

In the mainstream and on the edges, you'll feel the urgency of the struggle for reproductive justice as you turn these pages.

—Cindy Cooper, Founding Director of *Words of Choice*

# Hello. This is Jane.



## Judith Arcana

## Praise for **Hello. This is Jane.**

Judith Arcana's remarkable feat in *Hello. This is Jane.* is to paint, tile by tile, a complex mosaic of compelling linked stories—children's playgrounds and adult tattoo parlors, ill-advised lovers and underground abortion activists. In the mainstream and on the edges, you'll feel the urgency of the struggle for reproductive justice as you turn these pages.

—Cindy Cooper, Founding Director of *Words of Choice*  
and *The Reproductive Freedom Festival*

In a witty and searching voice, Arcana writes of resistance and revolutionary compassion, past, present, and future. Here is fiction rooted in the actual history of the Chicago underground abortion service known as JANE, which operated in the days before a woman's right to the procedure was legalized. Arcana herself was one of the young "Janes" providing abortions, and her tales of women helping women—the daring and secrecy, the risks and rewards—are essential reading, a warning and an inspiration for our time.

—Kate Manning, Author of *My Notorious Life*, a novel

I'm profoundly grateful to Judith Arcana for writing these vital, electrifying stories. With abortion rights in America being stripped away—state by state, clinic by clinic—we need to hear from those who've fought this battle before. Arcana is a Jane; her work in the pre-Roe abortion underground has provided the seeds for her fiction, stories rooted in essential history to spark action in our terrifying present.

—Leni Zumas, Author of *Red Clocks*

# Hello. This is Jane.



SNIPPETS  
STORIES BY

**Judith Arcana**

FREE PREVIEW

• LEFT FORK •  
O'BRIEN, OREGON

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

## Answering the Question

Sandy's on a talk show, and she's talking; there's a YouTube clip that's getting a lot of play. In the clip, which opens with the camera focused on a tattoo on her right forearm (a small red apple with two little green leaves on its tiny stem), she's explaining how most people felt different forty-five years ago – different about contraception, abortion and motherhood in those years before the anti-abortion movement. Now she's getting to the part, about ten minutes in, where she says that sometimes people ask the Janes if anybody died.

Journalists, sociologists, undergraduates considering careers in what's now called healthcare delivery, people who show up in classrooms, auditoriums and bookstores where Janes are talking – they sometimes raise their hands in the q&a and ask if anybody died. Or they wait 'til the end, when the event is over and the Jane is being taken out for supper by the people who invited her to talk. Then they come up to her and ask, sometimes in almost a whisper, Did anybody die?

What they mean, Sandy thinks, is this: Did you kill anybody? The amazing thing about this question, she always says, is that the ones who ask it obviously expect the Jane to tell them. If that Jane thinks anyone in the Service killed somebody, the people who ask her think she'll tell them. So they start out with a belief in the honesty and integrity of the Janes. Isn't that kind of amazing?

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

Betsy Is Interviewed for  
*Tattoo Queen's* Website  
Biography Series

Some things you just realize you know, like how to behave on the subway. Other things you have to study and practice, like a new language, or how to stand on your head. I decided to learn about tattoos. How I did it was I spent a certain amount of time around what used to be called *parlors*, watching the work being done, studying the flash on the walls and in the books. In Chicago I mostly liked the place on Broadway in Uptown, where I got work done by an old guy named Jerry. Jerry was quirky; you might even say he was *difficult* – and he was really good.

Now, this was Chicago in the early 1970's. I hung around the local artists and read about the famous ones, their style and attitude and how different they could be – some guys wanting it to be art, some laughing at that even when it was. I heard them talk about single needles, slender like wires, and bunches soldered into three, five, seven or nine-liners. They knew the speed of the gun by sound; they could tell if it was racing or dragging. They'd say, Let's go seven-wide on this one, and make thick curves, blending their fast little circles, mixing their own color when the basics couldn't take them where they wanted to go. Pretty quick I learned that work done over bone and tendon hurt more than work over muscle and fat, and I felt the sting of the thinnest needle on the inside flesh of my elbow. Once I took my vacation in San Francisco so I could visit Lyle Tuttle's museum and studio. I

read tattoo magazines and taped their pages up on my walls. I read books about Japan and New Guinea, articles about sailors. I read about people all over the world who used tattoo for thousands of years – that's how I learned tattooing is magic.

