

*Its 1942. Joe is representative of many young American men of his generation: America and its Allies are at war with the Germans and the Japanese, and this New Hampshire teenager wants to be in the thick of it.*

**Code Name Sonny:**  
**Book One of the Code Name Series**  
By K.E. Pottie

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BOOK ONE OF THE CODE NAME SERIES



CODE NAME  
SONNY

**K.E. POTTIE**

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## SPY!

It was a spring day in 1944 when Joe and Raymond raced each other through the school's front gate moments after the closing school bell rang. The sun felt warm on their skin, but as they made their way downtown, chilly gusts reminded them that shards of winter were still in the air. It was still not warm enough to go outdoors without their winter coats; that time of year when you need to carry one, just in case.

Weather wasn't top of mind for the two friends today. They were on a special mission that afternoon: They wanted to be the first to discover what was causing the biggest buzz of excitement they could recall in their quiet town.

The FBI had arrested the owner of the French River Inn, Mr. Leopold von Sliedricht, a suspected Nazi spy. Sliedricht was a White Russian who hired Jewish workers at his establishment, so no one in town ever suspected a traitor in their midst.

The FBI had been tracking von Sliedricht's activities and correspondence for months. They worked on a series of tips they had received from von Sliedricht's disgruntled wife.

The boys turned on to Lincoln Street, coats open to the wind, hair flying, heaving breath casting frosty explosions as they dodged cars and leaped over potholes, too excited even to speak.

They glanced at each other in silent disbelief that World War II had encroached on their sleepy New England town.

Joe and Raymond skidded to a halt at a makeshift roadblock that kept cars and pedestrians from the scene. Town police stood at guard behind wooden barriers that they had erected there from the townsfolk's workshops and barns.

Behind the police line, eleven men in dark suits and hats carrying Tommy guns were directing army personnel with mine detectors, poking at the bushes around the establishment, and raising cellar doors at the back of the tavern. Meanwhile, a steady stream of State Guardsmen moved in and out of the inn's front entrance, carrying crates to two waiting army trucks, where they stacked them row upon row. Six army soldiers with rifles kept a watchful eye over the loading operation.

The news of the FBI arrest was traveling fast, and the boys grinned with delight at their front row seats, watching in silence as an FBI agent shoved Mr. von Sliedricht headfirst into a black Packard sedan, his hands in cuffs behind his back.

"Get a look at that! They've got him in handcuffs! Guess he must be dangerous," Raymond whispered to Joe.

"Like you could tell," Joe retorted with a snort, only to receive the evil eye from Raymond for drawing attention.

Two FBI agents, wearing big badges and fedoras, turned to stare at the boys. The agents spoke with each other for a few moments before one strode over to the barrier.

He beckoned Joe and Raymond to come forward.

“You boys familiar with Mr. von Sliedricht?” he asked.

“Yes.” Both boys mumbled, awed by their first sight at a G-Man.

“Have you seen anyone not from around here come to visit him?” the agent asked.

Raymond shook his head no. But Joe hesitated.

“Spit it out boy! What did you see?” the FBI agent ordered.

“A few times I spotted this doozy of a car, a maroon Nash Ambassador with a New York license plate, parked in the lot next to the French River Inn.

“Do you get a good look at the driver or passenger?” the agent asked.

“The driver was a tall older man with eyeglasses, dressed in a tweed gray jacket and wool trousers,” Joe said. “Mr. von Sliedricht came out of the inn to greet them.”

“What did the passenger look like?” the agent asked.

She was a young blond woman dressed like a movie star,” Joe said. “She was a babe.”

His face turned red.

“Fascinating,” said the agent, as he pulled out his pen and a yellow pad and began writing notes on the pad.

The FBI agent rattled off more questions to Joe.

“Can you recall any specific dates when they were here?”

“How often were they in town?”



“How long did they stay?”

Joe felt his hands and forehead perspire. The questions terrified him. His stomach was churning, brain spinning, heart pounding. He felt like he couldn't breathe.

