way home in the Clean-Jean van that G-Mamma had ‘borrowed’ for the occasion. She relied on her friends a lot. It had taken her a long time to find them – G-

Mamma, Trouble, Alfie and his mother who was either Headmistress Maisie Halliday or Superspy Halo, depending on what was going on, and the very best new friend of all, her dad: Boz Brilliance Brown, Solomon Brown, Abe Rownigan. She sighed. Where was he now? And when might he get in touch with her again?

“It’s dawn.” G-Mamma pointed at the pink sky illuminating the city. “Just time to de-wow and do a bit more training before that mother of yours wakes up.”

Janey nodded, holding back a yawn. She was pretty tired, but there was no way she would escape G-Mamma in this kind of mood. Furthermore, she had to do whatever she could to get along with her SPI Kid Educator right now. Janey had only just been forgiven for nearly blowing the whole of their spy organisation, Solomon’s Polificational Investigations, wide open: she’d hung on to a piece of LipSPIck (the ruler-like Lip activated SPI camera Kilobyrary

allowing video footage to be transferred to any location given the right lip print), and it brought an image of her father to life, just for a moment or two, every time she gave it a tiny kiss. Unfortunately Copernicus - SPI's most sinister enemy – had seen it too. Now her father had been forced into hiding again, her mother had been brain-wiped so she didn't remember anything much about her husband, and Janey had to tread very carefully around G-Mamma.

“Okay,” she said reluctantly as they climbed the spiral staircase to G-Mamma's Spylab. “Just for an hour though. Then I really do need to clean up my room. I was supposed to do it last night.”

G-Mamma pulled a face. “Cleaning? Euw. Well, don't expect me to help you with that! Although...hmmm, yippy yes yo yos. It seems like as good a time as any to spy-proof your room. Go on, Girly-girl, let's clean!”

For the next forty minutes, Janey put away all her stray books, righted and polished her mirror, vacuumed furiously, and replaced all her puzzle books and other Spy-buys – gadgets she'd received as birthday presents - in the box under her bed in which she had stored all these treasures for years. “G-Mamma, this is just cleaning,” she said eventually. “What has this got to do with spying? And why are you sitting there watching?”

“You missed a bit.” G-Mamma sniffed, dusting icing sugar off her fingers from the doughnut she'd been sure to bring with her. “And for your information, I am not watching, I am *spiking*. We'll only be able to lay traps when you know exactly where everything is, and that everything is spanky-clean and sparkly. That'll do. Now,” she said as she jumped off the bed. “Back to that mirror.”

As they stood before the dressing table, G-Mamma licked the end of her little finger and drew it across the surface of the glass in a short line.

“I just polished that!” said Janey.

“Watch and learn, Janey Zany. Watch and learn.”

The track of saliva on the mirror had completely disappeared. Janey looked at it and shrugged. What did that prove? But then G-Mamma leaned forward and blew gently on her reflection. A puff of condensation clouded the mirror, and right across the polished surface was a clear, finger-width line.

“You see?” G-Mamma stood back to let the steam clear, then did it again.

“Right, I get that now. If someone comes in and breathes on the mirror, I’ll be able to see it.”

“Yes! Or you can leave an invisible message for me to pick up. Good. Now, what else?” G-Mamma rummaged around in her capacious bib pocket and pulled out a large container of baby powder. “Don’t worry, it’s not for your biddy botty. Tell me, what did you touch last?”

“Erm, the book shelf,” said Janey.

“All righty.” Crossing over to the book shelf, G-Mamma sprinkled talcum powder over the surface of the last book Janey had popped on top of its pile. “See?”

“My finger prints!” Janey could hardly believe it.

G-Mamma nodded. “You can lift them off with sticky tape and stick them on dark paper so you can see them properly. And you’ll also have a record of which are your fingerprints and which are somebody else’s.”

“Clever!” said Janey.

Now she was hooked. She followed G-Mamma around, fascinated, as the SPI:KE opened a drawer slightly and drew a pencil line on its side to mark its position so Janey would notice if anyone moved it, then drew another faint line down the side of the stack of homework books on Janey’s desk for the same purpose. Finally, G-

Mamma leaned over to Janey's head and yanked out a couple of her pale brown hairs.