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

**Hello. This is Jane.**

1. *Jane at Work*

The May morning is already bright but Denah and Eli are deep in sleep; it's maybe six when the phone rings, startling them awake. The phone's on his side of the bed.

Hullo? Huh? Yeah, just a minute. He hands the phone to Denah, rocking her shoulder and mouthing silently, It's for *Jane*.

Denah sits up to get clear. Hello? Yes, this is Jane. Who's this?

Her voice gets stronger. What's happening? Where are you?

Denah sits all the way up, against the headboard. Ok. Now, wait, please stop talking for a second and take a few deep, slow breaths. She breathes into the phone, a model. Then, suddenly, she throws herself across the bed, across Eli, and slams the phone down.

Omygod, Eli! Get up – there's a woman, across the street at Grant, she's there right now, she went there to miscarry. Some doctor has been threatening her, and she's hysterical – he grabbed the phone right out of her hand just now – yelled at me – says he knows where I am! He said, *We know who you are. We know where you are.* He says they're coming right now!

Eli sits up fast and says, Let's look. They jump off the bed, rush to the front window, the side of their building that faces the hospital. The street is empty, silent.

Denah is wild-eyed; Eli is calm. He puts his hands on her shoulders and says, Let's get out of here.

Yes! And we have to get the Jane stuff out! Jesus! Eli – I have everything! The cards, the file, the phone machine, the beeper – it's all here.

We'll take care of it. He's getting dressed as he talks. We're going to put everything – all of it – in my golf bag. I'll go out like always, down the fire escape. You go out the door, walk toward the lake on Webster. I'll meet you in the car at the corner of Clark. In the car we'll figure out where to go.

They're both dressed now – cut-offs, t-shirts, glasses; she pushes the Jane gear into his bag, he slides in a couple pairs of socks and stuffs a jacket on top. They're out of the apartment in less than four minutes, at the corner of Clark Street in less than two more.

Eli drives south on small streets, zig-zagging like a Jane on a work day. They stop at a gas station past Roosevelt Road, so Denah can call Allie.

Allie opens the door of her Hyde Park apartment wearing a bathrobe and long sparkly earrings. Her face is puffy from sleep. When they're inside, she goes to her front window and looks out.

Nothing. I think it was a bluff. He didn't really know where you were, or who you are. You weren't her counselor – she just called you Jane. Why did she even have your number?

I said Rita could give it to her for backup, in case Rita couldn't deal with whatever she needed when labor started. You

know, the kids or something. So she gave her my number and just told her it was another Jane. But here's the thing – if they have that number, they can get the name&address from Reverse Information – I don't know why they didn't, or haven't. Or maybe they did. Maybe they have – by now.

Eli says, Well, maybe she didn't have it written down. Maybe she memorized it.

Denah and Allie look at him.

Allie says to Denah, More likely she dialed before he came in, so the number wasn't sitting out there when he busted in on her and grabbed the phone. If he had that number, maybe he *would* have done what he said; they'd've been in your apartment before you were out of it. I think he doesn't have it. He doesn't know. He can't know. Who he is and how he thinks, every day of his life, keep him from knowing who we are and what we do. Guys like that never know these things because they can't – lucky for us – imagine them.

Eli dodged around on the way here – we didn't take the Drive. I'm sure nobody followed us. But I want to leave everything here for a while, Allie. At the next meeting we can decide – if nothing's happened – where it all should be, whether it's safe to keep it at my place again.

In the car on the way home Eli says, It's not safe to have that stuff at our place, Denah. It never was, and now for sure. How much closer do they have to be – I mean, that hospital is across the street, for godsake.

If nothing happens, I think Allie is right – he was bluffing. There's no reason to change anything.