I'm in big trouble with Mom over this, for sure, he thought. But I might be in bigger trouble with this FBI agent if I don't tell him everything I learned.

Joe told the FBI agent everything he could remember; his confession delivered in a rush.

“I saw them maybe about eight or nine times this year in February, March, and three times around Easter. The first time was early February. I was walking to Woolworths and had never seen a car like that before. The other times, I was on my bike running an errand for my Mom and I remember thinking: there's that chrome beauty with the New York license plate back at the French River Inn,” Joe said.

“That's quite a memory you have, kid,” the agent said.

“I am told I have a photographic memory,” Joe said.

“It serves you well,” the agent said. “How long did they stay?”

“I figured it was relatives or some friends of theirs, because they stayed a few days each time,” Joe said.

“Did you see anyone else with the couple besides Mr. Sliedricht?” the FBI agent asked.

“Just Mr. von Slie...” Joe started to say but changed his mind.

“Are you sure?” the agent said, noting his hesitation.

“Now that you mention it, the property caretakers seemed to be around them too,” Joe replied.

“Do you think the man and woman from New York are spies too?” Raymond chirped in.

“You never know, young man, you never know,” the FBI agent said, patting the boys on their heads as thanks. He turned on his heels and strode back into the inn.

Three FBI agents emerged through the tavern’s cellar door, each carrying four MP 40 German submachine guns. The FBI formed a protective barrier around the incriminating evidence.

The FBI agent who interrogated the boys turned to James Kenney, one of the local police officers, and ordered him to secure the area.

Scanning the scene, Officer Kenney yelled to the boys, “You kids get outta here. This area is under official FBI quarantine—now go home!”

The boys kicked at broken pavement as they walked away, disappointed at being ejected just when things were getting ripe with excitement.

“I guess that guy who was questioning us is the honcho of this operation,” Joe said, grinning at the honor of making his acquaintance.

“Like Officer Kenney would know how to be an FBI agent!” Raymond complained under his breath. The boys giggled at Raymond’s jibe at Officer Kenney as they walked home. While chagrined they couldn’t stay, they were still proud to have had a front row view of the only historical event they could recall happening in their Podunk village.

Joe and Raymond talked nonstop as they headed home along Route 27, stopping to argue about whether Mr. von Sliedricht was a spy, or just being picked on because he was White Russian, because everyone knew White Russians are sympathetic to the Nazi cause. Their serious conversation gave way to talk about that night’s radio shows, followed by griping that two girls at school, Cynthia and Lois, still wouldn’t give them the time of day. The conversation led to what homework they had to finish.

“I’m famished,” Joe announced, walking faster. “I wonder what Mom’s made for dinner. Dinner! Yikes! They were late for dinner.

The friends looked at each other. There would be hell to pay! They ran as fast as they could, but they arrived at their separate homes more than an hour past their suppertime.

“Where have you been, Sonny?” his mother asked Joe, using her nickname for him since his birth. “Supper’s cold and you’ve kept your brothers and sister waiting,” she greeted him as he closed the front door behind him.

“Sorry, Mom; we ran downtown to see what was going on with Mr. von Sliedricht. Did you hear the FBI arrested him?”

Joe replied. He lowered his book strap to the floor, removed his coat, and hung it up on the wall in the foyer.

“Yes, I heard,” she said, sighing, and walked back to the kitchen with Joe following behind her. “I think it’s awful they are on a spy hunt. I don’t suppose that nice man would do anything to hurt our little town or our country,” she replied.

“Mom, Nazi spies don’t all run around wearing black uniforms and swastikas. We saw with our own eyes what happened today at the French River Inn. They found a huge stash of German machine guns and all kinds of weapons at Mr. von Sliedricht’s place. They hauled off crates and crates of ammo in two army trucks!” Joe blurted with excitement.

“I want you to stay away from there, Sonny! Promise me you won’t go snooping around that inn while the FBI is in town.”

“But...”

“No buts—promise me Sonny!”

“Ok, I will.”

