

THE
ENIGMA
IGNITE

BREAKFIELD AND BURKEY

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Specialized Terms and Informational References are available beginning on page 315 if needed by our readers.

This book is a work of fiction. All names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the authors' imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or people living or dead is coincidental.

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Other stories by Breakfield and Burkey

Enigma Series:

THE ENIGMA FACTOR

THE ENIGMA RISING

KIRKUS REVIEW – The Enigma Factor

Breakfield and Burkey’s novel is a thriller for the 21st century. Instead of drug or money mules, it features “information mules” who steal others’ codes and work for organizations such as Dteam... A complex thriller with a hacker-centric plot and polished technological descriptions that may attract new fans.

KIRKUS REVIEW - The Enigma Rising

...latest techno-thriller, a group combats evil in the digital world, with multiple assignments merging in Acapulco and the Cayman Islands. ... The story boasts strong characters: R-Group hacker Quip and JAC (both of whom are more pivotal to the narrative this time...

.. the story will hold readers’ attention until its unsettling conclusion, which once again leaves plenty of room for a sequel.



PROLOGUE – SIX MONTHS EARLIER –

THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

“Ling, we gotta go. We have to get out of here! Can you stand?” asked JAC.

Ling was having trouble staying focused or comprehending much of anything. As the mental fog began to lift, words started to make sense again. Responding however was another matter. It was only after several minutes and with a great deal of struggle that words could be formed.

Ling finally questioned, “Where am I? And now that I think about it, when am I?”

JAC realized that Ling was still weak and in no condition to move under her own power.

“I can see you need a few minutes to gather yourself. You must understand the diversion will only last a few minutes and then the guards will return. You probably should have answers to get your thinking de-fogged, but time is of the essence, Ling. I can explain later when we have more time. Right now, we gotta go.”

Ling was lying on the table and rolled her head to the right in order to orient herself to the surroundings. It was an oppressive room with a stink of neglect and disuse.

“You are already too late,” asserted Ling. “There is a video camera just over the door. They must know already of the escape attempt. You should make your way alone. I can just barely move my head and you look like you’re ready for a marathon. Thanks for trying, whoever you are.”

JAC was frustrated with Ling’s attitude, but advised her, “We knew there would be a camera inside this area and right now we are feeding a video loop through it that still shows you lying on the table with the narcotic drip feed stuck in your arm. We expected that your muscles might have atrophied after this length of time, so I gave you a shot of B-complex with an adrenaline boost as a chaser to help get you amped up. With what I shot into you, it wouldn’t surprise me if you wanted to run down to the beach for a ten kilometer swim. By the way we are one hundred kilometers from the beach.

“How are you feeling now, Ling? Can you stand? We gotta go.”

Ling smiled then responded more coherently, “Now I know who you are. You are JAC, aren’t you? Why would you come to rescue me and Grasshopper?”

JAC’s smile quickly turned to a solemn dark look as she apologized, “Ling, I’m sorry about your assistant. They must not have valued him the way they did you. They saw to it that Grasshopper did not make it this far.”

Ling now was awash with remorse at the loss of Grasshopper and with guilt at having survived by the whim of her abductors. Her resolve to get up melted.

Ling’s voice cracked, “Then my fate is here and I shall follow behind my dear Grasshopper. All I see ahead now is emptiness, and I don’t want to face it without his strength.”

JAC’s eyes now flared from her temper, which was escalating to fury as she commanded, “Soldier! Colonel! I gave you an order! You will stand up and you will follow me out of here so we BOTH don’t suffer the same fate as Grasshopper! Maybe you should understand that they tortured him before they killed him. I am giving you a chance to escape and extract revenge from your abductors! Don’t you want to get even? Don’t you want to live for Grasshopper, so they can pay for their crimes? Don’t you owe that to Grasshopper?”

Ling began to feel the adrenaline boost kick in and the goading from JAC about revenge ignited a storm inside her. Ling swung one leg down and then the

other, which gave her the momentum to sit up on the side of the table. Her eyes now burned with hatred for those responsible.