There is silence in the car. Then Eli says, How about this for a reason? The end of June'll be five months, you'll be starting to look pregnant, easy to spot; maybe it'll be harder for you

to move fast. And there's me, too, Denah. My place in all this, what I think, my feelings – my law license! That's not a reason?

Let's see what happens. We don't have to decide anything right this minute.

They are quiet again, driving along the lake. It's maybe seven now, and the light on the water is turning to gold.

Then Eli says, Ok. Ok. So – was she wearing those earrings while she was sleeping? Those long earrings, at six-thirty in the morning? I mean, did she wear them to bed? Or did she put them on when you called, because we were coming over? Or what? What *about* that? I mean, you gotta wonder.

\* \* \*

Later the same day, Lucy is standing at the checkout counter in a medical supply house. She's got six dozen clear plastic vaginal specula in various sizes, packed in plastic bags. When her turn at the register comes, she pays cash. When the clerk asks the name of her company for the receipt, she says, North Side Women's Clinic.

She heads home, stopping at the drug store on the way, leaving all the bags on the floor in the back of the car, her jacket tossed over them. Pushing hard on the revolving door – it's got one of those wind-stopping rubber panels attached at the bottom – she flashes on yesterday afternoon, when she stopped at that day's apartment to ask the working Janes what supplies they'd need.

She knew Betsy was working; she thought maybe they'd have lunch together and she'd return Betsy's copy of *Zelda*. As Lucy walked down the hall, she heard a gasp from one of the bedrooms and looked in. The woman on the bed had blood pumping out of her vagina, hard. It hit the wall behind Jake before he could cover the open speculum with one hand and

reach with the other for Kleenex, Kotex, a towel – whisper-shouting to Betsy, Ice trays! Fast!

Today, now, at the drug store, the cash register clerk says, Gosh, you buy so much alcohol every week! If this was Prohibition I'd think you were making bathtub gin! He smiles at her.

Lucy is startled out of her memory of the day before by his apt comparison, but makes herself smile back and laugh a little. She says, I make jewelry, and I clean the beads, the wires, and the backing of semi-precious stones with alcohol.

When she tells this story at home to Mary Jo – who, as usual these days, is not amused – she laughs and says, And while I'm saying this, I'm hoping the guy doesn't know any more about making jewelry than I do, which is pretty much nothing. She hasn't told Mary Jo about the day before, about Jake and the woman with the blood and the ice, even though everything turned out ok. The woman is fine, but that's not the part Mary Jo would focus on.

Lucy and Mary Jo live rent-free in the Service's northside midwife apartment, where women come to miscarry when they are too far along in their pregnancies for the Service to do a D&C.

Mary Jo says, I don't see how you can think that's funny. I don't see why you don't think that's dangerous – and scary. You'll make a joke out of anything, even *this*.

Look, Mary Jo, this is how you can live here without paying rent; how else would we get to live in a place like this? In a neighborhood turning rundown crap into middle class heaven all around us? Besides, you knew what the deal was when you moved in.

I didn't know what it would be like! I couldn't imagine it in advance!

You're an artist, for chrissake! You've got a rich imagination – a psychedelic imagination, in fact. You're the first woman I ever met who had a tattoo – not counting Janis Joplin but ok, I haven't really *met* her. That suggests creativity, even open-mindedness. Doesn't it?

I mean it about this not being funny, Lucy. But look, it doesn't matter what the reason is. Fact is, I can't stand it. I probably shouldn't stay here. I probably shouldn't have moved here in the first place. And, I gotta say, I have trouble thinking *you* should. Shit, Lucy, I have trouble thinking you *do* this!

Ok, fine. We've been heading this way for a while, I know. This conversation is even a little overdue. If you can't stay, you can't stay. But I want you to tell me the truth – is this about being Catholic? Is this because you think it's a sin? Do you think I'm bad, wrong? That all these women are bad and wrong?

I never go to church, certainly not to confession; I never pray – you know that.

Yeah, well, I eat bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches, but that doesn't mean my rotten relationship with my sister won't cross my mind on Yom Kippur. Just tell me. I need to know. Is it religion? Or is it just that these terrified women show up at our place in the middle of the night with contractions – and the cops could bust in here any time? *That* I can understand. Because that's what I think – often.

