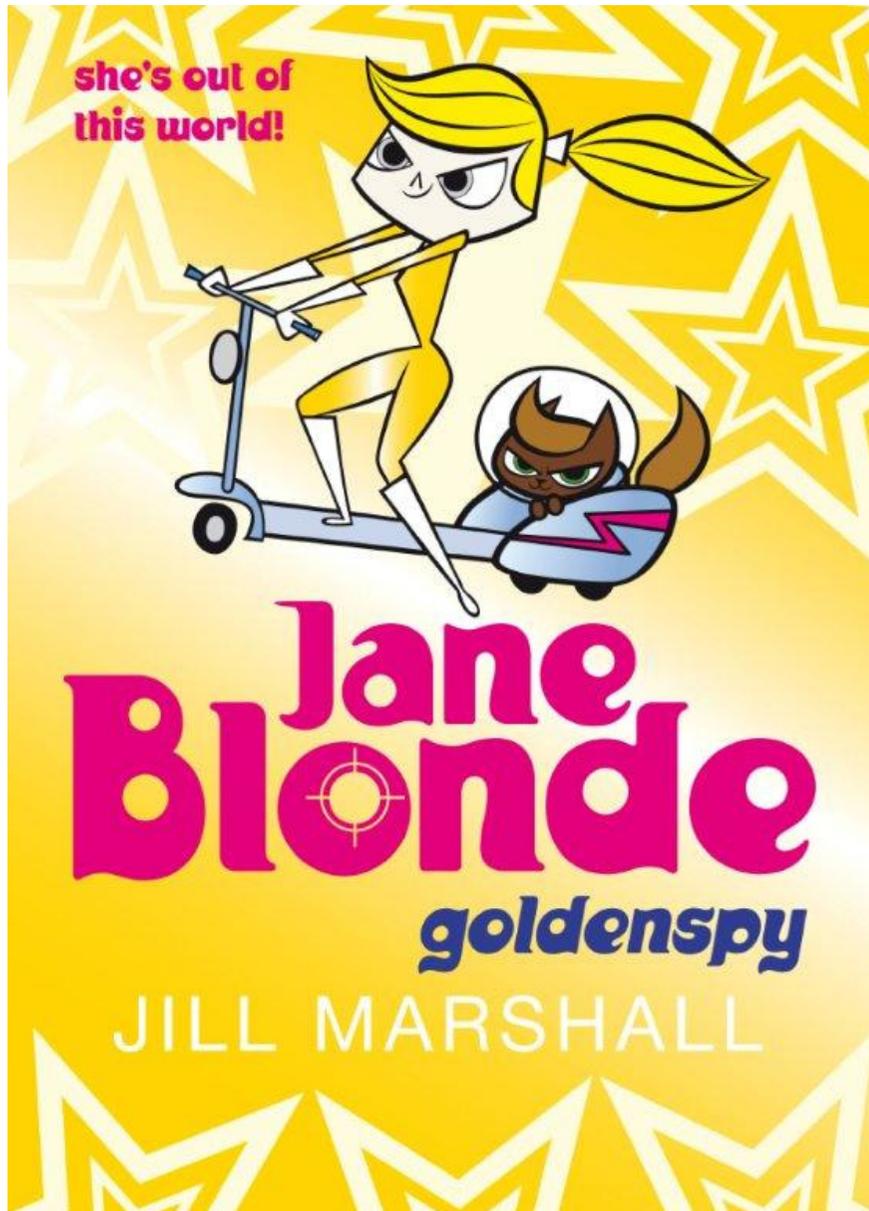


Jane Blonde, Goldenspy, by Jill Marshall



In the beginning ...

It had taken all his strength, every ounce of his extraordinary intelligence, to extract himself from the Earth. Now he had to be free of it – for ever. Free from the cloying cold that numbed his thoughts and his movements. Free from the pitiful, powerless race who dared, somehow, to condemn him. And free, by whatever means it took, from the SPIs who tried at every turn to stop him, irritating him like mosquitoes, thwarting even his most brilliant manoeuvres.

As for Jane Blonde ... the mere thought of her made his internal organs cramp with bitter rage. She was the most aggravating of all. Even more so than her conceited, know-it-all father.

But she wouldn't stop him this time. All the Jane Blondes in the world would not be enough to put an end to this plan. He had full control, right at his fingertips – or the tips of his tentacles, since Blonde had turned him into this mutant monster.

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No matter. He laughed quietly, the full beam of his gaze taking in the scene before him, the scene he would soon destroy. It was only a matter of time now. Just a matter of time ...

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Chapter 1 – Zoo’s news

The last week of the school year had come around amazingly quickly. And it wasn’t just the speed at which it had passed that had been amazing, thought Janey Brown as she waited in the queue for the coach, pulling her hat down further to stop the sun burning her nose. The year had quite simply been out-of-this-world.