With a shrug, Joe continued into the dining room to take his seat at the table. His two older brothers, Armand and Clarence, gave him dirty looks for keeping them waiting. His sister Louise kicked him under the table as payback for her sharp hunger pangs.

After dinner that night, Raymond and Joe went to their favorite fishing hole, which was on von Sliedricht’s property. The boys saw no harm in such an adventure. They were no

threat to von Sliedricht, and it was in a far corner of his property. They sat down on a log by the water's edge, preparing their fishing poles.

"Think the fish are biting tonight?" Raymond said.

"I hope so," Sonny replied. "I brought our secret bait with me tonight."

"What secret bait?" Raymond asked.

"Corn."

"Corn?" Raymond asked. "You think that will work?"

"Clarence says so," Joe said.

"Your brother thinks he knows everything," Raymond said. "I betcha it doesn't work!"

"You're on," Joe said. "Whoever catches a fish first, the other guy has to carry his books to school for a week."

"It's a wager then," Raymond said.

Joe attached some corn to the hook, while Raymond used a night crawler. After a few minutes, Joe had a nice sized fish on his hook. He dangled it in front of Raymond.

"Pure luck, Joe" Raymond said. "I'd bet you can't do that twice."

Joe didn't reveal he had come here after school, feeding the fish corn for the past few weeks. He would enjoy watching Raymond carry his books for him!

Just as Joe was about to toss his corn-laden line into the water, they heard a voice come from the woods behind them.

“How’s the fishing, boys?” a man said in a deep tone.

They looked around, terrified, when a man as dark as the evening stepped out from the tree line. Joe and Raymond couldn’t decide if they wanted to jump into the lake or run like hell. They ran like hell. Leaving their fishing poles behind, they bolted into the forest, to the laughter of the dark man.

“Who was that?” Joe said as they ran through branches and brambles without regard.

“I don’t know, but I never saw him before!” Raymond said. “Just keep moving, or he’ll catch us.”

They emerged onto the main road leading to home. Looking behind them, and not seeing the dark man follow, they stopped running.

Joe halted, “Our poles are back there. Should we go back and get them?”

“No way am I going back there,” Raymond said. “That guy will kill us!”

“That was Clarence’s fishing pole,” Joe said. “If I lose that he will kill me!”

“We can go back tomorrow after school,” Raymond said. “Our stuff should still be there.”

“Okay, but cover me if Clarence asks,” Joe said.

“What do you want me to say?” Raymond asked.

“I don’t know, just make something up!” Joe said.

“Sure thing buddy,” Raymond said. “I’ll just tell him some Nazi spies chased us through the woods.”

“It does sound crazy,” Joe said. “I just hope he’s not home.”

When they arrived back at the house, it relieved Joe to see that Clarence wasn’t home yet.

“Sonny, what happened to you? You’re a mess!” his mom said.

“We were out fishing tonight mom,” Joe said. “Is Clarence home yet?”

“No, he is out running an errand for me,” Emma said. “If you went fishing, where is your fishing pole?”

“We forgot it at the pond,” Joe lied. “Can I go lay down? I am not feeling so good, Mom.”

Emma did not press him to explain why he would leave his fishing pole at the pond. Then she saw his in the corner in the foyer.

“If your brother finds out you lost his fishing pole, he’ll be furious at you,” Emma said.

“I know, Mom,” Joe said. “Can you please cover for me? I promise I’ll get it back tomorrow. Clarence won’t know it was ever missing.”

“Okay, Sonny,” Emma said. “But next time keep your head on your shoulders and think!”

“Sure, Mom,” Joe said, giving her a kiss on the cheek. He went in his bedroom and hid under his covers.

Later that night Emma brought her Sonny-Boy a glass of warm milk.

\*\*\*

Early the next morning Joe awoke to the smell of bacon and coffee wafting up from the kitchen. He rolled out of bed, noticing that the old hand-me-down mattress had caved in the middle. He bounded down the stairs in his pajamas and threw himself onto a chair at the table.

“Morning, Sonny. Hungry?” his Mom grinned.