Ling stared into JAC’s eyes and responded in crisp military fashion, “Colonel Ling Po reporting for duty as commanded, sir! Get me out of here!”

JAC smiled knowingly and placed Ling’s arm around her neck to assist as she stood to walk. They moved slowly and carefully towards an opening in the floor that allowed them to then drop into the underground drain/sewer systems which snaked below the structure. The underground system lead to a shallow river. Going with the current they finally located an area that was flat enough to make it up onto dry land. Ling’s strength was almost all gone, but she grinned from ear to ear at their good fortune. JAC flashed a light signal into the dark, and a signal was returned. Shortly after, they were taken on board a craft and placed under cover as it moved downstream.

Ling used the last of her strength to ask, “What happened to my original escape plans? How did I end up here? Who was it that had me?”

JAC marshaled her features as she solemnly conveyed, “As far as we can tell, it looks like someone among the exit personnel compromised the operation and sold you out to Chairman Lo Chang. You have been here for months. We got a snippet about your location from the Internet chatter and staged this exit strategy. Now all we have to do is find a new place for you to operate from and a new identity.”

Ling Po smiled as she said, “Thanks for getting me to go. Making me move was not easy. I will trust you for now.”

Having spent all her physical and emotional energy, Ling dropped off to sleep while the boat made its way down river to freedom.



PRESENT DAY

CHAPTER 1

WEB SPINNING USUALLY EXPANDS WITH CONCENTRIC CIRCLES... THE ENIGMA CHRONICLES

Otto sat in his Zurich office. He casually ran a hand through his thick stock of well-cut white hair, and reviewed the plan he'd put together to fulfill the requirements requested by Prudence under one of the United States government contracts. The R-Group's contract was primarily focused on gaining information on where each of the global players was militarily with nanotechnology. He struggled with understanding the goals that each of these major players envisioned for the use of nanotechnology, how it might be applied, and what the potential downsides or risks were to each of the global powers. This was always the backdrop to their assignments.

The R-Group was a closed-family operation that had been founded during World War II by two brothers and a best friend. It had all started with the capture of an Enigma Machine that the Germans used to encrypt communications. As the founders of the R-Group, which included Otto's father, fled from Poland to Switzerland, this acquisition did as well. They formed their operation to encrypt information and used the expanded capabilities they created to help preserve and transport the wealth of those under Nazi scrutiny.

Over the years the family operations had grown to include real-estate, and financial investments along with the banking aspects, financial security, and, these days, a huge focus on information technology. They had many businesses established around the world that were subsidiaries of the primary family business. Trails from any of those subsidiaries back to the R-Group were obscured from the most in-depth reviews available to anyone outside the family. The overarching mandate of their organization was for human rights and options for good succeeding over evil.

R-Group resources for information technology were impressive by any standard. As their operations had grown, they had shaped bleeding edge technology and leveraged it far ahead of the intelligence agencies of any country in the world. As a result, they provided information services to those entities or countries with a goal of continual assessment of the capabilities of world powerbrokers. Decisions on which projects they would accept or reject was a review process with a voting right tied to the original founders. Each member of the inner circle of the family was highly educated in a general sense of the family interests, yet typically had a primary talent at which they excelled. The three primary members at present were Otto, Wolfgang, and to replace the recently departed Ferdek, Quinton Ferdek Watcowski, who was better known as Quip.

Otto himself had a real head for finance as well as most of the direct dealings with their clients from the world's intelligence communities. He also sculpted the vision for the organization expansion, yet maintained focus on their core mission.

Wolfgang was primarily focused on all financial matters with his ability to find even the most deliberately buried money trails. Additionally, he was brilliant in real estate and the primary moral ethics of the family and its associated business endeavors.

Quip, the youngest of this voting arm of the team, was the architect of their information infrastructure as well as an advanced technology integrator. His ability to access systems without detection, join programs and information together for analysis, and maintain the highest security levels was without equal.

Otto's daughter, Petra, was an encryption guru with the ability to create programs and algorithms to secure information. Her abilities were equally valued by

the clients she assisted, based on their requirements. She was valued as a consultant to many individual customers world-wide.