Well, *I* think that over at St Bartholomew's, even Father Sweeney, that shithead with his threats of hellfire, couldn't possibly compete with *this* stuff! It's all of what you said, Lucy; it's *all* of that – and the fact you're so exhausted most of the time. Even when you're *not* on call, when we both

have a break and could fool around, go to a movie, get high. I want you to be healthy, I want us to be happy – we're young! Jesus, Lucy, we're still kids! You shouldn't have all this responsibility!

There's a pause at this possibly offensive and probably ridiculous statement, a pause in which Lucy eyes her, waiting.

Mary Jo continues. Ok, yeah, I suppose sometimes I do think about what the nuns taught me. How could I not? They were so heavy, with their full-out habits, so intense, they left a big impression on me. To say the least. And even though I didn't like them, what they said came in – it came in, and it's still part of me.

What if we got Father Sweeney to join those guys in Concerned Chicago Clergy or whatever they call it – the ones who do abortion counseling. Think that'd help?

Everything's a joke to you – or, if it isn't to start with, you make it that way. Some things just aren't funny, Lu.

\* \* \*

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

Sons and Lovers

Some people remember tragic or funny or surprising things, but Dwayne remembers mostly what he thinks of as regular everyday life. Like, when he was a boy, his mother never made him eat anything he didn't want, but he had to choose from what was already there, in the icebox and cupboards. By the time he was in high school, he'd usually choose a can of soup and add things to it, like apple slices or celery or crumbles of toast and cheese. Rosemary would say, Now, Dwayne, there's things already in there, they make it so you don't have to put in even any water. I know, Mama, he'd say, but the things already in there are too soft. She always had some cans of soup up in the cupboard, with the sugar and salt and baking soda; she called these things staples. When he asked her why she called them the same name as the little metal paper fasteners, she said, Well honey, I guess I don't know; that is what they are though.

Raising Dwayne, Rosemary'd been careful about food, and one result was, except when he was in the army and had to eat what *they* had, he was pretty much always robust and cheerful. He'd learned from his mother to put apples, carrots or something green along with the leftover macaroni, the ham or tuna sandwich in his bag when he packed his lunch to eat at the shop. Then he'd gone beyond that, beyond her, to think about things like this new idea of complementary proteins and, later, organic vegetables.

Every morning Dwayne makes a drink in the blender, putting in brewers yeast powder, raw egg yolk, apple juice and whatever fruit's in the kitchen: peaches on the verge of going bad, bananas like his Uncle G prefers them – nearly black, so soft they're almost liquid inside the skin. These're still good, Ro, he'd say, taking them out of the garbage while Rosemary rolled her eyes at Dwayne. Dwayne, now, doesn't go that far, but he says they're not ripe if they have any green on them; he says they're a little hard to digest until they're nice and brown. When he pours the dregs of his drink out of the blender, he runs a little water into the glass canister, swirls it around, and drinks it. That way he gets as much of it as possible, and wastes almost nothing.

He does that every morning, standing at the counter by the sink, looking out the window at the corner where the #8 bus stops. When Norma had occasion to be there in the morning, she was impressed by, but did not choose to share, his methods.

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

## Men of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*A motley group of clergymen began meeting less than a year after the Roberts court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision of their 1973 predecessors. Here's a partial transcript taken from FBI files:*

John Smith: Truth is, I'm not good at knowing what to say when a woman comes into my office, bursts into tears, tells me she's pregnant and can't have the baby. I think probably I need to have a woman in there with me, talking.

Sam Abramowitz: Can you have someone from the congregation join you for those meetings?

John Smith: Thing is, I don't always know, when she says she wants to talk to me, *that'll* be the subject of the conversation – I don't have anybody on call or nearby I can get to right away, when the conversation goes that way.

Ahmed Mustafah: Whoa, wait a minute here. I don't think it's a good idea to bring members of your congregation into what might turn out to be criminal activity.

Joe Cohen: I agree with Ahmed; what we need is some kind of training, so we can be better at talking with these women.