“Ravenous!” Joe said as he smiled back.

“There’s coffee on the table. Careful; it’s steaming, and the bacon will be ready by and by. Help yourself to the toast.”

Joe wolfed down his breakfast in a matter of minutes, sparking remarks from his mother about “watching his table manners” and “where did you learn to eat like that?”

“I’m in a hurry, Mom. We have a science lab this morning and I want to get in a little early to set up.”

“I’m glad you’re so dedicated to your schoolwork, Sonny. We are all very proud you’re graduating at seventeen!” his mother remarked.

“Did I get any letters from the universities yet?” Sonny asked.

“No dear, nothing yet.”



“Think I can get into an Ivy League college?”

“You can do anything you set your heart on, Sonny-boy,” she said.

Joe blew an appreciative kiss, threw his coat over his arm, grabbed his book strap, and started out the door.

“Oh, and Sonny, please pick up your radio parts in the living room when you get home, you’ve made such a mess on the coffee table and all over the floor. One of your brothers or your sister is likely to trip on them.”

“Okay, Mom, I will,” was Joe’s quick reply as he shut the door, ran down the steps of his duplex, and bounded up the steps of the duplex next door. Joe and Raymond’s moms worked at the cloth factory in town, and like most factory workers, they lived in duplexes within walking distance of the factory.

Joe knocked on Raymond’s door and he appeared, wearing his heavy winter coat.

“Why are you wearing that coat?” Joe asked, “It’s not that cold out.”

“Because of this,” Raymond said grinning, opening his coat to display a vial.

“What is that?” Joe asked.

“It’s a stink bomb,” Raymond replied.

“I will not pull this prank with you,” Joe said. “School is almost out, and it’s our final lab test. I’m trying to get into an Ivy League college, not get expelled from high school.”

“C’mon, you’re no fun, Joe, it’s a senior tradition. Besides, you’re Mrs. Hamilton’s pet. Our science teacher would never suspect you,” laughed Raymond.

“Just keep me out of this,” grimaced Joe.

“Okay buddy, when I’m *in like Flynn* with Cynthia and Lois, remember I offered you the chance.”

“Let’s go, Raymond,” Joe said. “I don’t want to be late.”

The friends began their two-mile walk to school, passing the time with banter and teasing.

When the boys entered the science lab, Raymond moved over to one of the floor vents and removed the screws with a pocketknife. He lifted off the vent cover and peered inside, clearing out the cobwebs and dust. He set the cover on Mrs. Hamilton’s desk and moved to their lab bench.

Raymond removed a vial of chemicals from the cabinet. He uncorked it and poured it into his vial, covering the latter with a small, thin piece of paper. He placed his vial on a ledge in the vent, replacing the vent cover and tightening the screws. He squinted into the vent and smiled when he recognized the vial was still in place.

“This is pure genius,” Raymond declared.

“The school maintenance man doesn’t turn on the boiler until everybody is here and he’ll shut it off the minute frugal

Principal Lewis says so. When the furnace kicks on during class, the vial will fall into the ventilation system, stinking up the whole building, and we'll get out of school. Thank me in advance for a day off, Joe."

Joe walked to the door and peered down the corridor to make sure Raymond's antics hadn't attracted attention.

"I still don't condone the idea, but a day off would be nice," Joe mused. "Betcha the trout are biting."

"About time you came around," admonished Raymond.

"Are you sure they can't pin this on us?" Joe asked, still worried.

"If G-men are still hanging around," Raymond proclaimed. "They'd be the only ones smart enough to figure it out."

Less than an hour later, Mrs. Hamilton led the class out onto the school grounds, her scarf wadded in a ball covering her mouth and nose.

A cold breeze blew across the group of students and teachers.

"It smells as if the sewers in town backed up," she cried, a strange look of disgust coupled with a perplexed frown on her face.

Raymond and Joe giggled as they exited the building, coughing and gagging, too.

Later that day, the school's science lab stars stood in the Principal's office denying responsibility for the prank.

