

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric photograph of a person standing in a forest. The scene is overlaid with a complex, glowing blue and white shattered glass effect that radiates from the center. The sun is visible in the upper left corner, partially obscured by tree branches. The overall mood is mysterious and suspenseful.

The Sigma Code Chronicles

RECALL

JW BELL

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The Sigma Code Chronicles
BOOK ONE

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Dedication

*I dedicate this work to my family, my wife,
who put up with my constant disappearance in
order to write, and all of my kids who endured
their dad's blank stares and dumb looks while
he figured plot twists in his head.*

This above all; to thine own self be true.
William Shakespeare

CHAPTER ONE

Exhausted from the workout, she had trouble thinking. Even her muscles betrayed her as those in her hands and arms continued to wave a combat knife that wasn't there, a stab, a slice with the imaginary edge. Everything was automatic. The woman shuffled into the room, collapsed onto her bed, and lay in the dark, too sore to move. She'd trained in secret for weeks and her progress astounded her. Her confidence now that of a killer, lethal with weapons of all kinds. Not like before.

The bright of day would shine in about an hour, and it was time to sleep would her body let her? Muscles screamed and cramped, arms and legs spasmed. She labored to breathe.

What kept her at it was blood: then and that yet to come.

They don't remember me – that was clear to her – and being brutally honest, I don't care if the one who raped me remembers.

A flash of that memory shot through her mind: pain, the humiliation of being taken from behind, not even seeing his face, the noise of slaughter around her. Something to be endured, she brushed it away as part of life.

She intended to kill him, even if she had to kill them both, even the one to whom she'd grown close. She'd do it too.

But, she reminded herself, his death would not be

for the rape. But for what came afterward. The death. Benjamin. My little Benji.

She blinked quickly before her eyes betrayed her. My baby! Benjamin. My little Benji.

Benji. She had to think of something else. Quickly. My training, that will do, it will enable me to ...

She grabbed the air above her as though it was her knife and sharpened the imaginary blade. She loved knife combat. Knives were so hard to master, but tonight things had turned.

Several times her knife ended up in the right place.

All I needed was a bit more force and I'd have killed ... she held it up and stared down the edge, at the smooth gleam. They say it feels like stabbing an overripe watermelon, slightly resistant at first, then slides in.

She pantomimed a stab to someone's gut and repeated it several times, each action slow and deliberate, a twist of the wrist at the end of the thrust. The effect was electrifying each time.

Yes. I'll kill that son-of-a-bitch. I'll kill that son-of-a-bitch. I'll ...

She dozed, the thought of sliding a knife into him a constant replay.

CHAPTER TWO

The flickerin' in the hearth did nothin' against the night, but I didn't need no help noway. This was my woman's place an' I knowed where everything was. Been sneakin' in here fer almost a year. We'd cozy up an' hump. I'd fall asleep after, an' then git up afore first light 'cause we din't want the Masta ta know.

The smell of Shannie's collards, greens an' neck bone hung all over the cabin, an' my mouth watered good. Maybe there'd be some leavins.

I tiptoed ovah ta the table an' took a gander. A extra plate was a layin' there. First, I thought maybe Shannie put it out fo me, but as I got closer, I see the food on it already been eat.

An' what else? That prime neck bone sat there, ne'er been touched. Now, who in hell would do that? Shannie's neck bone was the bes' part.

I stood there a scratchin' my head an' then another smell in the air tol' me what's goin' on – Masta's pipe smoke was a hangin' stale in the air.

My eyes eased my head up ta the loft, seein' if I had sight a him ruttin' up there, but nothin' come ta me 'cept flickerin' shadows.

“What you doin' here, boy?”

I jumped and turned. Masta stood 'hind me, an' I almost losed it in my drawers.

“This ain't yer shack. Now you better git on away, Fox Boy.” His laughter cut the room like a old knife

aguttin' a fish. "That piece of ass up theah," he nodded to the loft, "Shannie, she's prime, but only foah her Masta. She's even light 'nough ta pass fer white." He pointed the stem of his clay pipe at me. "Ain't nothin' here foah ya, boy." Masta walked ta the fire and lit a taper.

"An' you keep from my missus too."

At mention of the Mistress, I seen her face afloatin' in my mind, plain as if afore me, curly red hair, the pale skin white like 'baster an' strange eyes, one blue, one green.

"Young buck. You stay far from my women. Don't come 'round 'em at all."

The light from the wick-stick shined off his deep, black eyes as he sucked that fire inta his pipe. Pale-blue smoke billowed 'round his silver-white hair so much, I had trouble tellin'

'xactly where his beard ended an' the smoke cloud took over. But the cloud never cover his eyes.

He stare at me with the calm face of uncaring death.

"Ya ain't gone yet, boy? You smarter than that. You cunnin' like a fox, always have been, even as a young buck. S'why I named you Fox Boy." He puffed a coupla times, smoke arollin' from his mouth like he was chewin' on a cloud. "You go on now."

Holdin' his pipe with his teeth he screamed, "Git!" Then he run over an' slapped me. My ears rang so bad I heerd nothin'. Then another slap. "I tol' ya."

I wanted to git away, but Shannie. I din' wanna jus' leave her. She mah woman. My eyes shot ta the loft an' seen Shannie's eyes a shinin' in the light, starin' at me, seein' Masta beat me.

I tried ta bust free, ta run, but ta do that I'd have ta hit him. An' if'n I hit Masta ...

Mah eyes jiggled at the next slap. His boot found my leg, an' I fell. It was hard ta breathe. He'd kicked

my tally-whacker an' balls. Two more kicks, one in mah ribs, an' t'other in mah whacker makin' me puke. I tried ta roll an' keep from the kicks, but his knee dropped onta mah neck, trappin' the puke halfway up, burnin'. Then somethin' pop.

"Awrw! My scream come out wrong. My fingers grabbed at mah throat, tryin' ta breathe, but "Awrw." It was a whimper.

His hands push mine ta the side, grab mah neck, an' I think he squeezed, but I don't 'member.

'Cause that's when I died.

The deranged screaming spooked Carbonella enough to spoil her aim, and her shot ricocheted away. The redhead leaped from the shadows, behind the dumpster. The knife in the woman's hand flashed briefly and then disappeared. It stabbed upward, and Carbonella lost her balance.

Then she was on the ground, her leg screaming. Two shots fired from a long distance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J.W. Bell's life reads like an adventure story. He was a Field Artillery Officer in the Army for ten years, is well-versed in long-range and large-caliber weapons, and is an expert with small arms — handguns, rifles, machine guns. Oh yes, he trained in explosives and is excellent with hand grenades. His military thrillers use actual terminology and weaponry. The military courtesy and discipline portrayed is accurate. He traveled extensively throughout Europe, Asia, and the U.S., living in Hawaii for several years. He coached gymnastics for a time and worked for years as a roughneck in the oilfields of Oklahoma. He became a teacher and still holds a lifetime teaching license to teach music and drama. He composed his first symphony and now has a good start on his second. Currently, he lives in Arkansas on a small acreage with his wife Catherine and their ten children, five boys ages six to eighteen and five girls ages six years to sixteen. He has two older daughters who live in Little Rock with their own families. The family of twelve has four dogs and cats, two horses, one pony, and two pet pigs on the acreage. Additionally, there are four cows and one sheep in an attempt to become self-sufficient. In keeping with that theme, the last inhabitants of the property are the goats; they are prolific, so it is hard to give solid numbers for them, somewhere over ten and not quite fifty.

There is always something happening around the house, as the children are home-schooled, everyone has chores, Catherine attends nursing school, and J.W. carves out time to write.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

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