“Don’t sit at the back,” said her best friend, Alfie, giving her a shove in the back-pack. “Those goons will just want to wave at people out the back window. And not there either,” he added, shuddering as he saw which seat Janey had been about to slide into. “Too near Mum.”

“Your mum’s coming?” Janey was surprised. Alfie’s mum was the headmistress of Winton School, but as she didn’t have a class of her own she didn’t normally go on school trips with the pupils.

“Are you kidding?” Alfie plonked himself next to Janey.

“Her two favourite pupils are going – that’s you and me, in case you hadn’t realised – on our last ever school trip from Winton. And where are we going?”

“Solfari Lands,” said Janey with a grin.

No wonder Mrs Halliday couldn’t resist. Solfari Lands was the wildlife park operated by Janey’s own father, Boz Brilliance Brown, Superspy, master of disguise, and head of his own spying organisation, Solomon’s Polificational Investigations – or SPI. His team included Mrs Halliday and Alfie, otherwise known as Agent Halo and Spylet Al Halo; Janey’s exuberant SPI Kid Educator – or SPI:KE – who went by the name of G-Mamma, and various other spies and spylets, with Jane Blonde, Sensational Spylet proving to be the greatest of them all.

Janey still found it hard to believe that when she stepped into the Wower, the super-charged spy shower in G-Mamma’s Spylab, as

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an ordinary, mousey-haired school-girl, she emerged as her platinum blonde, multi-gadged alter-ego, Jane Blonde. But it was true. And that was what had made the year so completely incredible – along with the various gadgets she'd employed, the friendships she'd established, and the death-defying missions she'd been hurled on to protect her father, her fellow SPIs and spylets, and even the Earth itself, from destruction at the hands of the mad scientific genius – rogue spy – Copernicus. Who also happened to be Alfie's father.

Mrs Halliday clambered up the coach steps and clapped her hands. "Well, boys and girls, here we are... Your very last trip, before you all go your separate ways after the summer holidays. Let's make the most of it. And Jake Bell," she said loudly to one of the 'goons' on the back seat, "if you even think of sticking your tongue out through that back window, I'll make you stay with me at Winton for another year."

Nothing gets passed Agent Halo! thought Janey.

She smiled at her head-teacher as she walked by, counting heads. Mrs Halliday's hand paused over Janey's hair, and then she dropped her hand in a sudden, furtive flick, and moved on down the bus. Janey looked down to find a note in her lap.

She opened it eagerly and read it to Alfie in a whisper. "Lunch for you and A with your father. 12.30. Usual place. I'll cover." Mrs Halliday had signed off with a flat oval-shape – a halo.

Janey was so excited she nearly jumped out of her seat. Instead she settled for grabbing her friend and fellow spylet by the elbow. "Alfie! My dad's here!"

"So it seems," said Alfie. "Wonder who he'll be this time?"

"Hmmm. Good question." Over the course of the missions that Janey had completed, her father had turned up either as himself (dark-haired, blue-eyed Boz Brown), or as the version of himself he'd created by going through the dangerous Crystal Clarification process – tall, sandy-haired, brown-eyed Abe Rownigan. And he

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even had another alter ego – Solomon Brown, his own completely invented brother. Janey gave herself a little squeeze. She didn't care which body he turned up in. It was just enough that he was going to be there.

The sun beat down on the coach windows as they meandered their way further into the surrounding countryside. *The usual place*, thought Janey, fanning herself absently with the note from Mrs Halliday. She must mean the Spylab hidden away beneath the Amphibian House, under the holographic North American Wood Frogs that had inspired her father's first experiments. Only true SPI members would know its location, and Janey could hardly stop herself from running straight there as the coach pulled up in the car park.

"Steady," said Alfie, seeing how excited she was. "It's only eleven o'clock."

"I know," moaned Janey. "It's so frustrating. Imagine having your dad so close and not being able to see him ... oh. Sorry."

Alfie shrugged at the mention of his father. Last time he'd seen him, Copernicus had been Satisfy'd, Spynamited, and Wowed by Jane Blonde, pretty much all at the same time – and the results had not been pretty. Alfie's evil father was now a revolting squid-like creature, who the SPI team had sent to his death in the depths of the earth. "Not seeing my father is a very good thing, believe me."

"Oh look," said Janey, changing the subject. "Monkeys! Aren't they cute?"

The class stood back and watched cages were unloaded from the back of a gigantic truck. There were tiny marmosets and lemurs, black, furry chimpanzees and two vast crates, each containing a bored-looking, marmalade-coloured Orang Utang. "Don't touch," warned one of the men as the class gathered around. "Some of these can give you nasty bites."

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Janey looked at the nearest chimp. He was cuddled up against a slightly bigger chimpanzee, and didn't look capable of hurting a fly, let alone a person. Her heart went out to him, and unthinkingly, she gave him a tiny wave. "Hello, little chimp."