During the four years that Joe and Raymond had lived next door to each other, they had adopted a routine of sneaking out of their bedroom windows to the side rooftop overhang at night.

They sat for hours quizzing each other with their knowledge of constellations, moon cycles, automobiles, radios, baseball, and girls. They dreamed what they'd do when they both became rich and famous; Joe as a doctor and Raymond pitching in Major League baseball, playing with the likes of Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Stan Musial, and Bobby Doerr.

Raymond arranged their rooftop rendezvous by tapping Morse code on the wall separating the duplexes. Over time, the wall plaster fell on his bed from the constant rapping. His mother was mystified at the curious case of deteriorating plaster, until they caught Raymond tapping on the wall one night. That incident broke their Morse code routine. Still, their nightly rendezvous continued.

As the boys walked home from school, they prearranged a time to meet on the roof after dinner.

Joe and Raymond enjoyed their impromptu day off from school with six hours of trout fishing. That cool fall evening, when they convened for their nightly conversation on the rooftop, they were too tired to do much more than laugh at the looks of horror on the faces of Mrs. Hamilton, Principal Lewis, and Cynthia and Lois, the stuck-up girls in high school. They retired to their beds, pleased as punch to have carried out the school's annual prank unscathed.

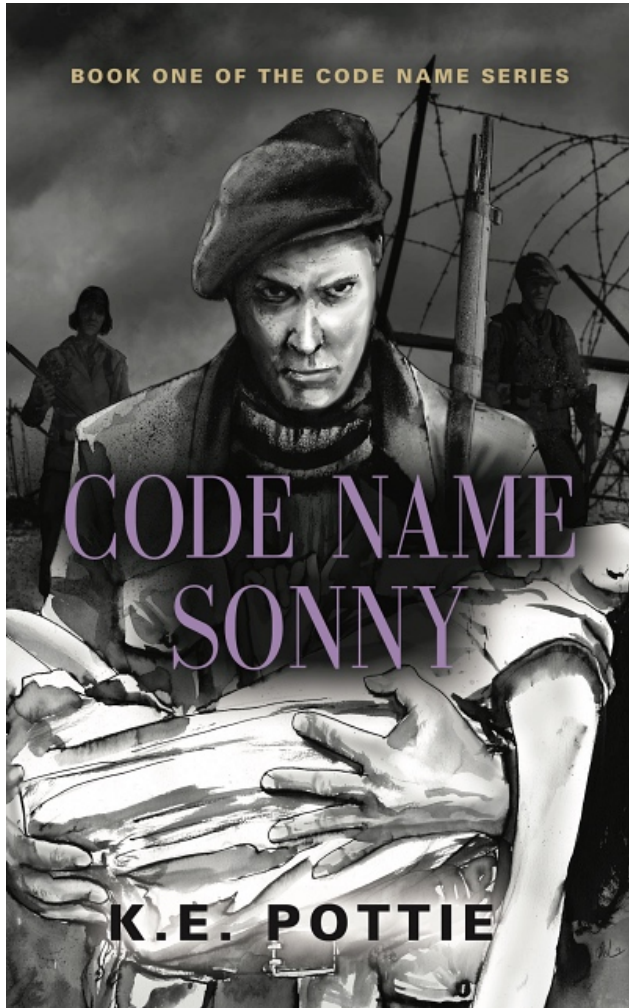
Raymond instigated most of the pranks at school, with Joe as his faithful accomplice. But Joe's prank achieved the most notoriety, because it remained unsolved during his entire life: He built a homemade radio that blocked out the local radio station.

The odd incident of the eleven hours of radio silence was the matter of conversations in taverns, shops and at dinner tables for months afterward.

Joe's mom and sister had suspected his involvement because the radio blackout happened just two days after Joe removed his radio parts from the end table and floor in the den and took them up to his bedroom.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ken graduated from Norwich University in Vermont in 1980 and spent 13 years in military service in the Army, leaving at the rank of Major. During this time, he served as a company commander during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, earning the Bronze Star, Kuwait Liberation Medal and Combat Air Medal.



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