



Chapter 1: A piece of cake

The cubicle fizzed as Jane Blonde, Sensational Spylet, stepped into the Wower to be changed back into an almost-normal schoolgirl once more.

It had become such a familiar routine that she barely noticed the pearlised moisture drops swirling around her inside the glittering spy-shower cubicle. Blonde was already thinking about what she would have to do when she got out of the Wower. Her SPIKE (Solomon's Polificational Investigations: Kid Educator) was in the Spy-lab, chewing anxiously on a carrot stick as she awaited a de-brief from her prize pupil. In fact, her only pupil.

There wasn't long to wait. Within a few moments, a robotic hand had removed Jane Blonde's voice-activated Ultra-gog spy spectacles, so that her eyes dimmed a little to their usual misty grey.

Her silver lycra Spysuit was removed, and the angular limbs beneath it were encased once again in a regular school-holidays uniform: jeans and a tee-shirt. Finally, another metallic hand whisked the bright platinum colour from her hair, along with the band that held it firmly in place in a high, multi-functional ponytail. Her fine mousey waves settled onto the spylet's shoulders, and Janey Brown emerged from the Wower.

Janey grinned as G-Mamma rifled through a plastic carton in her large stainless steel fridge. "Is this what you're looking for?"

G-Mamma seized the brown paper bag before Janey even had her arm fully extended. "That was mean, Blonde-girl. Mean, mean, mean. You know the order you're meant to do this in: De-code, de-brief, de-wow. Since when did you start de-wowing before you gave me the goodies. I mean, the crucial info."

"Just trying to help you stick to your diet, G-Mamma. You said that was my mission for the holidays," Janey said teasingly.

G-Mamma rolled her Amethyst-Dazzled eyes heavenwards. "That was just a trick, Blondette! I was bluffing! You were meant to see straight through it immediately and do the reverse: BRING ME CAKE!"

"Well, I worked it out in the end," said Janey.

"Unfortunately the only place to get cake at midnight was from the bins behind the bakeries. I chose the cleanest bin I could find. The cake's probably only a day or two old..."

"It's been through the Wower though!" G-Mamma's eyes gleamed as she pulled a square cardboard box out of the cubicle. "Look at that baby."

Janey laughed. The rather squashed and miserable victoria sponge she had raised from the depths of the dustbin had been

upgraded to a mighty gateau. Light-as-air angel cake, interspersed with hefty layers of jam, cream and butter icing, made its way into the cavern of G-Mamma's mouth. "Save me some!" said Janey. "That looks amazing. I didn't know the Wower worked on food as well as people. And cats."

She looked around the lab for her Spycat, Trouble. Since getting embroiled in her first mission, Trouble had become very attached to Janey, and now spent most of his time on the other side of G-Mamma's fireplace in Janey's bedroom, although the smell of cream cake and doughnuts often enticed him back to G-Mamma's lab. "Where is he, then? Have you seen him tonight?"

G-Mamma shook her head. "He's a cat, girly-girl. He's probably out chasing mice."

"He hates mice."

"True. Well, chasing birdies then."

"It's night-time."

G-Mamma tutted. "The kitty's fine. Now listen, it's the end of the holidays, and I want to show Solomon how much we've done since you saw him last." She reached out for a ruler, dropped a little kiss onto it and pointed the end at Janey. A tiny pin-prick of green light danced before her. "Speak. Tell your father what you've learned in the last couple of weeks."

The ruler was actually a LipSPICK (Lip-activated Spy Camera Kilobytery) – a spy camera with an enormous memory. Janey stared into the winking light and took in a deep breath. When she went back to school tomorrow, she would have to write a report about what she'd done in the holidays. There was no way she would be able to say what had really happened: that a mad woman called G-Mamma had turned up to inform her that Janey was actually a spy (well, a junior spy. A spylet – Jane Blonde); that her never-seen-

before Uncle Solomon was actually the head of Solomon's Polifunctional Investigations, and had disappeared with a secret so huge that it could change the world, since it allowed for one creature to be frozen and changed into another, completely different animal; that her lovely teacher and nice new friend Freddie were actually leading members of the evil rogue spy organisation, Sinerlesse, who Janey had to thwart. She certainly couldn't write that the head teacher and her son Alfie were really a Spy and Spylet, and her greatest friends and supporters.