The chimp looked back at her with shiny round eyes, and suddenly moved his hand around in a circle. Janey gasped. "He waved at me!" She grabbed Alfie's arm and pointed at the cage. "That one! I waved at him and he did a ... a circle thing back at me."

"A circle thing?" Alfie looked closely at the two chimpanzees. "I think he was just lifting his ... what is it, a hand or paw? Anyway, look, he was just picking out the other one's fleas. That's disgusting," he said loudly to the chimp, who blinked at him solemnly and then carried on combing through the other's coat.

"You're probably right," said Janey, a little disappointed. A waving chimp might even have rivaled her wonderful spy-pet, Trouble the cat. "Oh well. Let's go and look at the rhinos."

They wandered around the wildlife park ambling in the sunshine in a great loop that took them past hippos, rhinoceros and tigers, enclosures of deer, impala, and zebra, then down a hill into the tropical bird aviary. The next stop was the Amphibian House. Janey checked her watch. 12.20. Not long now before she could see her dad.

Sure enough, Mrs Halliday shot her a quick, knowing glance before calling all the children to her. "It's about time we had some lunch. The picnic area's just behind those trees." She stood like a traffic warden, arms out, waving the class through the gap in the trees until Janey and Alfie were the only ones left. "Back here in forty five minutes," she muttered out of the side of her mouth, before marching through the grass towards the picnic area.

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As Janey pushed through the doors of the Amphibian House, her heart began to thud with anticipation. Last time she had been here, she'd been trapped in the Spylab by the evil Sinerlesse leader, Ariel. Janey was now ten times the spylet she had been on her first mission. She pressed the red eye of a model tree-frog, and stepped onto the cushion of air at the top of the entry tube that led down into her father's Spylab.

Janey and Alfie scrambled to their knees in the stark light of the lab, and looked around for her father. "There you are," said a deep voice, and suddenly Janey was wrapped in a warm hug, her nose pressed into a salmon-pink Solfari Lands polo shirt.

Her father held her at arm's length, and Janey looked up at the crinkly brown eyes and flashing grin of Abe Rownigan. "You look well," he said gently.

"So do you," said Janey, her smile so big that her eyes had become slits, and she could hardly see.

Abe reached over and shook Alfie's hand. "Al, good to see you."

"You too. Thanks for inviting me for lunch," said Alfie. "Sir," he added as an afterthought, going slightly pink.

"Ah, yes. Lunch." Abe looked around the laboratory, rubbing his hands through his hair so it stood up in curls. "I forgot about that. I could check the fridge. G-Mamma might have filled it up last time she was here."

"It doesn't matter. We've got our sandwiches with us." Janey jostled her back-pack around so he could see, and Abe smiled.

"Great. Sandwiches it is. You eat," he said, leading them to one of the workbenches, "and I'll talk."

Janey knew that her father put himself in danger whenever he came out of hiding. He must have something very important to share with her and Alfie. The atmosphere was electric, and Abe was pacing around the bench. What was on his mind?

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“Sandwich?” Janey offered.

“Did your mum make them?” Abe grinned. Jean Brown’s lack of kitchen skills was legendary in their family. Of course, she had other legendary skills, namely the ones she’d used as super-SPI, Gina Bellarina, before she’d been brain-wiped into a dull but worthy existence as Jean Brown, cleaner, businesswoman, and mum.

“I made them,” Janey said with a grin.

Abe shook his head anyway. “I’m too fired up to eat, to be honest.”

“Has something happened, sir?” Alfie opened his lunchbox and fiddled anxiously with a sausage roll. “You don’t think that my da—“

“No,” said Abe looking directly at Alfie “There’s no evidence that Copernicus has resurfaced. But I’m going to need your help guarding the Spylab.”

Janey and Alfie both sat forward eagerly. Something WAS afoot, and that meant one thing – a new mission.

Abe paused, staring at his feet as though the enormity of this mission weighed him down. “I’ve discovered something. Something enormous. A ... process, I suppose you’d call it.”

“Like Crystal Clarification?” said Janey breathlessly. Her blood was racing through her veins, nervous excitement mounting with every word.

Her father nodded. “Yes. But bigger. Bigger than Crystal Clarification, and the Nine Lives theory, and the cloning process.” He ticked off the scientific discoveries on his fingers. “This is ... extreme. It could affect the whole of mankind.”

Janey held her breath, eyes shining. Alfie gasped, his sausage roll halfway to his wide-open mouth and his eyes round with anticipation.

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Abe leaned in closely. “This has to remain top secret. It’s a revolution.”

Janey’s gaze faltered for a moment. The only revolutions she’d ever heard of had involved guns and battles. “You’re starting a war?”

“No, no,” said her father quickly. “That’s the name of the new process I’ve discovered.”

“Revolution,” whispered Janey.

She exchanged glances with Janey. Even without saying anything more, they both knew the truth.

This mission was going to be their biggest yet.