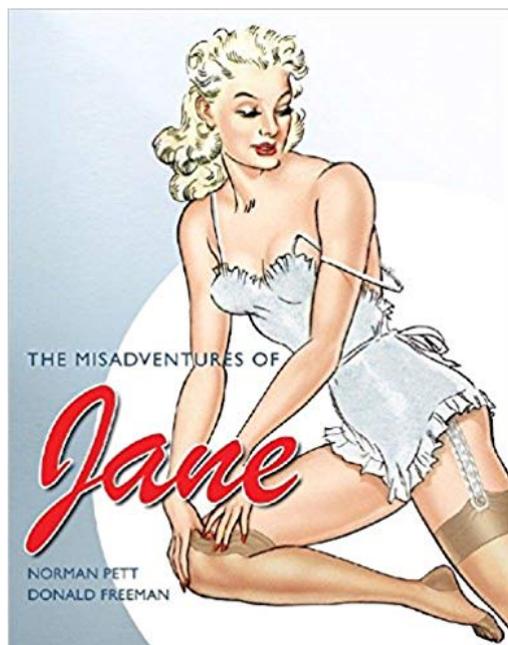


## The Misadventures of Jane by J. H. G. Freeman, Norman Pett



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She was the world's first pin-up girl and glamour model. She teased, thrilled and titillated a generation of fighting men, her likeness graced bombers, tanks and tattoos and at the height of her popularity she was enjoyed by over four million readers a day! The new Jane anthology, the first in 20 years collects, together a year's worth of classic cartoon strips as well as some extremely rare, full-color pin-up art not seen in print for over sixty years.



## Reviews of the The Misadventures of Jane by J. H. G. Freeman, Norman Pett

### Arador

What Milton Caniff's alluring Miss Lace was for war-weary, sex-starved American GIs during World War II, THE DAILY MIRROR's Jane was for hard-pressed British "Tommyes" -- and both more and less besides. "More," because Jane was not created specifically to boost wartime morale, but had

instead been appearing in THE MIRROR since 1932. "Less," because Jane, rather than being an alluring, iconic totem like Miss Lace, (1) actively got involved in the war effort as an intelligence officer and (2) took her endearing habit of frequently being accidentally disrobed to a higher plateau, often appearing fully or partially nude. Jane's raiment-relinquished doings were so racy for the time that even a "cleaned-up" version of the strip failed to catch on in the more prurient U.S. Titan Books, which has previously reprinted such British comic strips as DAN DARE and MODESTY BLAISE, has now given us an eyeful of what we've been missing by reprinting several continuities from Jane's memorable wartime career.

Jane started as a "flapper" character of sorts. Perpetually accompanied by a dachshund named Fritz (amateur Freudians, the time is now yours), she was a gag-a-day character until "Don" Freeman assumed the writing chores in 1938 and introduced continuity into the mix -- not to mention plenty of puns, wordplay, and high-toned literary allusions. Artist Norman Pett delineated the "misadventures" of the leggy blonde beauty -- many of which involved pratfalls that divested Jane of at least the top layer of her clothes -- in a style hovering somewhere in the vicinity of Caniff territory, though with somewhat cruder figure drawing (especially noticeable in backgrounds and angled facial profiles, where Pett had a tendency to give everyone, including Jane, overly large noses). World War II was the best thing ever to happen to the strip, giving Jane a less frivolous purpose in life and providing Pett with the perfect excuse to make the comic a literal "strip." Following the war, Pett left for other projects and the strip slowly foundered, finally expiring in the late 1950s. Several later attempts to revive JANE all tanked. However, Chrystabel Leighton-Porter, the primary model for Jane -- she also appeared in movies and stage shows -- remained popular with aging veterans until her death in 2000.

In this collection of strips from 1944-1945, Jane goes "undercover" (that seems to be an inappropriate word, somehow) as a member of NAAFI (a service organization that provided refreshments and such to British troops) and ENSA (the British version of the USO) and encounters appropriately nasty Nazi agents and guerrilla fighters. The depictions of Jane's foes aren't exactly subtle; the "lingerie salesman" who's actually a spy scoping out an RAF airfield is so transparently a bad guy that he should be wearing a SPY VS. SPY-style trenchcoat and dark glasses. Far more interesting are the interactions between Jane and her there-and-back-again beau, Lieutenant Georgie Porgie -- Freeman wasn't that great with character names, either -- and a shy NAAFI worker named Dinah, whom Jane convinces to shake loose of that metaphorical corset and ultimately snare a fiancée. As one might imagine, Jane picks up a few would-be suitors along the way, a French secret agent and a Russian officer among them, but stays loyal to Georgie (whom she would eventually marry at the end of the strip's run). What makes Jane interesting to me is the fact that she is often used as the butt of physical humor -- of the clothes-shedding variety and otherwise -- yet Pett and Freeman obviously respect her as a clever, courageous woman who may be somewhat naive but is aware of her naivete on some level. Jane could very easily have been turned into a buffoonish bimbo à la Little Annie Fanny, but her creators refused to let that happen. Probably Jane's closest American relative is Sally the Sleuth from SPICY DETECTIVE STORIES, but Jane is a far more interesting (and far better-drawn) character.

Titan includes a few tantalizing extras in the form of a vintage newspaper article from the Canadian armed forces newspaper THE MAPLE LEAF and some beautiful full-color reproductions from JANE'S JOURNAL, a postwar collection of pin-ups and poems. I am, however, disappointed that the modern perspective on the character was not given more attention. We get a one-page glorified blurb, "Introducing Jane," but that's about it. For the American release of the book, some explanatory footnotes on terms and acronyms used by the characters would also have been helpful. For all of Freeman's clever wordsmithing, though, the "madame" is the message here. If you like classic "good girl" art by the likes of Caniff, Bill Ward, and Dan DeCarlo, you'll certainly enjoy this collection.

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...should try this one. I hadn't actually heard of Jane until encountering it/her in a local "alternate" bookstore. I'm glad I did. This character, according to Sir Winston himself via a quote on the back cover, helped raise British squaddies' and others' morale, and the character does a creditable job in rooting out spies both domestically and in wartime Europe. She is often seen déshabillé, even almost full-frontal, and it's all done in fun. Yet it's still surprising this was allowed during the forties, and the other reviewer notes that a toned-down version was floated in the U.S. Today it would be considered very tame, but always fun.

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