

## **DISK 6 — (66:06 minutes)**

### **Blood and Screams**

*FAYE:* I pulled the Jeep over as soon as Angie and I reached the paved road, two hours down that terrible dirt road, those cliffs dropping away on either side ... I needed coffee badly, and Angie was ... Angie was ... Angie ... needed something. It was that restaurant where I always meant to stop, but Mark was always in too much of a hurry and ... never mind that... we stopped.

I took my first gulp of coffee too quickly and scalded my mouth and throat because, as I saw the date on the newspaper that had been left at our table, I was stunned to find it was Friday. I called the waitress back to the table, intent upon asking her what day it was, wondering how I could possibly have lost three days. That's when it happened. The scream...

But first, I must tell you this. The waitress... I had noticed her earlier, to the point of distraction. I admired her immensely. She was clearly of Maya descent with a lovely demeanor and carriage, her entire aspect contagious with the love of life. She must have been in her late sixties or early seventies but had a youth and grace about her, gay and friendly and frank. I found the distraction extremely irritating because I was trying to make a plan of action, you see, yet I was finding it impossible to concentrate on anything but the loveliness of the old woman.

Also there was her sister, her twin in the corner, identical except with an altogether opposite aspect, sombre and frowning as she joylessly patted tortillas with none of that quickness or life in her hands common to the women of México who had patted tortillas for countless generations.

How like and unlike these twins were. One of them was, or perhaps both were, unquestionably the forebear of all the younger people working in the restaurant who shared a remarkable family resemblance; the man in his thirties who oversaw the operation of the restaurant and took the money, the younger woman who waited tables, the boy endlessly running in and out the front door, the baby in the cradle whom each member of the family picked up in turn to fondle and chortle into the face of, all offered the same beautiful almond eyes, the same

dusky shade of skin, the same nose and forehead, distinctly Mayan as pictured on the frescoes in the ruins, yet shaped with familial definition, and mixed ever so slightly, how many generations back with European blood. A lovely lineage except for the crone in the corner with the misery genes.

This family appeared so different from yet so similar to the people of Santa Cruz de K'u that I had paused to contemplate each of them. Slightly lighter skinned, dressed entirely *catrín*, probably with double Spanish surnames, they lived on the paved road and communicated routinely with the city, ran a restaurant and had commerce with tourists. I remember pondering how this family would end up as they traveled their continuum in both chronological and chirological time simultaneously.

Oh, you will think me ponderous and didactic —well, as Angie would tell you, duh! and I have already confessed to you that I *am* fallible— but I must share with you this particular distraction as it has great significance for us all, particularly at this chirological moment in time, *our* *chiros*. Chronological time, of course, is what we are used to and flows in a steady, gradual evolution. Chirological time, however —and this ... might be something that I have ... perhaps ... invented, but it's very useful; it is an age-old concept even if I am... just now... inventing it, the terms I mean— chirological time veers away from the continuum, fractured, a *chiros*, a digit caused by some birth or some death or some other event of enormity, bending time and altering destiny.

The birth of Christ, of course, is merely one example... and of course you no doubt have no interest in that... or I don't know, is what I mean ... but as one perspective, one might view the birth of Christ as the single most significant chirotic event in human history because not only was a new and earth-changing religion born, but time did literally change, from BC to AD at a single event.

But of course there have been countless other chirotic events in history, even ones that reshaped or redefined the counting of time itself very much in the same way as the birth of Jesus Christ: in the year equivalent to 3113 BC, for instance, the zero year on the Maya calendar.

What on earth could have happened 3113 years before the birth of Christ which was so significant that it was agreed upon by an entire people as the beginning of time, their zero year?

Perhaps... I will wager this... I will submit to you... I will conjecture, a mere conjecture, that it was their invention of zero itself. An incredible invention, zero, which we today take utterly for granted as though it is a notion which has always been with us, but it is an incredibly profound notion, requiring a prodigious intellect to imagine and convey and convince others to accept: zero.

I don't mean to get us started on zero, but it was huge, and it *was* a chirological event, and I am not insane for saying so.

But to get back to the Maya woman, that's what I mean to do ... get back to the lovely woman and her troll twin and their family, because you must understand their importance to us now, at *our* chiros. Imagine how this family would appear had there been no chirological arrival of the conquistadores, with their new way of counting time, their new religion, their new diseases, and their strange new killing ways? But, you see, the Spanish did come, and these Maya did survive. Unlike their neighbors, the Indians of North America who were vanquished and all but destroyed by the white invaders, these Meso-American Indians endured and eventually *conquered* their conquistadores, subsuming their blood and their religion into their own culture.

You must find this a delicious irony, you must: the Maya kept their legends secret from the Catholic missionaries, and when the missionaries burned the Maya's hieroglyphic texts and made them learn the Roman alphabet in order to teach them the new religion, the Maya subsumed their *alphabet* as well and rewrote their own mythologies, giving us today the books of the *Jaguar Priest* and even a newer religion founded on top of the conquering religion, very like the church, built upon the former temples. Using every resource, even those —especially those! — of their conquerors, the Maya adapted, and they survived, and they kept their culture alive with them! And we must learn from that!

And remember that other, earlier chiros —bear with me, please, because it all does make sense and does have a hugely important point— that mystery hundreds of years *before* the conquistadores arrived of why the Maya, the the Toltecs abandoned their great centers of civilization. Why? No evidence pointing to the usual chirotic events which cause a people to pack up and leave: war, famine, drought, disease, none of these. And even earlier, a millennium *before* they abandoned their cities, what spurred them to begin *building* the cities in the first place? What transmutation, genetic or otherwise, escalated them so suddenly from stone age to civilization with hieroglyphic writing, with a calendar year calculated to 365.1211 days, with — oh, good heavens!— a zero?

Why and how had this woman and her family survived? To serve me coffee so hot it scalded my mouth. To serve my daughter ... hot ... hot ... hot chocolate. And now, as I called the woman over to ask her how it possibly could be Friday, that's when it happened. That scream ... that eldritch scream ...