And there was an even greater revelation. Her Uncle Solomon was really her father, Boz Brilliance Brown – who Janey always thought had died before her birth, and who her mother, Jean Brown, had partnered in her previous life as the Superspy, Gina Bellarina. It was all so crazy that Janey could hardly believe it herself.

“Come on,” muttered G-Mamma indistinctly, through a fifth mouthful of gateau. “Spill the beanage.”

“Okay.” Janey ticked off the various things she had learned over the last couple of weeks in her spy lessons. “Body language – I've learned how to make myself blend into a crowd without being seen, or how to stand out so all attention is on me if I'm the decoy. And I can read other people's body language to know if they're lying. Codes – I've covered half a dozen different encryptions. I've learned that a single hair can tell you if someone's been looking at your stuff, and I can take fingerprints with talcum powder. Equipment: I've mastered the Girl Gauntlet and my Fleet-feet technique. My self-defence is getting much better but I still know the best way for me to stay unhurt is to get out of the way. Um, I guess that's the lot.” Janey smiled into the camera, a little shyly.

“Excellent briefing, Blonde.” G-Mamma held the ruler out to Janey. “Now you hold it and turn it on me. I’ve worked out something a little special for Solomon.”

As Janey directed the camera, G-Mamma whipped a lime-green cloth off the nearby counter, and flicked a switch on the twin speakers that were hidden beneath it. A pounding rhythm filled the Spylab, and Janey’s SPIKE popped her head in time, from one side to the other.

Janey screwed up her eyes. “Oh no. I know what’s coming.”

“Yo, Sol!” yelled G-Mamma, flinging her hips around with wild abandon. “Here we go...

Your girl’s been SPIKED, and I hope you liked

What she has to say on Graduation day.

A Spylet true is what I have for you

And a badge of honour is what you’re gonna gonna gonna gonna...

GIVE BLONDE!”

Janey smiled hesitantly. G-Mamma had so much enthusiasm that it was difficult to avoid admiring her for it. “So I’ve graduated? Wow. How are you going to get this message to Solomon?”

“You’re all Spylet now, honey. Yes you are. And a Spylet should be able to work out the answer to that second question.” G-Mamma turned off the beat box to allow Janey some peace in which to think up the answer.

“Well, we don’t know where he is,” said Janey. “So we can’t send it anywhere with no address. Right. He’s not going to drop round here to collect it either, so...ah. Got it! He can collect the image from anywhere, wherever he is, provided he has the right password, or...or no, the right Lip Print activation?”

G-Mamma's round blue eyes shimmered. "Oh, girl, I trained you well. How spiky is that spiked spylet? Very very yes indeedy. Correct answer. Full points."

"So can I have some cake now?"

"No way. Too late. You'll get indigestion. And it's school in the morning. So through the tunnel and into bed with you."

G-Mamma shoved her towards the fireplace as Janey protested. "You're starting to sound like my mum."

Dropping to her knees, she shimmied through the short tunnel that ran between their two fireplaces, and brushed herself down on her bedroom hearth, before carrying out what was now her usual, secret night-time routine.

Janey swallowed down the guilty feeling that hit her in the gullet each time she did this, and pulled out the old shoe box containing her precious SPI-buys collection - gadgets her father had

sent her over the years. It had once contained perfume which was really SPI truth serum; a spy pen with invisible ink; rocket-powered hair slides, and a LipSPICK ruler of her own. Now all that remained was a few drops of SPIT and a miniscule disc of metal from the LipSPICK. It was this tiny circle that she now balanced on the end of her finger like someone putting in a contact lens. Instead of pushing it into her eye, however, she drew it to her mouth and, very gently, Janey gave it a feathery kiss.

"Hello," she whispered, as a moving image sprang up above her head.

The flickering light in Janey's bedroom caught the eye of the spy lurking outside in the garden. He turned his head slowly to the

window, as if it were weighed down by the strange, spiked mask he wore. His Ultra-gogs were built into the narrow eye-slits cut into the metal.

“X-ray,” he instructed under his breath. “And zoom.”

There it was again, on the ceiling – footage of a man, stroking the head of a large tabby kitten, and mouthing something to the camera. The spy caught his breath. and focused the Ultra-gogs to lip-read what the man was saying, over and over again.

“...what I’ve created...what I’ve created...what I’ve created.”

The spy smiled. From here on in, it was going to be plain sailing.

“Thank you, my dear,” he whispered. And then he was gone.