Jacob, Wolfgang's grandson, had recently joined into the family business after he'd grown up in the United States with his mother. His mother had been killed, essentially in the line of family duty. Jacob was educated in both structured and unstructured programming, and gained significant experience as he worked with financial institutions on security of their systems. He was renowned for his ability to perform near exhaustive penetration testing.

Additionally, all the family members were educated to be multi-lingual for reading and speaking which allowed them to easily work with customers all over the globe. Their manners and attire spoke of wealth without being gaudy or trendy. They were all masters at hiding most of their feelings from all but each other. For the few skills they did not have within the family they had developed strong contractor relationships, such as for advanced telecommunications. They supported those that helped mankind and helped detour those who carried the same mindset as the Nazis.

Prudence, an Avatar identification for interactions with the R-Group by those in the Western intelligence community, had contracted for two services. One service was verification that the CIA was or was not involved in a terrible explosion in Mexico that could possibly derail the joint efforts by the United States and Mexico. This effort had been completed and would be provided in due time to fulfill that assignment. The other service, which was the one Otto was focused on, was the information requested around the terms "nanotechnology", "grasshopper", "biometric implants", "peer to peer mobile communications", "satellite uplink tethering", "near field communications in combat situations", "po", and "pilotless drones". The information from simple searches of these terms was certainly within the capability of the agencies at Prudence's disposal. So without further guidance, Otto had presumed that she required a broad deliverable for the service across world powers and their respective use of communications for identity and location of people and things.

Otto had outlined many of the possibilities that he thought might be applied with use of these technologies in part or total combination, but he wanted the insight from the key staff he had assigned to focus on the project. As he walked

toward the conference room, located in the primary technology center in Zurich, he was absorbed with the direction he planned to take with that discussion as he took his seat.

“Good morning, all. I trust that you are refreshed and ready to tackle this new assignment. Of course, as other pressing matters arise from customers we will decide if any of you need to break away for those issues. Otherwise, I would like you all to focus on this assignment,” began Otto.

Quip offered, in non-typical seriousness, “Otto, I have shown both Jacob and Petra my current modifications to our Immersive Collaborative Associative Binary Override Deterministic, or ICABOD, system. The enhancement made with facial recognition as well as some enhancements Jacob made for handling rapid review of the Big Data collected dovetailed well with the updated next generation encryption from Petra. It seems to be performing well with these additions, and Jacob will continue to modify as things are processed to continually improve. I believe this will be key to not only gathering and classifying the information by the sources and owners, but also for the modeling of where each of the leaders in using these technologies are at present and what their plans are.”

“Good,” Otto replied as he smiled and then continued, “So, we all seem to be on the same page, which is important.”

Jacob suggested, “In looking at each of the aspects of potential application of nanotechnology, the use of locating people rather than objects seems to be the focus. Problems to overcome that seem most obvious include: how to easily maintain power, how to be used with a person, and how to avoid falling into the wrong hands or effectively hiding. At least I believe these would be initial critical category questions.”

Petra chimed in, “All of this development would be ripe for stealing by different entities if they think one group is ahead of another. The encryption would be extensive by any group to help avoid information theft. At this point, given enough time, we can open any file and create the needed encryption keys.

“Toward that end, I have been doing surveillance on several of the most easily identified targets for military and non-military development. So far the feedback is meager, but the content is fairly rich from sources in the U.S., England, Middle East factions, and China.”

“If those are the targets at present, then I will start tracking all the money sources for each of these primary players,” Wolfgang offered. “As other players are added, we can expand the financial aspects.”

Otto grinned and declared, “It is so nice not to have to provide assignments since you each know where you can provide the most help. I suspect we will begin receiving other requests from these entities as they are hitting walls in developing or deploying the newer technology. We also need to determine if England is working independently, or augmenting efforts for the United States.”

Each of the professionals at the table nodded in agreement. They didn’t know what would be the full value of this project, and frequent reviews would help direct their efforts. For the time being, they would work out of this operations center which would also hone the team further to make them a more cohesive force.

