



Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to new era?

Chapter 1 - Midnight Mates

Janey Brown had been having a dream - a very nice one in which she was playing tennis with her dad. Boring, perhaps, to anyone else, but to Janey it had been the best dream ever. Her dad had been just that - a dad. Not a spy. Not an ever-changing personality who invented a pretend brother and then many different machines so he could live his extraordinary life. And definitely not someone who had turned himself into a hairy caveman and then lost himself in time. She sighed. Why did she have to wake up now?

Struggling out of bed, she peeped out of the window, wondering if it was the moans and howls of the ferocious gusts of wind outside that had woken her. A storm was brewing, although the day had been close and hot. An Indian summer - that was what her mum called the unusual autumn weather.

From the darkness appeared a face. ‘Aha!’ whispered Janey. So it wasn’t just the gale that had woken her. It must have been her spy instincts kicking in. Janey drew back behind the curtains, then moved alongside the window.

She’d been trained well. *Surprise, surprise, surprise* - the first rule of spying. G-Mamma had taught her that right back at the beginning. So instead of doing the obvious thing and looking through the crack in the middle of the curtains - risking being spotted - Janey hopped up on to the edge of her bed and peeked down through the narrow gap above the curtain rail. The face appeared disembodied, bobbing around in the alley behind the house like the moon on a stick. But that was only an illusion. The spy - for that was obviously what it was - was simply dressed in black so his body wasn’t visible in the darkness.

Furthermore, the spy was friend, not foe. Janey relaxed and twitched the curtain to one side.

What was Alfie up to? It was after midnight. And even though it wasn’t that unusual for spylets like herself and Alfie to be galloping about the globe in the middle of the night, that was only when they were on a mission.

She watched as Alfie jumped over the back fence, catching his trousers on a jagged splinter. He dropped down, head swivelling left and right as he took in the details of the garden.

Janey opened the window. ‘Halo! What are you doing?’

Alfie stared back at her, his upturned face glowing in the moonlight. For a moment he looked terrified, then he grinned, holding up a scrap of paper that was nearly snatched from his hand by the wind.

‘What’s that? And what are you wearing?’ hissed Janey.

Janey only ever saw her best friend and Spylet buddy in one of three outfits: his school uniform, his denim-blue SPIsuit, or jeans and a sweatshirt. Oh, and occasionally his football gear. Right now

he was sporting wide black trousers that billowed around his legs - no wonder they'd snagged on the fence - and a short V-necked jumper that made him look taller and more gangly than usual.

Alfie glanced down at his clothes, then shrugged. Style was never that important to him. The little tornado behind him made his whole body quiver, and Janey tutted as she realised what he'd been up to. He'd been flying the Pet Jet. And he'd left the engine running, so much so that some sort of force was dragging him back towards it.

'Hang on,' whispered Janey. 'I'm coming down.'

Moments later she eased open the back door and flitted silently into the garden. 'Alfie why didn't you just ...'

... SPIV me, she had been about to say. He could easily have contacted her on the SPI Visualator she always wore around her neck or kept on the bedside table at night.

But he wasn't there. Janey pushed back the mousy hair that whipped around her face as the gathering storm grew more violent. Head down, she battled through the wind towards the back of the garden where Alfie had been standing.

Gone.

'Alfie!' said Janey crossly. She could have just stayed in bed. What was he mucking about at? The wheel of the Pet Jet was still spinning.

Maybe he was hiding. A glint of moonlight caught her eye as she looked for him behind the garage. When she had finally made up her mind that he wasn't there, Janey braved the gusts of wind and foraged in the grass for whatever had gleamed.

It was a little glass ball, clear for the most part, with a curved sliver of coloured glass nestled at the centre. For a moment Janey wondered if it was one of G-Mamma's sweets. She'd been living in the garage for a while, after all, and the ball could be a re-invented

Malteser that had been through the Wower. But then she spotted a strand of black fibre attached to it.

‘Alfie’s.’ It had probably fallen out of his pocket when he’d caught his new black trousers on the fence.

Well, I might just keep it, she thought. Serve him right for getting me out of bed on a hideous windy night. And Jane Blonde stomped her way across the garden and headed back to the warmth of her duvet. The wind swooped and roared throughout the night, but with a pillow wrapped around her head Janey hardly heard a thing.