Doug Grayson: Do we need to do more than give referrals?

Stan McKellen: Yes! Don't you guys consider this a part of pastoral counseling? I mean, these women are coming to us with a serious emotional problem, something that requires guidance and comfort, the same way they'd come to us for anything else, like if they found out their kids were using drugs or their partners unfaithful – whatever. Even though abortion is illegal again, the counseling part is the same as it always was. Think about what that guy in Wichita had to go through – probably *still* has to deal with even now – having George Tiller assassinated right there in his church! What would *that* feel like? PTSD for the whole congregation, right? Tiller was a deacon, for Lord's sake! Hey, don't look at me like that, you guys. I can't help thinking about these things.

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

## Denah & the Strawberry, Talking

Denah says, Are you telling me you want a name? I mean, a real name? Is it not ok for me to be calling you the Strawberry? Too cute? I suppose you know I'd have named you Franny, after my mother. If I'd kept you, I mean; if you'd been born.

The Strawberry says, Franny's a good name and I like it, but – please don't be offended, Denah, I know how you feel about her – I don't think it's right for me. I always thought her dying young was part of why you're so thoughtful, so careful, about motherhood. I've even wondered if, any of the times you got tattooed, you ever thought about those hearts that say MOTHER. But you know what? I think you're on to something here. You know how sometimes it takes somebody else saying what you think to make you know that's what you think? I *am* interested in having a name.

I used to think those heart tattoos are like Mother's Day cards – mostly phony and superficial. But they *are* classic flash, and I might find the nostalgia appealing; I mean, if I were to do it now. I'm sure some of the people who get them are sincere. I *could* get a heart that says "Franny," or a ribbon with her name on it. There's this woman here in town whose work I really like; she'd do a good job.

Think about it, turn it over in your mind. But right now, let's concentrate on a name for me. I think maybe I need kind of a *trans* name, Denah. Because my gender wasn't done yet when you aborted me. I was, what, 5-6 weeks at most? Practically still an embryo. You can say I'm female, because at that stage every fetus is – but I think I should have a name that's not gender-specific.

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

## Knocking

*... The younger generation  
will come knocking on my door.*

– Henrik Ibsen

Andrea got tattooed in the summer of '73, a pink ribbon with red rosebuds at both ends and the name “Jane Roe” written on it, rippling across her belly a few inches below her navel. Even later, when Weddington’s plaintiff went over to the dark side, that name still meant what it was supposed to mean: Everywoman. Anywoman. Andrea.

She met the two young women in this story at the hot tubs on NE 33rd. She was lying on her back on a bench, eyes closed to the sun drying her naked skin, baking her cough, when she felt their shadows move across her face and chest. She opened her eyes and one of them said, I love your tattoo! It’s so, like, vintage! The lines, you know? The style – and the meaning too, the politics. Totally.

Andrea sat up.

Yeah? She squinted. I see you don’t have any yourself, though. She looked at the other young woman and said, You, however, are ahead of the game. The second one, who hadn’t spoken yet, had bracelets of bright beads tattooed on both wrists, tiny golden serpents wound around both nipples, and a purple sash drawn in soft folds circling her waist.

Both of them were darker than Andrea, but she couldn’t be sure, squinting in the sun, if they were women of color or

simply tanned by the strong summer sun of global warming. When she'd first opened her eyes, dazzled by that light, Andrea thought – for just the tiniest second, the way you can think a whole story in what seems later like not even time – maybe these young women could be mixed-race grandmothers of the golden people she imagines will live on earth afterwards, when the horrors have subsided and remaining species are few enough to live on the little bits of air and water that're left, eating food grown in soil clean enough to be tilled in those new, post-Monsanto, years.

She squeezed her eyes shut again for a second and did a tiny head shake. Then she opened her eyes and saw them clearly: two young women, naked as she was, out there on the wooden deck of a bath house in Northeast Portland.