“Ow! You could have warned me.”

“What's the spy motto, Blondette? Surprise, surprise, surprise. Now stop whinging and start taking notes.” Once again G-Mamma licked the end of her finger, but this time she used it to moisten the end of the hairs she'd extracted from Janey's head, and stuck one across the window frame, and another across the lid of Janey's Spy-buys box. “Invisible to everyone else, but if you come back in and those hairs are broken or missing, you'll know someone's been in here.”

“G-Mamma, that's brilliant!” Janey was amazed. She was quite used to staggeringly clever gadgets by now, but using everyday stuff to spy-proof her room was really very clever. “It's like ... proper spying.”

“Course it is, Blondette,” said G-Mamma, looking rather hurt. “I am a proper spy, you know, not just a glamour queen. Oh heck, there's your mother.” She headed for the tunnel as Jean Brown shouted up the stairs. “Don't forget to buy me an Easter Egg while you're out.”

G-Mamma's voice became muffled as she headed further down the tunnel, and Janey grinned as her hippopotamus behind disappeared from view. As soon as the panel at the back of the fireplace slid shut, Janey ran out of her bedroom and down the stairs.

Her mother was standing by the door with a parcel in her hand. “This is funny. I didn't think they delivered the post on Good Friday. Anyway, it's addressed to you. Think it might be from...you know...”

“From Abe?” Janey grabbed the parcel, shot down the hall and into the kitchen. The box was very similar to the one in which



Janey stored all her precious Spy-buys. Maybe it was another gadget! She ripped off the lid and rummaged around for a moment.

“Oh, Janey, they’re great! Perfect for the summer. And just your size,” said her mum over her shoulder.

“They’re weird.” Janey held up a pair of shoes - light summery sandals made from pale blue cloth, with long cotton straps that crossed around the ankle and up the leg. They didn’t look at all practical for running in, or doing anything else in for that matter. She couldn’t imagine why her father, who knew better than anyone that spying could be physically challenging, would send something so impractical.

“They’re not weird,” said Jean, foraging around in the bottom of the box. “They’re espadrilles. Summer shoes. It’s probably a bit cold for them just at the moment, but you can put them away for a couple of months. Look, there’s even directions on how to put them on!”

She held up a little piece of paper. It certainly was headed “Directions”, with a picture of the sandals beneath it, but apart from all there was on the paper scrap was a compass with the **S** circled in pencil. “Well, that’s not much use,” said Jean Brown. “Never mind, though. I used to have some when I was younger. It’s just like lacing up ballet shoes. It’s funny he didn’t send a note or anything.”

Janey nodded. There wasn’t much she could say, really. Jean wasn’t to know that Abe dearly to be with his family again, but couldn’t afford to put them in danger by staying too close. And anyway, he *had* sent a note, saying Directions, and a southerly compass point. She just didn’t quite know what it meant yet.

“I’ll just go and put them away,” she said, putting the lid back on the box. “And then we can go and do those errands you wanted to do? My room’s all clean.”

Her mother leaned over and gave her a kiss on the forehead.  
“Good girl. That sounds like a plan. Maybe we can go for lunch somewhere”

“Yeah, great,” said Janey.

She went quietly to her bedroom, wondering what the note meant. He was obviously somewhere south. But south of where? South London? South Pacific? It was still a mystery. Bending down, Janey shuffled the box in beside its twin that held her Spy-buys, smiling at the two boxes of Dad-related goodies.

It was only then that she noticed something.

The hair that G-Mamma had stuck across the Spy-buys box, just half an hour before, was missing.

Janey’s gut churned. Her spy instincts were suddenly all a-quiver, ready to alert her to danger. She’d just heard from her dad, only minutes ago. And already, someone had been in her room – possibly trying to track down new information about Abe’s

whereabouts. Whenever someone was looking for her father, the problems began. She would have to warn him somehow, get in touch and let him know that he might be in danger, that she and her mother and G-Mamma and everyone might also be in danger again.

And unable to help herself, Janey suddenly grinned. Maybe the Easter holidays were not going to be as dull as she had suspected. In fact, it could be quite the opposite. Jane Blonde’s next mission was about to begin.

End of sample