“I, for one, would like at least update meetings every couple of days until we see where these trails take us,” requested Wolfgang.

“Agreed. I also need to think of the best ways to get a bit of an update on our friend Su Lin at Texas A&M. I would not like her to become a target for any of these players,” advocated Otto.

“We’ve kept a fairly close eye on her activities, but she is very adept and clever when she gets focused. So you might be right. Though nothing is present on the radar screen with her,” confirmed Quip.

Wolfgang asked, “Don’t we also owe Prudence an update on the CIA involvement in Mexico? I know Quip and Jacob were working on the report completion and the presentation framework, but I didn’t hear if that was finalized and ready for delivery.”

Both Jacob and Quip grinned at the same time, then looked to each other to see who was going to speak first. Quip nodded toward Jacob to do the honors.

“As you know, the CIA was not directly involved in the operation that brought down the building in Mexico and killed several pornographic-linked criminals. However, we have been able to create the impression, if we all agree, that the CIA potentially was behind the incident. We don’t want to report a lie by any means. However, we were able to secure some facts which might make this the best option for the slant of our final report.

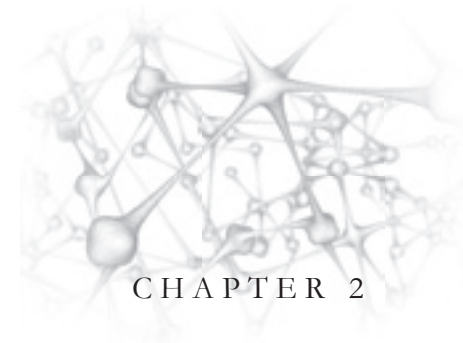
“One, there was trace evidence, found by the authorities that investigated the damaged site, that indicated the C-four was part of a shipment that the CIA had stockpiled in a southwestern U.S. location. Additionally, there were several CIA operatives that were identified as being in close proximity, though assigned other tasks, during the time of the incident. That information came from CIA correspondence. It would be a short step to weave these elements together suggesting this was an inadvertent communications glitch that resulted in a tragedy. There is no other evidence tying to any other source, and we dug really hard.”

Quip offered, “The other option is to simply point out these facts in our report and that no other culprits could be identified, which is totally true. Jacob and I agree that outright lying on this would be wrong, but assembling the facts along with the evidence of the activity would arm the U.S. agencies during any subsequent discussions with the Mexican authorities. The evidence of the pornographic criminal activity has only partially been identified by those governments, so the report would include new information for Prudence on the actual victims of the activity.”

Silence reigned as each participant thought about the options. It was a fine line. However it made sense for conveying the information. Each of them wanted this chapter closed. Finally, Otto broke the silence.

“I think this might be the best choice to go forward. Complete the report then as you would like it to be submitted and send it to Wolfgang and me. We will read it very carefully and let you know the decision in the morning.

“Let’s get started, folks, on the new assignment, update as needed, but we will regroup together day after tomorrow. Thank you.”



CHAPTER 2

START OVER AS IN A FRESH SHEET OF PAPER

Dawn, with the light reflecting off the Yangzi River, promised to be a beautiful start to a productive day. The light from the east scattered through the low clouds on the horizon producing magnificent colors. The warming land generated a light mist over the river that spilled over onto the banks much like the Scottish moorlands. What a great day to be alive! It seemed as if ying and yang were totally aligned for the troops that were assembled for practice maneuvers. What a shame!

The Captain, followed closely behind by the Lieutenant, ran into the command center and both screamed, “Get me ambulances now! Do you hear? Now!”

The Major was ashen white and could barely get any words out but finally said rather solemnly “We saw it on the cameras. They don’t need ambulances, but we clearly do need autopsies. We need to understand what happened and why.”

The Captain and Lieutenant stopped in their tracks as their eyes burned with fury.

The Captain reprimanded, “We saw it firsthand! They are all dead! The ones that didn’t die instantly from the goddam chip in their neck died trying to claw it or cut it out before it could kill them! Shit! A hundred men killed not by the enemy but by their own people!