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture

*Denah talks to the movie people*

I remember tiny details and I remember whole scenes. Sometimes I even see them as shots, as if through a camera lens – like the scene with Sherrie, the woman I was with when we got busted: We’re standing there, waiting for the elevator, and the camera is behind us – so when the doors open, the audience sees the cops in that frame. Those guys looked like they were *already* in a movie, actors playing 1972 Chicago cops: white guys, shiny black shoes, trench coats. They talked like they learned how from tv.

But here’s the thing – there’s a lot I don’t remember. I don’t remember the name of any other woman that day, just Sherrie, and I don’t remember what I said on the phone when I called my husband, Eli, from the police station and got Tony, his partner. I’ve forgotten a lot. We’ll have to invent all that – doesn’t matter though, does it? There’s the mystery of memory itself, for one thing. Who knows, now, what really happened that day, or might have happened? For the movie, it’ll be *based on a true story*. It can’t *be* a true story; that’s impossible. If it’s good though, I mean if we make a really good movie, it’ll tell the truth.

I’ve got files here on my laptop – my research, a bunch of pieces I’ve written over the years. When we decided to meet, I put it all together, making a list of possible scenes. I’ve never worked on a fiction film, never wrote screenplays

or treatments. I spent some time a few years ago thinking maybe I'd do it, but that did not – to put it kindly – pan out.

Now, don't be offended: I'm using this little recorder. My agent told me to do it so I'd have my own copy, audio, of what goes on here today. She said we were far enough along that I could talk freely but I should record everything. And this'll be clearly visible in your video, so we'll have a cross-referencing thing going on. After all the weeks of email and phone conversation – and seeing films you've worked on – I feel like I know you. It's probably an anachronism for me to even *care* about knowing you outside of cyberspace, but that's who I am, that's who you're working with here.

So, you don't mind if I'm sort of all over the place? After each question, I'll just talk 'til I stop? Then you'll ask more questions and I'll talk some more.

I remember two women from the holding tank, when the seven of us, the Janes, got put in with them. Even right now, while I'm telling you this, I can see both women *clearly*. It's weird, isn't it, what we remember? And what we don't? The first time I tried to write this, I didn't know who took care of the baby while I was working. Which is truly bizarre because at the time, I couldn't stop thinking about the baby. There was the breast milk situation plus fear – I was thinking: What if they take my baby away because I've been arrested? And: If I do time, he won't know me. That was in my head all day, and it was a *long* day; we started doing abortions about nine, got busted at three, got to the lockup around midnight.

A  
SNIPPET  
FROM

## Monumental

*By Stephanie Daley*

Visitors to the monument will be able to walk along the smooth curves of the surface, where they'll encounter the names engraved there. It is the intention and hope of the design team that visitors will also sit down on the grass or one of the many benches included in the model, and read the plaques that tell how it happened:

The condom broke. The IUD failed. The diaphragm slipped. The implant made me sick. One time we got foolish and this is what came from it. He wouldn't wear it. He wouldn't wait for me to put it in. We got a little drunk and went for a long walk on the beach and then, well, you know. He threw away my pills. He didn't pull out in time. They pushed me down on the floor in the basement. The priest said we should use the calendar. The doctor said it was an experiment. We were in love.

In one unusual aspect of the plan, high above the grass and benches will be carved words that no one who visits the monument can see. The team has daringly stretched their audience by including what cannot be seen by visitors, and their rationale seemed sound to the judges. Danforth Humphrey, Dean Emeritus of the Capitol School of Architecture and Design, and Charles Cadbury, former art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, explained what they and their fellow judges find praiseworthy in this unconventional design

element. “The carvings scattered around the monument far above ground level are all quotations from writers who addressed these issues before our youthful contest winners ever thought about them – in several cases, before these young women were even born. The carvings, like the names and aphorisms cut around the crowning frieze of so many of our great libraries, represent the philosophical history, if you will, of the present work,” said Dean Humphrey. “They are the relevant classics.”

(Interviewed by this reporter, the team agreed with that estimate and added, “It’s like having a tattoo where nobody sees it when you’re all dressed. You won’t show it to, like, just anybody, but you always know it’s there, and it’s really important – to you.”)

# **Hello. This is Jane.**

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